

MFA in Visual Studies

The School of Visual Studies Master of Fine Arts (MFA) program focuses on the creative goals of the individual. Faculty guide all MFA students to find and develop a direction and language as they create a coherent and conceptually unified body of artwork.

Through an intense studio-based practice, our MFA program prepares students for advanced professional art careers and provides teaching experience to those interested in teaching at the college level. Our graduates successfully contribute to the culture on a local, national and global scale through many different fields in the visual arts. The structure of our MFA curriculum allows students direct access to faculty whose engagement of traditional studio production blends with contemporary approaches. The program supports student movement between media areas as needed to tailor a student's experience to the goals of their creative research. Additionally, the department supports consistent integration of contemporary and historical theories of art as appropriate to each student's individual studio practice.

The University of Missouri has been a leader in the visual arts since 1877 when the renowned painter George Caleb Bingham began teaching the first studio courses at Mizzou. Current faculty members follow in that tradition as leaders in the visual arts through their creative work that is nationally and internationally recognized. Their artwork encompasses: abstract and figurative painting and drawing, illustration, ceramics, sculpture, traditional and digital photography, all media of printmaking, fibers and surface design, papermaking and book arts, mixed-media, video, installation and performance art plus intermedia and intradmedia approaches. Faculty are all are eager to mentor young artists who share the passion for creativity, critical thinking and the arts.

Laboratory facilities are available in all media areas and are continually updated to coincide with technological advancements. The Art program is home to the George Caleb Bingham Gallery with monthly exhibitions highlight artwork by students, local, regional and national artists. We offer opportunities for students to visit museums and galleries in both St. Louis and Kansas City. Our yearly Florence Summer Study Abroad Program places students in Italy where students have a month to study firsthand many of the most important masterpieces in Western art history. More about the MFA program. (<https://visualstudies.missouri.edu/digital-storytelling/>)

Study Areas

Applicants typically study within a particular art medium. Applicants declare a media of their choice at the time of application to the program. Media areas for selection include: ceramics, drawing, fibers, graphic design, painting, photography, printmaking, and sculpture. Aspects of new media, (2D and 3D computer imaging and animation, video production, web publishing and other digital media), are also integrated into the curriculum of many of the listed traditional media.

Degree Requirements

The MFA program is a full-time, three-year program consisting of 60-70 credit hours.

The degree includes:

- Studio Art Courses in Major Area: 18 hours
- Studio Practice and Critique Courses: 15 hours

- Studio Art Elective Courses: 18 hours (up to 9 of which may be taken in the major area)
- Art History Courses: 6 hours
- First Year Graduate Studio Seminar Course: 2 hours
- Practical Pedagogy: 1 hour

Graduate-Level Course work

Graduate level courses are at the 7000/8000/9000 level. A minimum of 15 of the 30 hours must be selected from courses numbered at 8000 and/or 9000 levels; no more than 40 percent of the 30 hours credit requirement can be satisfied by Research, Readings and Problems courses. No credit is given for courses at the 4000 level or below.

Additional Requirements and Progress

Residency Requirement

A minimum residency of two years is required for the degree. However, mere completion of the prescribed number of credit hours and the residency requirement is insufficient, rather the degree will be granted upon the student's high level of creative achievement as determined by the student's graduate thesis committee.

Regular Student Evaluation

The full graduate faculty of the fine art program reviews every MFA candidates progress during the 1st, 3rd and 5th semester. If the candidate fails to receive a passing evaluation during review, the student is placed on probation for one semester and is required to be reviewed the following semester. If two consecutive unsatisfactory reviews occur, the student may lose funding or be dismissed from the program.

Clearance

During the semester prior to graduation, the graduate thesis committee will approve the student to proceed with the final steps toward graduation, composing the written thesis and mounting the thesis exhibition.

Time Limit and Extensions

The time limit for completion of the MFA degree is 8 years from the first semester of enrollment. Time spent in military service is excluded. For an extension for other reasons the student must petition the Graduate School through his/her chair/major advisor. The five-year period will extend from the beginning of the first semester of enrollment in which the student is accepted to the MFA degree program to the date of his/her clearance to graduate.

Thesis

Thesis Acceptance

The graduate thesis committee approves the thesis exhibition and written thesis. During the final semester, the MFA candidate installs a thesis exhibition. The candidate thereafter presents a final draft of the written thesis that defends the conceptual and philosophical ideas of the final body of artwork. Thesis exhibition pieces discussed must be included as images in the written thesis. Each degree candidate must pass a final two-hour oral examination conducted by the graduate thesis committee. The presentation must focus on aspects of academic study related to visual and written aspects of the thesis work. Following final approval of the thesis exhibition and the written thesis, the MFA candidate will officially submit documentation of the theses to the graduate school before the end of the semester in which the exhibition is presented.

Admission Criteria

Fall semester deadline (priority for campus scholarships): January 18.
Please note those wanting to compete for A&S Graduate Fellowship Awards need to apply by January 1st.

Minimum TOEFL scores: Internet-based test (iBT): 80, Paper-based test (PBT): 550.

- Minimum GPA: 3.0

The preferred undergraduate degree for admission to the graduate program in visual art is a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA). However, applicants holding a BA, BS or other bachelor's degree are eligible to apply if they have a minimum of 40 hours of undergraduate studio credits or an equivalent professional experience. Applicants for the Graphic Design Area are required to have a minimum of 2 years professional experience before applying.

Application materials are evaluated to determine if the applicant has the preparation and ability to pursue an advanced degree. Admission is based on the recommendations from the art department graduate faculty members representing each of the media areas. Some applicants, may be placed on a waiting list as alternates, then accepted if others decline their admission offers.

Required Application Materials

Submit Required Application Materials to the Graduate School via the University of Missouri Graduate Application: <https://applygrad.missouri.edu/apply/>

Required Application Materials

- Unofficial transcripts from each college attended (if you are accepted into the MFA program, you will be asked to send official transcripts to the Graduate School)
- Statement of Purpose - Letter of Intent/Artist Statement (your goals for Graduate Study, and a description of your current work and related concepts)
- Résumé (include exhibitions, awards, publications, artistic experience, etc.)
- Portfolio (20 digital images or video files that represent your most recent and accomplished body of work. Your work should indicate your major artistic interest and creative direction, as well as your creative ability and media competence. Maximum of 2 images for any one piece of artwork)
- Assistantship Application (a statement detailing your interest in teaching, past teaching experience and related professional skills)
- Recommendations - Three (3) letters of recommendation

Contact:

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<https://visualstudies.missouri.edu/grad/mfa-program/>

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