

# Master of Fine Arts in Visual Arts

## Graduate Student Handbook\*

Department of Art + Art History  
Florida International University  
Miami, Florida

*\*Handbook disclaimer: At the bottom right-hand corner of this (and every page) is the date upon which the most recent amendments were made. Acting within policies and procedures of FIU, the Chair of A+AH and/or MFA Program Director reserve the right to make necessary changes in the handbook without prior notice. The department will make every effort to alert students to any major changes to the handbook.*

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## **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

The **Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Visual Arts** is a production-oriented, studio art program directed toward individual development. The curriculum is designed for maximum flexibility to accommodate both those seeking advanced training in a particular studio area and those whose interests may involve more media crossover. Graduates of the program will be prepared for careers as professional artists. The MFA is the terminal degree in Studio Art.

## **ADMISSION PROCEDURES**

Prospective applicants wishing to be admitted into the program must meet the University admissions requirements as specified in the Graduate Policies and Procedures Manual. They must provide the following: transcripts from all schools attended (a minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.0 is expected); CV (no more than 2 pages, single-spaced); three (3) letters of recommendation (from persons who are in a position to evaluate the applicant's previous professional and academic performance, as well as the applicant's potential for success in the graduate program); and for international and domestic applicants whose language of instruction for the undergraduate degree was not English, scores from Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score of 550 paper-based/80 internet-based.

Applicants to the MFA program should provide an artist statement (no more than 500 words) and upload it as well as a CV and slides of 20 artworks (300 dpi) onto <http://getacceptd.com>. Please note there is a nominal fee in addition to that for the general application for the latter. Successful completion of the bachelor's degree in art or equivalent is required.

A graduate selection committee composed of the graduate faculty in the Department of Art and Art History will make the final selection of those to be admitted and those to be placed on a wait-list. Only those who submit their applications with all supporting documents by the deadline published on the department website will be considered for admission.

## **POLICY ON FULL-TIME VS. PART-TIME STATUS AND FALL ENTRY**

### *FALL ENTRY POLICY*

MFA students will only be accepted to begin in the Fall each year. The graduate director will allow students to defer up to a full year on a case-by-case basis.

### *FULL-TIME/PART-TIME POLICY*

The University defines full-time enrollment as nine (9) credits for each Fall and Spring semester. Recipients of stipends from the University must be full-time students. The number of credits a graduate student may carry without special permission is 15 each semester. The graduate director, department chairperson and the appropriate academic dean must approve a heavier load.

Part-time student status must be approved by the graduate director with the understanding that all requirements are to be completed in no more than five years.

### **DEGREE REQUIREMENTS**

#### *NOTES ON GENERAL COURSE STRUCTURE/TERM*

For a balanced approach to graduate education, students are expected enroll each term in a studio tutorial (independent work with check-ins with a mentor), a graduate art history or advisor-approved graduate course.

Notes on triad of courses:

#### 1. Independent Studio Tutorial

Every term, the student works on his or her personal artistic development under the direction of a graduate faculty member:

#### **LIST OF GRADUATE FACULTY:**

Tori Arpad-Cotta | Associate Professor: Ceramics  
Benjamin Zellmer Bellas | Associate Professor: Foundations  
Pip (Sharon) Brant | Associate Professor: Painting and Fibers  
William Burke | Professor: Ceramics  
David Chang | Professor: Painting, Drawing and Visual Arts Education  
Daniel Guernsey | Associate Professor: Art History  
Alpesh Kantilal Patel | Associate Professor, Art History  
Jennifer Printz, Drawing  
Thomas Scicluna, Sculpture  
Fereshteh Toosi | Assistant Professor: Digital Arts  
Lidu Yi | Associate Professor: Art History

Tutorial courses include but not limited to the following: Drawing (ART 5390C), Figure Drawing (ART 5391C), Portrait Drawing (ART 5396C), Printmaking (ART 5408C), Painting (ART 5580C), Portrait Painting (ART5588C), Figure Painting (ART 5584C), Still Life Painting (ART 5583C), Landscape Painting (ART 5582C), Sculpture (ART 5740C), Figure Sculpture (ART 5792C), Photography (PGY 5425C), Color Photography (PGY 5530C).

Student must be advised by Graduate Director. Once approval is granted, Ms. Caitlin Maxcy, Coordinator of Administrative Services who will provide graduate course permission for student to register in the appropriate graduate course.

As the department continues to expand the array of course offerings, new courses will be added to the list and students will be informed when they meet with the Graduate Director for advising each term.

Though the exact nature of the tutorial is contingent on the faculty member involved, the following stands across the board: students are expected to work independently on their practice and meet with mentors throughout the semester: preferably a mix of one-on-one and group meetings with other graduate students.

## 2. Graduate Seminar (on rotating topics)

While the studio tutorials are independently driven, graduate seminars reflect our belief that creating a community is just as vital to artistic practice. During Fall of student's first year, he or she will sign up for Graduate Seminar I with all other first-year students. Overall, the graduate seminars function as a foil for the more independent and often solitary nature of making one's work.

## 3. Art History

Although only 12 credits of art history are required for graduation (ARH 5796 and Nine (9) other credits in ARH as noted in the next section), it is strongly suggested that candidates take 18 ARH credits, or one ARH course/term on average. Taking an

art history course every term will provide students exposure to a broad variety of artworks and artists that is indispensable in terms of being able to situate one's practice in the history of art. On a more practical note, one must have at least 18 credits in the subject in order to be credentialed to teach it in the state of Florida's university system (SUS). By completing 18 credits in art history, students will be eligible to teach art history as well as studio courses at any school in the SUS. This can be an advantage when applying for college teaching jobs.

### *BREAKDOWN OF COURSES*

Consistent with the College Art Association standards for the MFA degree in Visual Arts, the FIU program will require 60 semester credits of coursework at the graduate level to be distributed as follows:

- Independent Studio Tutorial: 18 credits (*one 3-credit course each term*)  
Drawing (ART 5390C), Figure Drawing (ART 5391C), Portrait Drawing (ART 5396C), Printmaking (ART 5408C), Painting (ART 5580C), Portrait Painting (ART 5588C), Figure Painting (ART 5584C), Still Life Painting (ART 5583C), Landscape Painting (ART 5582C), Sculpture (ART 5740C), Figure Sculpture (ART 5792C), Photography (PGY 5425C), Color Photography (PGY 5530C).
- ARH 5805 Critical Studies in the Visual Arts: 3 credits (*typically taken in semester 1*)
- ART 5939C Graduate Art Seminar I: 3 credits (*typically taken in semester 1*)
- ART 6939 Graduate Art Seminar II: 3 credits (*typically taken in semester 2*)
- ART 5938 Studio Art Pedagogy: 1 credit (*typically taken in year 2 or 3*)
- ART 5XXX Studio Electives: 15 credits
- ART 5907 Directed study (thesis): 3 credits (*taken in semester before expected graduation*)
- ART 6971 Graduate Prospectus/Exhibition Preparation: 3 credits (*final semester*)
- ARH 5XXX Art History: 9 credits

The above will yield 58 credits. Students will need *two (2) more credits to graduate*. It is recommended that students take ART 5910C Research for 2 credits to complete a total of 60 credits. In the case where a student has not completed the recommended 18 credits in art history (page 6), he or she should consider enrolling in a 3-credit ARH 5XXX course.

### Suggested distribution of course (over 3 years)

	Yr 1 Fall	Spring	Yr 2 Fall	Spring	Yr 3 Fall	Spring	Total Credits
<b>Independent tutorials</b>	Tutorial (studio)	Tutorial (studio)	Tutorial (studio)	Tutorial (studio)	Tutorial (studio)	Tutorial (studio)	18
<b>Art history/ Art writing/ Art marketing/ Pedagogy</b>	ARH 5805 Critical Theory	ARH 5XXX	ARH 5XXX	ARH 5XXX	Pedagogy (1 credit)	Directed Study (thesis)	16
Group seminars	Grad Seminar 1	Grad Seminar 2	Studio elective	Studio elective	Research (2 credits)	Prospectus (exhibition)	17
Misc.		Studio elective		ARH 5XXX Art History Elective	ARH 5XXX Art History Elective		9
<b>Total credits</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>60</b>

### NOTES ON PEDAGOGY

Each graduate faculty member will have a 1-credit pedagogy course under his or her name and will have a different approach to this course that is specific to his or her medium. Graduate students are not expected to attend every undergraduate course he or she is observing. Each graduate student under the supervision of a faculty member is expected to:

- construct, deliver, and assess ONE assignment for students
- lead at least ONE critique of undergraduate work
- develop a syllabus (for job applications)
- research and develop a teaching philosophy (also for job applications) and
- learn how to operate and maintain any equipment related to the medium.

### MFA PROGRESS REVIEW/FORMATION OF MFA COMMITTEES

Each year, student will orally present his/her trajectory in the program and what his or her plans for the remainder of the program are to the MFA committee. Based on this review, the committee will determine whether or not the student progresses satisfactorily towards the next stage in the MFA program.

At the end of year 1 or beginning of year 2, all MFA students should approach three graduate faculty members to serve as part of their MFA committees. In addition to those graduate faculty listed under "independent studio tutorial." After students have selected and received permission from three faculty members to be on their committees, they may request one additional faculty member to be an unofficial part of his or her committee with the approval of the Graduate Director.

Overall, the Graduate Director must approve all committee appointments and has the right to make alterations, as he or she feels is necessary.

Once committees are formed, they shepherd the student through the remainder of the program. During the semester, the student should meet with individual faculty members of the committee at least once a month; committees will report back to the Graduate Director with any major concerns. Graduate director will meet with students in the latter case.

### *FINAL YEAR REQUIREMENTS: EXHIBITION, ORAL CRITIQUE, AND FINAL PAPER*

#### 1. Exhibition

In addition to the triad of courses (independent studio, graduate seminar, and art history), during the final year the student should take ART 5907 Directed study (effectively, the graduate seminar to prepare student for thesis exhibition) and ART 6971 Graduate Prospectus and Exhibition Preparation. These courses are tied to the student's final exhibition and written thesis.

#### 2. Oral Critique

A final oral critique of the candidate's work will take place during the candidate's final semester. The purpose of this critique is for the candidate to demonstrate to the faculty the candidate's ability to describe the work exhibited, justify the use of formal strategies in connection to the overall theme, and contextualize the artwork in the contemporary art world. Student must pass critique to receive degree.

#### 3. Final Paper

The graduate thesis faculty member in consultation with the Graduate Director will discuss and determine the expected length and content with students.

### **TIME TO DEGREE COMPLETION**

Student should complete the degree in three academic years; those who are approved to be part-time must complete the degree in no more than five academic years but preferably earlier. In rare cases, it is possible to graduate in two academic years if the student is approved to take heavier course load in Fall, Spring as well as during the summers, but such a plan would need to be approved by the Graduate Director to ensure that the student will be ready to present their final exhibition.



### **GRADE POINT AVERAGE**

To remain in good standing, student must maintain a graduate GPA of 3.0. Only courses taken as part of the graduate program will be counted in the GPA.

Undergraduate prerequisites taken after the bachelor's degree will not count toward the graduate GPA. A grade of B- or lower in any graduate course cannot count toward graduation.

### **INCOMPLETE GRADES**

An incomplete grade is a temporary symbol given at the discretion of the instructor for work not completed because of a serious interruption not caused by the student's own negligence. An incomplete must be made up within reasonable time frame not to exceed two semesters or it will automatically default to the grade the student earned in the course. Student cannot graduate with an IN on transcript; it will need to be turned into some kind of grade. There is no extension of the two-semester deadline. To complete the course, the student must consult with the instructor. The student must not register again for the course.

### **REPEAT COURSES AND FORGIVENESS POLICY**

Graduate student must follow procedures described in the University catalog to utilize the forgiveness policy. A student may repeat no more than two courses with none of the courses being repeated more than once. Only the grade and credit received on the second attempt shall be used in computing the graduate GPA; however, the original grade will remain posted on the student's permanent record.

### **COURSES TAKEN AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS AFTER ADMISSION**

Following admission to the University, admitted students may take a maximum of six (6) credit hours at other institutions. Courses taken within the SUS or affiliated programs may exceed this limit, provided the student has approval of the Graduate Director and the academic dean.

### **TRANSFER OF CREDITS TAKEN PRIOR TO ADMISSION**

Graduate Director must approve any graduate work taken elsewhere prior to admission. Normally, no more than six (6) credit hours of coursework excluding thesis credit will be accepted toward the completion of the MFA degree requirements. Supporting documentation is required. Only course work completed within the last six years can be transferred. The minimum grade for transfer credit is a "B" or better. Undergraduate coursework of any kind cannot be applied to a graduate degree.

## **TRANSFER OF CREDIT EARNED AS A NON-DEGREE-SEEKING STUDENT PRIOR TO ADMISSION**

Student seeking admission to the program may enroll prior to completing the requirements for admission as a non-degree-seeking student with permission of the Graduate Director and the chair of the department. *Please note that enrollment as a non-degree seeking student does not imply a right to future admission as a regular degree-seeking student.* A maximum of 12 graduate level credits earned at FIU as a non-degree-seeking student may be counted towards a graduate degree provided these were earned within the six years preceding admission to the degree program.

## **ACTIVE STATUS**

Active status entitles student to utilize the University's resources. Master's programs require a minimum of one (1) credit hour per semester to maintain active status in the program. Lapses in enrollment for three or more consecutive semesters require that the student apply for readmission subject to the admission procedures, criteria, and policies in effect at the time the re-application is made.

## **LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

A student who finds it necessary to be excused from registration in the graduate program for three or more consecutive semesters must formally request a leave of absence from the graduate program. The program director and the academic dean must approve leave time. Leave will be granted only under exceptional circumstances. When a student returns from a leave of absence, the student's advisor and/or research committee will mutually agree upon decisions concerning previous or current program of studies. Applications for a Leave of Absence are available in the Office of Graduate Studies.

## **ACADEMIC WARNING, PROBATION, and DISMISSAL**

Conditions for incurring academic warning, probation or dismissal for failure to maintain an acceptable GPA (3.0 or better) and procedures for appealing dismissal are specified in the University catalog.

## **GRADUATE STUDIOS**

Graduate majors are eligible to request a Graduate Studio. Availability of studio spaces is limited. Depending on availability, a studio may need to be shared by two graduate students. Graduate Studios are assigned by Graduate Program Director.