

MFA in Visual Art

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

Degree Requirements

MFA in Visual Art

The Graduate School of Art subscribes to the standards for the MFA degree as set forth by the College Art Association of America (CAA (<https://www.collegeart.org/>)) and the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD (<https://nasad.arts-accredit.org/>)).

The residence requirement for the MFA degree is at least two academic years of full-time study (minimum 15 units each semester). Students have three calendar years from the date of first registration to complete the degree. Individual programs are arranged with the program chair. Graduate students work with faculty advisors according to their areas of interest within the Sam Fox School and the university at large.

In order to earn the MFA in Visual Art (MFA-VA) — the terminal professional degree in studio art — students must complete the following requirements:

Required	Units
Graduate Studio & Critique	32
Graduate Seminars	13
Workshops	3
Summer Independent Project*	3
Art/Design/Art History/Academic Electives	9
Total	60

The culminating event of the program requires students to present, defend, and document a thesis exhibition.

Electives may be taken from art or design, art history, and academic courses:

- 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 they 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.

A new curriculum launched in fall 2021 promotes a rigorous and immersive approach to graduate study in art. By combining Graduate Studio, Group Critique, Graduate Seminars, Electives + Workshops, and the Summer Independent Project, the program maximizes the context of the broad and diverse community at Washington University and in St. Louis.

Graduate Studio

In the Graduate Studio — through a combination of self-directed study, studio critiques, visiting artist reviews, and research students work independently with the guidance of a primary faculty mentor, and they enjoy regular encounters with a broad range of other faculty and visitors. Students are expected to support and drive each other to make work and to take their ideas as far as they can go. A student's time in the MFA-VA program is a singular experience in their artistic journey: we want each of our students to thrive in their chosen path.

Group Critique

Group Critique is the heart of the curriculum. A mix of first- and second-year students meet for rigorous weekly critiques to share new work and engage in lively, constructive discussion. These groups also serve to integrate the entire program as a supportive yet demanding cohesive group invested in their community, both individually and collectively.

Graduate Seminars

Students take a sequence of required seminars — one each semester — on professional practice, research methods, thesis exhibition, and writing. Beginning with the First-Year Colloquium and culminating with Thesis & Exhibition Preparation, the sequence grounds students in their practice within the Sam Fox School community and in St. Louis. It engages students in research methodologies, prepares emerging artists for professional careers, and supports students in the development of their final thesis text and museum exhibition.

Electives + Workshops

MFA-VA students can enroll in electives across the Sam Fox School and the university that build upon their research interests. Each semester, students also participate in required, 1-credit workshops to build essential technical and professional skills. Students can select from workshops in the Sam Fox School (like Fox Fridays), opportunities offered through the university's Skandalaris Center or the Center for Teaching and Learning, or other options in settings around St. Louis.

Summer Independent Project

During the summer following the second semester of the program, MFA-VA students create projects supported by independent research. Projects can be accomplished in a Sam Fox School studio or by engaging in partnerships or residencies with arts organizations. In alternating years, students have the opportunity to participate in our Sommerakademie (<https://samfoxschool.wustl.edu/academics/>)

international-programs/sommerakademie/) in Germany. Each student develops a proposal for their project during the spring of their first year. The experience culminates in an exhibition of completed projects at the beginning of the fall semester.

Suggested MFA-VA Course Plan

Course	Fall Units	Spring Units
First Year		
Graduate Studio	4	4
Group Critique	4	4
Graduate Seminar	3	3
Workshops	1	1
Electives	3	3
	15	15
Second Year		
Graduate Studio	4	4
Group Critique	4	4
Graduate Seminar	3	4
Workshops	1	—
Electives	3	—
		—
Summer Independent Project*	3	—
	18	12

* Units from the Summer Independent Project are awarded in the fall semester of the second year.