

MFA in Illustration & Visual Culture

The Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Illustration & Visual Culture program explores the idea of illustration authorship by combining studio practice in illustration with curatorial training in visual and material culture. This program is ideal for illustrators, designers, and those interested in working with popular visual matter of the modern period to discover how it was made and by whom, who it was for, and how it remains relevant today.

This is a two-year residential program. Graduates of the program will be prepared to work as author-artists of graphic novels and picture books; professors of illustration; critical writers on popular culture; and curatorial staff in museums, libraries and auction houses.

The program is built on the strengths and expertise of the Sam Fox School's illustration and design faculty as well as the vast visual culture resources of Washington University, including the Dowd Illustration Research Archive, a preeminent site for studying the history and culture of American illustration.

Website: <https://samfoxschool.wustl.edu/academics/college-of-art/mfa-in-illustration-and-visual-culture>

Faculty

Our faculty are practicing artists and designers who engage in projects internationally, nationally, and regionally. They exhibit their work in museums, galleries, and other venues. They engage a variety of audiences, receive critical review in periodicals, publish their own writing, and produce documentaries. Others produce site-specific performances and lead community-based programs. Their range of creative practice spans conceptual and media territories that include art and social practice; propaganda and print media; figurative painting; and cinematic, time-based work including sound and digital film-making, book arts, and large-scale sculptural installations. Students often have the opportunity to assist faculty members with studio-based work and research that addresses timely and relevant topics, including race, global politics, the environment, art + science, evolving technologies, social justice, and materials culture and studies.

For further information, please visit the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts website:

- MFA-VA Faculty
- MFA-IVC Faculty

Visiting Lecturers

The school brings nationally and internationally recognized artists, designers, historians and critics to campus to promote new ideas in practice, theory and technology. Invited speakers often participate in graduate studio visits and conduct one-on-one reviews of work.

The Henry L. and Natalie E. Freund Teaching Fellowship is an internationally recognized program that consists of two month-long artist residencies in the Graduate School of Art that culminate with a public lecture and solo exhibition at The Saint Louis Art Museum. During their fellowship, artists teach the graduate students and conduct studio critiques with students.

The Arthur L. and Sheila Prensky Island Press Visiting Artist Program brings distinguished artists to the school for intensive studio residencies at Island Press. Visiting artists work closely with faculty, graduate students and advanced undergraduate students to create innovative prints that garner a critical response from national and international audiences.

Degree Requirements

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The Graduate School of Art subscribes to the standards for the MFA degree as set forth by the College Art Association of America (CAA) and the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD).

The residence requirement for the MFA degree is at least two academic years of full-time study (minimum of 15 units each semester).

The MFA in Illustration & Visual Culture program combines studio work in illustration and cartooning with the academic study of visual and material culture, and it places an emphasis on popular print and hands-on curatorial training in partnership with the Olin Library Special Collections staff. Individual programs of study are arranged with faculty advisors according to the student's area of interest.

Students are expected to proceed at a pace that enables them to finish their degree within the appropriate time limit; this is usually four semesters. Students have a maximum of three calendar years from the date of their first registration to complete the degree. Delays in a two-year completion must be approved by the program chair.

Students will complete a major creative project and a significant writing exercise to position and defend their work.

Required	Units
Illustration Studio	30
Visual Culture History & Theory	12
Hands-On Archival Work	6
Electives	12
Total	60

The two-year program can be organized as follows:

Course	Fall Units	Spring Units
First Year		
Illustration Studio 1: Drawing and Voice (ART 561)	6	—
The Illustrated Periodical (ART 571)	3	—
Special Collections: Practice & Purpose (ART 573)	3	—

Elective	3	—
Illustration Studio II: Artist, Author, Audience (ART 562)	—	6
Literatures of Drawing (ART 572)	—	3
Special Collections: Exhibition & Engagement (ART 574)	—	3
Comics and Cartooning: A Critical Survey (ART 576)	—	3
	15	15
Second Year		
Illustration & Visual Culture Thesis Studio I, II (ART 661, 662)	9	9
Readings in Visual and Material Culture (ART 675)	3	—
Elective(s)	3	6
	15	15

- Art and design electives introduce students to the intellectual and conceptual issues and production methods of a broad array of practices that complement and expand the student's studio practice. First-year MFA students must take College of Art electives at the 500 level; second-year students must take all electives at the 600 level.
- Courses taken outside the College of Art by MFA students must be at the 300 level or above to count as graduate-level credit and require prior approval by the student's academic advisor (program chair) in advance of registration.
- Students may not register for courses in the School of Continuing & Professional Studies.