

# MFA in STUDIO ART

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Manual for the Master of Fine Arts Program in the  
Department of Studio Art

COLLEGE OF VISUAL ARTS AND DESIGN  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

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## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Department of Studio Art is to promote excellence in the visual arts through a comprehensive educational program in its eight studio disciplines. Our goal is to inspire creativity, foster critical thinking, and to develop the competencies necessary for effective leadership roles in art as expected of practicing professionals, college teachers, administrators, and visual researchers. Toward this goal, the resources of the entire college and university are utilized.

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## **USE OF THIS MANUAL**

The procedures that follow are a summary designed to assist graduate students in Studio Art. They are offered as a step-by-step guide for planning and fulfilling the requirements for the graduate degree programs indicated. The student and the major advisor can plan programs of study for the MFA degree so that individual interests, needs, and professional goals can be met. The candidate must earn a minimum of 60 hours for the MFA degree.

It is strongly recommended that each graduate student familiarize themselves with the policies and regulations outlined in the graduate catalog as well as this manual. It is the responsibility of each individual student to be aware of and meet all of the requirements of the College of Visual Arts and Design (CVAD) and the Toulouse Graduate School as described in the catalog and in this manual.

A current UNT Graduate Catalog is available for free online. You can access the UNT website and view the entire catalog at [www.unt.edu/catsched](http://www.unt.edu/catsched).

Graduate work in any area assumes that you have the appropriate background to handle graduate instruction in art. If not, then deficiency coursework may be required before taking graduate courses in an area. If any deficiencies are assigned upon admission to the graduate program, they must be removed before graduate study in the area of deficiencies may be pursued. Students may take graduate classes in areas without assigned deficiencies along with classes taken as deficiencies.

If there is uncertainty about any requirement, you should not hesitate to consult the faculty in your area or the Department of Studio Art Chair.

## AREAS OF CONCENTRATION

The Department of Studio Art, in the College of Visual Arts and Design at UNT, offers the Master of Fine Arts Degree in Studio Art with concentrations in eight areas: Ceramics, Drawing and Painting, Fibers, Metals and Jewelry, New Media Art, Photography, Printmaking, Sculpture.

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## MFA COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Studio Art	30 hours (10 classes, 8 of which must be in your concentration area)
<sup>1</sup> Art History	9 hours (3 classes)
<sup>2</sup> Elective	12 hours (4 classes, can be in or outside CVAD)
Professional Practices	3 hours (ASTU 5010)
Creative Project	3 hours (ASTU 5015)
MFA Exhibition	3 hours (ASTU 5020)
	60 hours <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Because they fill quickly, art history classes should be taken at the earliest convenience. Art History courses are any AEAH 58xx courses. Substitutions require approval from your major professor.

<sup>2</sup> ART 5700, University Teaching Seminar in Art, must be taken to be eligible for a teaching assistantship. This will count toward your elective credits and is only offered in the fall semesters.

<sup>3</sup> All courses must be 5000-level or higher to count toward the MFA in Studio Art

A current list of course offerings can be found in the online catalog at [catalog.unt.edu](http://catalog.unt.edu).

The Schedule of Classes is available at [registrar.unt.edu/registration/schedule-of-classes](http://registrar.unt.edu/registration/schedule-of-classes)

## **TYPICAL SEQUENCE FOR THE MFA DEGREE**

First Semester:

- Begin coursework
- File a degree plan in Department Office (form available in department office)

Between completion of 9 and 30 hours:

- Participate in the Graduate Review process
- Select a major professor
- Meet with major professor to review degree plan

After completion of 30 hours:

- ASTU 5010 Professional Practices (the best timing for this class is in spring of your second year)
- ASTU 5015 Creative Project (preceding or in conjunction with your MFA exhibition)
- In addition:
  - Designate your committee
  - Convene proposal meeting
  - Begin work on your creative project
  - Arrange a date for your MFA exhibition

Your last semester:

- ASTU 5020 MFA Exhibition
- File for graduation with the Toulouse School of Graduate Studies in the Eagle Student Services Center Building. See online Academic Calendar for deadlines.
- Complete your creative project and install your MFA Show
- Defend your project and extended artist's statement at your oral defense meeting
- After completing revisions and no later than Monday of pre-finals week, submit a minimum of ten pdf images of your work, the completed and signed Final Defense Form for Creative Project/MFA Exhibition (see form in this manual), and a final copy of your extended artist's statement to the Studio Art Department office via the [unt.slideroom.com](http://unt.slideroom.com) portal. There is no charge for this submission.

## **ADVISING**

The department office can advise you on procedural matters and logistical issues like enrolling in classes, filing paperwork, and getting a studio space. The faculty in your major or the Studio Art Department chair can advise you about general requirements for the MFA degree, including courses to take, selection of a major professor, and choosing your MFA committee.

Shortly after you begin graduate work, and usually after completing twelve hours of studio art, you should select a faculty member from your area to serve as your major professor. Your major professor serves as your primary graduate advisor, creative project director, and chairperson of your graduate committee.

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## **FILING YOUR DEGREE PLAN**

The degree plan is an outline of your course of study, listing courses already completed and courses yet to be taken in pursuit of your degree, as well as your contract with the University of North Texas dictating which classes constitute your MFA degree. Your degree plan must be filed with the Toulouse Graduate School through the Department of Studio Art. This form is completed in consultation with your program coordinator in your first semester of graduate work toward the MFA degree.

To file a degree plan, obtain the audit form from the Department of Studio Art (the pink form), make an appointment with your program coordinator, discuss the required coursework, and complete the degree plan audit form no later than the end of your first semester of enrollment. You must then forward the completed degree plan audit form to the Studio Art Department Office for signatures and processing. You will receive a copy of your official degree plan once it has been processed by the Toulouse Graduate School. You must keep this copy to be turned in with your application to graduate in your final semester.

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## **TRANSFER CREDIT / TIME LIMITATIONS**

All graduate coursework must be 5000-level courses or higher. No 4000-level courses may be counted for graduate credit. In order to take an undergraduate class and have it count as graduate credit, you must enroll in the instructor's graduate special problems section (ART 5900 or 5910). You can then attend the undergraduate section.

Up to twelve (12) graduate hours of transfer credit may be counted towards your 60-hour MFA degree, subject to the approval of faculty in your area, the Studio Department Chair, and the Graduate Dean. All coursework must be completed within eight years; as credits exceed this time limitation they can no longer be counted towards the degree and will need to be repeated or replaced.

## **CHANGE OF MAJOR / CONCENTRATION**

Occasionally, a student will decide to change their concentration during the course of their graduate degree. Changing majors is not automatic; it has two parts:

First, you must fill out a Change of Major/Status form with the Toulouse Graduate School. This form can be found at [tsgs.unt.edu/new-current-students/forms](http://tsgs.unt.edu/new-current-students/forms). This will trigger the regeneration your graduate application document from that office, which is what the Department of Studio Art needs to facilitate a change of concentration.

Second, you must be accepted by the faculty to the new concentration just as you were accepted to the first program to which you applied. To this end, you must submit a portfolio of work for review by the faculty in the new, intended concentration area. No new letters of recommendation are required. Please email [studio@unt.edu](mailto:studio@unt.edu) and request that the Change of Status portal be opened in [unt.slideroom.com](http://unt.slideroom.com). Once this portal is open, you will have at least two weeks of access to the portal. If more time is needed, please email [studio@unt.edu](mailto:studio@unt.edu) again.

Once both steps are complete, the faculty in the new concentration will review your application. Admittance is not guaranteed.

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## **GRADUATE REVIEWS**

The purpose of Graduate Review is to complete a step toward candidacy for your MFA. You can read more about Candidacy on page 10. Graduate portfolio reviews are held each fall and spring semester. You are required to present to the designated review committee representative examples of your artwork from your major area during each semester you take a studio course for graduate credit, until you pass the graduate review. This presentation will take the form of a conversation with the faculty in your area, and any others who choose to attend, in your studio space, usually lasting 20-30 minutes. This is an excellent opportunity for you to discuss your work with practicing artists.

You may show work from areas outside your major area with the approval of your major professor. Any and all exceptions to the review policy should be so stated on your Graduate Review Evaluation form. Recommendations from the Graduate Review Committee are used in assessing your progress, in preparing you for admission to candidacy, and in assisting in your professional growth. You are expected and required to abide by the committee's recommendations.

Reviews typically occur two weeks before finals week. Information about review times, locations, and sign-up procedures is posted in the Studio Department Office, room #317 in the Art Building, and the main bulletin boards in Hickory Hall, Oak Street Hall, and the Welch Street Complex. Your professors will also have this information.

## **MFA COMMITTEE**

Your MFA committee is composed of a minimum of three faculty members: your major professor and two additional faculty members selected in consultation with your major professor. You may choose to have additional faculty on the committee but more than four is not recommended because of the increased difficulty in scheduling required meetings. Any other variation in the committee structure must have the approval of the Studio Art Department chair.

### **CANDIDACY REQUIREMENTS**

Candidacy is a Toulouse Graduate School requirement and an attainment which you must actively seek and earn. The graduate faculty assists in this endeavor via coursework, individual consultations, and Graduate Reviews. Although the accumulation of graduate hours with satisfactory grades is an integral part of your program requirements, regardless of the numbers of hours accrued, candidacy is not an automatic occurrence. Before seeking recommendation to candidacy and before beginning work in ART 5015 Creative Project, you are required to:

- Successfully complete all assigned deficiencies, if any.
  - File a degree plan (see page 6 for more information).
  - Complete 30 hours of 5000-level (or higher) graduate course work in art at UNT.
  - Successfully pass your graduate review (see page 7 for more information).
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## **THE ORAL EXAMINATION**

Once you have completed your creative project and written your extended artist's statement, you should provide your MFA committee with copies and call a meeting for oral discussion and final approval. You should bring either images or actual work to the meeting or schedule your meeting in the gallery along with your show.

After receiving approval from your MFA committee you must file the final documentation with the Studio Art Department Office via the [unt.slideroom.com](http://unt.slideroom.com) portal. These materials include a minimum of ten images of your artwork from your MFA exhibition, your extended artist's statement, and the completed Final Defense Form for Creative Project/MFA Exhibition (get a copy in the Department office or email [studio@unt.edu](mailto:studio@unt.edu) for a digital/pdf copy). As with the proposal meeting, it is your responsibility to make arrangement for the oral examination meeting.

All graduate students experience a certain amount of apprehension concerning the oral examinations. This is natural. Bear in mind, however, that if your major area professor did not think you were ready for the examination, you would not be scheduling it.

NOTE: You should not take a thesis, or problem-in-lieu of thesis, and do not have to file anything with the graduate school other than basic graduation paperwork, which is due early in the semester you plan to graduate.

You must file your materials in the Studio Department Office via [unt.slideroom.com](http://unt.slideroom.com) no later than Monday of pre finals week in order to graduate.



## **CAPSTONE COURSES**

### **ASTU 5010 PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES**

Professional practice is a comprehensive study of the theoretical and practical aspects of succeeding as a practicing artist both inside and outside academia. You will survey the protocols and common practices expected of the artist as a productive member of the business community where fine art and craft is the commodity. This course should be taken before enrolling in ASTU 5015 or 5020, ideally in spring of your second year.

### **ASTU 5015 CREATIVE PROJECT**

You are to plan and execute a creative project in consultation with your major professor. You should explore your own artistic heritage and determine the origin and nature of your artistic convictions which guide the conceptual aspects and/or style of your artwork. This will be explained in more detail when you take ASTU 5010 Professional Practices. You will then write a comprehensive artist statement based on the research and generate a body of artwork reflective of the stated convictions.

During this course you must form and call together your MFA committee who will sign off on your project. It is your responsibility to make arrangements for your committee meeting. This includes scheduling the meeting with committee members, booking a room for the meeting via the department office, and submitting copies of the proposed creative project to members of your committee well in advance of the meeting.

A “Final Defense for Creative Project/MFA Exhibition” form is available in the Department of Studio Art. Fill out this form and take it to your final MFA committee meeting for approval and signatures. The form should then be turned in along with your disc of images at least two weeks before Commencement.

### **ASTU 5020 MFA EXHIBITION**

All candidates for the MFA degree in studio art must plan and install an exhibition of their artwork in a university gallery or alternate exhibition space that is approved by the major professor. The Lightwell Gallery, Cora Stafford Gallery, and the Union Gallery are available for showing on campus. Reserve dates for your show in the Gallery Office (ART 221) a minimum of one full semester before you intend to graduate as these spaces book up very early. Initial discussions regarding type of exhibition should be held with your major professor well in advance of reserving the space.

While we are loath to interfere in any way with the content of your show, CVAD reserves the right to censor anything which could be considered harmful to the health or safety of our staff or your fellow students. Any work, performances, installations, etc., which fall “outside the normal” should be approved ahead of time by your major professor, the department chair, and the CVAD Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. If you have a question about what is considered “normal,” please talk to your major professor. A statement signed by your full MFA Committee indicating that the plans for your exhibition are acceptable constitutes official approval. This statement must be filed with the Department of Studio Art chair at least a week before your exhibition is scheduled to open.

## **TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP / TEACHING FELLOWSHIPS**

Most of the students who are working toward their MFA are looking for employment while they work on their degree. CVAD has over one hundred teaching fellowships and assistantships available each long semester to graduate students who are pursuing a degree in one of our programs and who are interested in teaching or work experience. TA and TF positions give a student the opportunity to work within CVAD to earn a wage while allowing for your own research and studies.

### **APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

Currently enrolled graduate students or students who are newly accepted into the graduate program with no deficiencies or leveling are eligible to apply. To apply for a fellowship, please complete the application (form available online at <https://art.unt.edu/fellowships-assistantships>) and return it to the CVAD Dean's Office (Art Building 107). Those currently holding an appointment must reapply each semester. Completion of an application does not guarantee an appointment.

The deadline for all students (new and continuing) to apply for an assistantship/fellowship is February 1st for a fall or summer appointment and October 1st for a spring appointment. CVAD reserves the right to extend the deadline should there be significant need.

### **TYPES OF APPOINTMENTS**

**Teaching Assistantships** - There are two types of teaching assistants. One type assists faculty with large lecture classes. The other type of teaching assistants teaches basic design or drawing lab courses. These are usually students pursuing an MFA in a studio area. Only students who have taken ART 5700, Seminar in University Art Teaching, are eligible for appointment to one of these types of positions. ART 5700 counts for 3 credit hours towards the student's graduate degree, and it is taken prior to the first semester of the assistantship. ART 5700 is only offered in fall semesters.

**Teaching Fellowships** - Graduate students who have gained experience as TAs and have completed at least 18 hours of graduate coursework may be awarded a teaching fellowship, in which they either teach a foundation level class or a more advanced course independently as the instructor of record. Teaching fellowships are granted based upon the needs of CVAD and are subject to enrollment numbers.

**Area Assistantships** - Area assistants do not assist in large classes or teach. Instead, they work in a specific area lab assisting students and faculty. Area assistantships are awarded in almost all major areas as well as in the Art Shop and CVAD Gallery. Specific duties of area assistants vary accordingly.

More information about the TA / TF positions, eligibility, the selection process, and the TA / TF manual is available at <http://art.unt.edu/fellowships-assistantships.html>

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The following are some of the questions that are most commonly asked by our new, continuing, and graduating students. This is by no means meant to be a comprehensive list, only some quick assistance. Any links provided will give more thorough information and you are always welcome to contact the Department of Studio Art.

**1. What classes should I take in my first semester of graduate school?**

You should be taking a graduate studio in your major concentration area each semester in order to maintain your studio practice. In addition to this, we recommend that all students who are interested in being a teaching assistant or teaching fellow while at the University of North Texas enroll in ART 5700 University Teaching Seminar in Art. If your goal is to graduate in three years, it is recommended that you take nine hours of credit each long semester, which means choosing one last course in your first semester. Most often, students take either an additional studio class or an art history class. Please keep in mind that the art history courses that apply to your degree are AEAH 58xx.

**2. How do I enroll in classes?**

Course offerings for each semester can be found in downloadable form (pdf) on the Registrar's website at <http://registrar.unt.edu/registration/schedule-of-classes>.

Once you locate the classes you wish to take for the semester, log in to <http://my.unt.edu> and use the Student Center link. Be sure to check your holds before you try to enroll, as many of these will stop you enrolling in classes. Examples of holds on your account could be parking fines, library fines, advising holds, financial aid restrictions, and many more. One hold applied to each active student's account each semester is called the Student Financial Obligation hold. You must read this memo to remove the hold.

**3. How many classes must I take to be considered a full-time student?**

Any graduate student enrolled in more than 5 hours of coursework each semester is considered full time and eligible for employment at the university and student financial aid.

**4. What is the Federation?**

The Federation of North Texas Area Universities, established in 1968 with guidance from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, enables the sharing of resources between the University of North Texas at Denton (UNT), Texas Woman's University (TWU) at Denton and Texas A&M University-Commerce. This special agreement allows students to expand their course offerings while receiving credit and paying tuition at their home university.

Any UNT graduate student admitted to a masters or doctoral degree program or pursuing certification may cross-register in graduate level courses at TWU or A&M-Commerce that are being used toward their current degree program. Before enrolling in a Federation course, students must have the approval of their department and verify that TWU and/or A&M-Commerce does not have their own restrictions on the course.

You can find more information on the Federation at <http://tsgs.unt.edu/new-current-students/federation>

**5. Where do I get my Student ID Card?**

On the first floor of the Eagle Student Services Center, which is connected to the University Union.

**6. How do I get access to use the Art Shop (ART 108) or FabLab?**

For the Art Shop:

Just go to the Tool Cage, located in the Art Shop between the Sculpture classroom (ART 108) and the Wood Shop (ART 120) to request a Shop Card. After you pay your \$35 fee to Student Accounting with the fee slip you acquire in the Tool Cage, you will be given access to the Wood Shop and supplies in the Tool Cage.

For the Fabrication Lab:

Nearly everything you need to know can be found at <https://art.unt.edu/content/fabrication-lab>

**7. Can I get after-hours access?**

There are not currently any specific requirements to get after-hours access to the Art Building resources.

**8. Do the local art supply stores offer a discount to art faculty or students?**

Yes! Both Voertman's (1314 W Hickory Street) and Asel Art Supply (1053 Ave C) offer discounts to CVAD faculty, including TAs and TFs.

**9. How do I get access to my UNT-provided Lynda.com account?**

Every semester, the IT folks in CVAD go through the class rosters after the 12th class day and request Lynda.com access for each enrolled student. The email from Lynda.com will go to your my.unt.edu (EagleMail) email address and you will have about a week to accept the access and set a password before this request expires. Your EagleMail address will be your login. If you miss this window, you can contact [artsupport@unt.edu](mailto:artsupport@unt.edu) and request access.

**10. Where can I get help with my writing?**

<http://writinglab.unt.edu/>

Graduate students needing help with course papers, publications, a thesis, or a dissertation may contact UNT graduate tutors at [GradWriting@unt.edu](mailto:GradWriting@unt.edu) to set up an appointment. The UNT Writing Lab does more than merely proofread; they teach you strategies and techniques to improve your writing for the long term. To make the most of your tutoring session, please indicate what you would like to work on during your appointment when you request the appointment.

**11. Is there a facility to get my work documented?**

CVAD currently offers a Photo Documentation Lab in ART 314 during the fall and spring semesters. Just go to [cvadservices.acuityscheduling.com](http://cvadservices.acuityscheduling.com) to schedule an appointment.

**12. How do I get important notifications from the department?**

Be sure the email [studio@unt.edu](mailto:studio@unt.edu) from the email you check most often and ask to be put on the Grad Student Mailing list. Important reminders, announcements, and opportunities go out to this email list a few times per month.

**13. I'm a teaching assistant/fellow now. Do I get a mailbox?**

Yes, and you should check it often! The instructor mailboxes are located in ART 107H, accessible via a door outside the Dean's Office, which has a coded keypad.

## NEED MORE HELP?

As much as we would like to give you a single place to find all the answers, the graduate experience is just too complex to put everything in one, small manual.

If you have a question that is not answered in this manual, your first stop should always be the department office.