



2023-2024

GRADUATE STUDIES HANDBOOK

James Madison University
College of Visual and Performing Arts
School of Art, Design, and Art History

INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO THE GRADUATE PROGRAM IN ART

This Graduate Studies Handbook is a guide for graduate students and graduate faculty in the School of Art, Design, and Art History at James Madison University. This handbook should be consulted regularly for detailed information on specific art requirements, regulations, and procedures.

General requirements, including policies, procedures, deadlines, and the Graduate Catalog are posted on the Graduate School website.

These pages contain the official regulations of The Graduate School (TGS) and remain the binding agreement with students enrolled at JMU. A graduate faculty advisor is assigned to each student in the program, yet please note that the student is ultimately responsible for understanding the contents of the appropriate publications and for following all stated requirements and deadline.

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ADMISSIONS

GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN ART AT JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

DEGREES AND CONCENTRATIONS OFFERED

The School of Art, Design, and Art History (SADAH) offers the Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree in Art with a concentration in studio art, which is an interdisciplinary program within the school and offers the Master of Arts (MA) degree in Art with a concentration in art education and in studio art.

ADMISSION TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

The application process for admission to The Graduate School (TGS) at James Madison University is initiated online.

Transcripts will be submitted digitally for the application process; TGS will request official final transcripts from accepted candidates. Do not send transcripts or letters of recommendation to the SADAH.

A non-refundable application fee is required of all applicants. Foreign student applicants must follow additional guidelines established by TGS.

The Graduate Faculty and Director of SADAH will review all completed applications for admission for graduate study in the studio art concentration. The Art Education Graduate Faculty will review applications in art education concentration.

Action will not be taken on a student's application until it is complete.

Admission to begin taking graduate classes in studio art and art education must be approved by the Graduate Faculty and Director of SADAH and approved for final action by the Dean of TGS. Each student will be notified of the disposition of their initial application for admission by TGS.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN ART

MFA AND MA IN ART - CONCENTRATION IN ART

Corinne Diop
Studio Art Graduate Program Director
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The studio art degrees require a submission of a portfolio of between 15–20 images, three letters of recommendation, an artist's statement, and a brief written statement of purpose. All are to be submitted on CollegeNet following the prompts and instructions provided. Applications may be fulfilled in part and returned to as needed to update and complete the application.

In addition to the general admission requirements of TGS, the prospective graduate student in the MFA program should have an undergraduate degree with a minimum of 33 credit hours in studio art and nine credit hours in art history. It is recommended that the art history hours include six hours surveying the history of Western art and three hours in upper-level art history, or the equivalent. The GRE is not required.

The MFA and MA in Art with concentration in studio art are interdisciplinary. Work using any media to express creative ideas and visual research is permitted and encouraged.

Finalists for admission to the MFA and MA in Art with a studio art concentration will be interviewed in person or online before offers of admission are extended.

**Admission to the Fall 2024 Semester:
February 1, 2024**

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN ART

MA IN ART - CONCENTRATION IN ART EDUCATION

Dr. William Wightman
Art Education Graduate Program Director
wightmwh@jmu.edu, 540-568-5144

In addition to the general admission requirements of The Graduate School, the candidate have a certified art-teaching license. Candidates should submit three letters of recommendation, a current professional teaching portfolio, and a personal statement as an indication of preparation for graduate study.

**Admission to the Fall 2024 Semester:
January 19, 2024**

CLASSIFICATIONS OF ADMISSION

Applicants may be admitted to TGS under three classifications: unconditional, conditional, or provisional admission.

UNCONDITIONAL ADMISSION

Acceptance without reservation. This indicates that you have a sound academic background in preparation for your program of study and have met all entry requirements for both The Graduate School and School of Art, Design, & Art History.

CONDITIONAL ADMISSION

Admission with reservations, such as deficiencies in undergraduate preparation, which you must correct. Once corrected, you may make written request directed through your Graduate Program Director to the Dean of TGS for a change of status to unconditional.

PROVISIONAL ADMISSION

Admission under probationary status. You have not fully met the requirements for admission into your program. Your priority must be to satisfy the conditions outlined in your acceptance letter. To change to “unconditional” status you must submit a written request to your major adviser or the Graduate Program Director who will forward it to the Dean of TGS. You may only apply up to 9 hours of graduate credit to a degree program (with the recommendation of your School Director and approval of the Dean of TGS) while in this status.

Reasons for Provisional Admission

- The previous academic record is weak.
- Prerequisite course work is insufficient.
- The applicant has majored in another field and has not yet clearly demonstrated abilities in the proposed new field.

STUDIO ART MFA

MASTER OF FINE ARTS DEGREE

MISSION

The mission for the Master of Fine Arts Program is to challenge and support independently motivated artists in their intellectual, philosophical, and artistic development. The graduate program encourages life-long learning, career success and community involvement.

GOALS

- To offer study in collaboration with an exemplary faculty who challenge candidates to develop artistic skills demonstrating a professional competence.
- To advance each candidate's ability to articulate a personal aesthetic, philosophical and conceptual mode of individual inquiry.
- To equip candidates with a deepened knowledge of artistic history and culture as it relates to their chosen area(s) of artistic pursuit.
- To graduate candidates who have a heightened awareness of contemporary issues and who are prepared to develop an artistic career beyond the university as engaged and productive members of their communities.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The MFA degree is the professional and terminal degree in studio art and is awarded for a high level of professional competence. It is designed to provide studio, historical, and theoretical studies in art at a level advanced beyond the preliminary professional baccalaureate degree, the BFA in Studio Art.

The MFA in Art with a concentration in studio art at JMU is an interdisciplinary program that encourages non-discipline-specific work in a variety of studio-based genres or between genres. Students may focus their work in a traditional studio medium, however, supervisory instruction is provided by an expansive range of graduate faculty that may not be practitioners in the chosen studio medium. Any substitutions to the MFA curriculum requirements must be approved by the advisor, Graduate Director, and SDAH Academic Unit Head.

MFA PROGRAM OF STUDY

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS	CREDIT HOURS
ART 600 Graduate Integrative Seminar	18
ART 601 Graduate Studio Practice	18
ART 602 Contextual Practice	6
ART 593 Contemporary Art Theory	3
Art History	6
Elective	3
ART 700 Thesis	6
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TOTAL CREDIT HOURS	60

FIRST SEMESTER

ART 601 Graduate Studio Practice	3
ART 600 Graduate Integrative Seminar	3
ART 593: Contemporary Art Theory	3

SECOND SEMESTER

ART 601 Graduate Studio Practice	3
ART 600 Graduate Integrative Seminar	3
ARTH 572 Modern Art Since 1945	3

FIRST SUMMER

ART 602 Contextual Practice	3
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THIRD SEMESTER

ART 601 Graduate Studio Practice	3
ART 600 Graduate Integrative Seminar	3
ART or ARTH Elective	3

FOURTH SEMESTER

ART 601 Graduate Studio Practice	3
ART 600 Graduate Integrative Seminar	3
ART or ARTH Elective	3

SECOND SUMMER

ART 602 Contextual Practice	3
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FIFTH SEMESTER

ART 601 Graduate Studio Practice	3
ART 600 Graduate Integrative Seminar	3
ART 700 Thesis	3

SIXTH SEMESTER

ART 601 Graduate Studio Practice	3
ART 600 Graduate Integrative Seminar	3
ART 700 Thesis	3

STUDIO ART MFA

MFA GENERAL PROGRAM POLICIES, FORMS, AND PROCEDURES

MFA PROGRAMMING ATTENDANCE

To provide a broad background in contemporary art, MFA students are required to attend as many of the school's exhibitions, lectures, and art events as possible each semester. These experiences include Duke Hall Gallery of Arts events, New Image Gallery and ArtWorks openings, visiting Wampler Distinguished Professors lectures, Encore visiting artists, and other arts programming.

MFA STUDIO SPACE

Individual studios are assigned by the Graduate Program Director. Returning graduate students will be given special consideration for studio selection. Occupancy will be for the duration of the student's full-time enrollment in the graduate program. A Studio Contract specifying studio rules and the duration of the assigned studio space will be issued each time a student moves into a new studio.

As part of all studio occupancy, studio graduates must complete an annual studio safety seminar directed by the SDAH safety officer during the Fall semester.

Graduating students, or students moving to a new studio, are responsible for patching, painting, and returning the studio to its original studio condition. Graduating MFA students are required to vacate their studio by the end of May. All belongings must be removed.

MFA EVALUATION

COURSE GRADES

The responsibility for assigning final grades in each class rests solely with the individual instructor of record. When a student is enrolled in studio coursework with more than one graduate faculty member per semester, faculty may consult one another about the work submitted and final assessments.

Evaluation of all graduate work completed under instruction is understood to be an on-going, collaborative, and cumulative process involving all graduate faculty. Success in individual coursework does not warranty success in summative reviews. Feedback from End of Semester Graduate Reviews may or may not be reflected in the semester grade.

GRADUATE REVIEWS

End of Semester Graduate Reviews, 18-Hour Reviews and Thesis activities will take place at the end of each semester as the following outline shows:

FALL SEMESTER

- End of Semester Reviews (All Graduate Studio Students)

SPRING SEMESTER

- End of Semester Reviews (All First & Second-Year Students)

- 18-Hour Reviews (All First-Year Students)

- Thesis Exhibition/Gallery Talk/Oral Exams (All Third-Year Students)

END OF SEMESTER REVIEWS

The End of Semester Review (ESR) is open to the public and may include undergraduate students and others who are invited by the graduate faculty to attend. An outside reviewer is often invited to serve as a Visiting Critic.

One week prior to the scheduled ESR each graduate student will submit an artist statement that addresses their current work to an online folder provided by the Graduate Director for sharing with the graduate faculty and other ESR attendees. It should have a heading listing the student's name, program year, and a title related to the content. If time-based material is to be submitted to the faculty for advance review (such as a video that requires additional time to review), this work should be titled and submitted as well.

The artist statement submitted as part of the end of the End of Semester Review should focus on the work being presented to the faculty during the review.

The written statement should avoid jargon and should strive to illuminate and clarify the working methods, ideas, and intent of the work. Students should consult with the ART 600 and 601 professors and their advisor as they prepare their statement.

The actual length of the written statement is secondary to the goal of guiding those reading the statement towards a more meaningful understanding of what is being attempted. Students are strongly encouraged to write only what is necessary to effectively communicate the principal ideas motivating their work and its connection to historical or contemporary precedents.

Participating students will formally present their work for ten minutes followed by 20 minutes of Q & A and discussion with the group. All graduate students will attend all discussions along with the participating graduate faculty. The faculty and audience will fill out comment forms for each student, and a copy of the compiled feedback will be shared with the student, their advisor, and the semester ART 600 and 601 instructors for discussion and consideration.

MFA ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY

MFA 18-HOUR REVIEW PROCESS

During the semester in which the student completes eighteen hours in the MFA program, the student must apply in writing to the Graduate Program Director to request continuance in the program and to ask that an 18-Hour Review be arranged. The 18-Hour Review will take place on the same day as ESR or next business day during the Spring Semester. It is open to participation by all SADAH graduate faculty, but only graduate studio faculty will vote on a student's continuance in the program.

The student will prepare an overview of work from the year; all work may be included in the earlier ESR presentation or additional work can be added for the 18-Hour Review. The student will begin with a summary of what they have done their first year, and this will be followed by an intensive discussion with faculty. After the presentation/discussion is finished, the student will be excused so the studio faculty can discuss and vote on the candidacy for continued admission. A positive majority decision is required to advance a student to candidacy. In the case of a tied vote, the Graduate Program Director will break the tie with a vote on the student's admission or denial of admission.

18-HOUR REVIEW STATEMENTS

As part of the 18-Hour Review process, students are required to share work completed during both the Fall and Spring semesters and to submit a written statement about their first-year progress to the graduate studio faculty. This should be submitted to the Graduate Program Director one week prior to the scheduled review and should expand upon the artist statement shared as part of ESR.

The expanded statement should address the student's perspective on their technical, expressive, and conceptual development over the past year spent in residence as an MFA student and should identify the student's perspective on their future purpose and artistic direction should they be approved for admission to candidacy for the MFA degree.

DECISION

The results of the graduate faculty vote will be tallied by the Graduate Program Director and the results will be shared confidentially with the participating faculty and student. A copy of the written summary and recommendation will be placed in the student's permanent academic folder kept in the SADAH administrative office.

APPEAL PROCESS

A student may successfully appeal a non-continuance decision made by the graduate faculty only if there has been a factual error in evaluating the student's studio work and/or academic record. Appeals must be made in writing within ten business days after being officially notified by the Graduate Program Director that the student is not being recommended for continuation. The appeal must be directed to the Graduate Program Director, who will forward it to the studio art faculty within two working days. After review, they will forward their findings and recommendation to the SADAH Academic Unit Head (AUH) within seven working days. The AUH will make the final determination about the student's eligibility for continuance in the graduate program.

STUDIO ART MFA

MFA THESIS WORK

MFA THESIS COMMITTEE SELECTION

The Thesis Committee must consist of at least three SADAH Graduate Faculty members with the background and interest necessary to evaluate the mastery of the student. The Committee Chair and at least one additional committee member must be from the graduate studio faculty. The committee may have up to five members, including additional graduate faculty from within or outside of SADAH, although the student should keep in mind that this larger group makes scheduling more difficult.

Faculty with Graduate Instructor status may be appointed to committees in addition to the required minimum number of Graduate Faculty members only when their expertise clearly qualifies them for appointment, and with the approval of the Dean of TGS.

Each MFA student will select a Thesis Chair in consultation with the Graduate Program Director and second advisor prior to making the invitation. If the selected faculty is chairing another committee or has other obligations that preclude taking on this role, they may decline; this is in the student's and their best interest. In this case the process will repeat until the Thesis Chair is in place.

The additional Thesis Committee Member selection is done in consultation with the Thesis Chair. The Thesis Chair will oversee and guide the Thesis process and serve as the student's advisor. The Graduate Director remains as an advisor for administrative purposes, but the Thesis Chair will replace the previous second advisor.

The SADAH Thesis Committee Selection form (see Appendix) must be submitted to the Graduate Director with original signatures from the Thesis Chair and at least two other Thesis Committee Members by mid-term of the first semester of the second year.

A full meeting of the Thesis Committee should take place, virtually or in person, the second semester of the second year before Spring Break. This meeting is to initiate dialogue about the student's progress and the upcoming thesis process of research and studio work.

MFA THESIS ENROLLMENT

Thesis enrollment is in Fall and Spring semesters of the third year. A final and official Thesis Committee Approval form found on the TGS website must be completed and submitted to TGS no later than the second week of the semester in which the student first registers for ART 700 Thesis. Note that this TGS form is different from the preliminary SADAH form submitted the prior year.

Thesis work for the Thesis Monograph, the Thesis Exhibition, and Thesis Gallery Talk will be completed under the direction of the Thesis Committee. The Thesis Committee will consult with one another and the student to construct a procedure for review of monograph drafts, discussion of the artwork being prepared for the Thesis Exhibition, and overall progress towards degree completion. at the beginning of the final semester. **A full meeting with the Thesis Committee must take place the first semester of the third year before Thanksgiving break.**

MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

The MFA candidate must produce an exhibition of artwork that demonstrates a professional level of accomplishment for an MFA Thesis Exhibition. All work included in the exhibition must have been produced while enrolled in the graduate program at JMU. The graduate student will prepare the exhibition in consultation with their Thesis Chair and their Thesis Committee to choose their highest quality work for exhibition and appropriate installation methods. Inadequate preparation and presentation of the artwork in the exhibition may prejudice the results of the Thesis evaluation and Oral Comprehensive Exam.

Students in the MFA program will have their Thesis Exhibition in the Duke Hall Gallery of Fine Art. The Thesis Exhibition must be scheduled a year in advance. Typically, one inclusive Thesis Exhibition highlighting the work of all graduating MFA candidates is held during the month of April.

The Gallery Director and Graduate Program Director will coordinate the exhibition schedule and general list of deadlines for the Thesis Exhibition. The student and their Thesis Committee will coordinate with The Gallery Director to schedule the opening reception, Gallery Talks, and Oral Comprehensive Exam.

Each work or installation displayed in the Thesis Exhibition must be digitally photographed, and labeled with the title, date, medium, and size for documentation and inclusion in the MFA Thesis Monograph.

MFA THESIS MONOGRAPH

The Thesis Monograph is a formal written statement that clarifies the student's work, its development, and its cultural and historical references. Images of work from the Thesis Exhibition should be represented and discussed along with any work-in-progress that is chosen for inclusion.

The final Thesis Monograph is deposited and fully indexed in JMU's Scholarly Commons, the institutional repository that is optimized for library search systems, Google, Google Scholar, and other search engines. It becomes a permanent record of the student's Thesis work and of the Thesis Chair and Committee who supported them.

SADAH requires The Chicago Manual of Style as a writing guide for the Thesis Monograph, found online.

The final Thesis Monograph must meet the format and deadlines for the Thesis/Dissertation Manual set forth by The Graduate School. All current guidelines and deadlines are on the TGS website. Students are encouraged to attend a TGS workshop or complete online Thesis Formatting training when nearing thesis submission. Students are also encouraged to work with a professional writing consultant at The University Writing Center on the first floor of the Student Success Center. Contact the center prior to scheduling an appointment for advice on a consultant who will be most knowledgeable about art and thesis writing.

During development of the Thesis Monograph, drafts should be typed and presented to the Thesis Committee members by the established deadlines. Students should also meet regularly with their Thesis Committee as a group to review their progress on their work and written statement. At least two such meetings should occur before the Oral Comprehensive Exam.

Regarding the length of the Thesis Monograph, each student should determine with their Thesis Committee the appropriate length of the monograph according to their style of expression. Examples of MFA Thesis monographs by previous graduate students are available online through the JMU library and may be consulted as models.

Questions which students may consider important in drafting their written thesis are:

- How does their artwork relate to contemporary issues found in art and/or society?
- What are their aesthetic interests?
- What is the general approach to creating artwork?
- How are the ideas translated into visual form and structure?
- How do they reflect upon and evaluate their development as an artist?

Students should keep in mind that while the Thesis Monograph is an individual, creative declaration just as are their artworks in the Thesis Exhibition are, clarity and coherence is essential.

MFA GALLERY TALK

Each graduating student will present a gallery talk that is open to all faculty and students. It should take place in the Duke Hall Gallery of Fine Art or other venue approved by the student's Thesis advisor during the Thesis Exhibition and before the Oral Comprehensive Exam. The gallery talk is completed in lieu of the graduating student's presentation of work during the Spring ESR.

The graduating student is responsible for scheduling the gallery talk with the SADAH Gallery Director. Every effort should be made to coordinate with other SADAH events and academic programming. SADAH will promote the Thesis Exhibition opening and gallery talk as part of the regular public relations calendar. The student is responsible for any additional advertising, such as posters or announcement cards.

MFA ORAL COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

The Thesis Committee will serve as the Examination Committee for the Oral Comprehensive that takes place during the Thesis Exhibition and after the Gallery Talk. The completed Thesis Monograph must be disseminated in advance to members of the Thesis Committee and brought to the Oral Comprehensive Exam. Signatures of approval on the final document will signify that all steps of the Thesis have been completed as required by the Thesis Chair and Thesis Committee; this also signifies that the candidate is moving forward for degree completion. The deadline for completing the Oral Comprehensive Examination is indicated on the TGS academic calendar. TGS must be contacted for an extension.

STUDIO ART MFA

The purpose of the Oral Comprehensive Examination is to assess the extent of the student's knowledge in the fields related to their MFA research. The exam will take the form of an oral review of the Thesis Exhibition, the Thesis Monograph, and the Gallery Talk. The exam will encompass a broad spectrum of issues related to the candidate's work, and thus goes beyond a simple "testing" of the student's previous course work, with a focus designed to appraise the student's readiness to become a professional artist.

If a student does not pass the Oral Comprehensive Exam, a student may request a re-examination to be administered within six months of the date of the original failure. Only one re-examination is allowed.

MFA THESIS EXHIBITION DOCUMENTATION

The Thesis Exhibition must be digitally documented for the final copy of the Thesis Monograph that will be submitted to the library for open access via JMU Scholarly Commons. Additionally, the Thesis Exhibition will be featured in an online and/ or printed MFA Thesis Catalog and archived on the SADAH website. Candidates are responsible for providing high quality images, written materials and other necessary information and documentation by the established deadlines.

MFA THESIS GRADING

A grade of S (Satisfactory) or U (Unsatisfactory) will be posted for ART 700 Thesis. The final semester Thesis grade will be entered after the thesis requirements are completed and the signed Thesis Monograph is submitted to TGS for final processing.

MFA GRADUATION APPLICATION

A properly approved Application for Graduate Degree must be submitted online no later than the deadline listed in the academic term in which the student plans to graduate. The student should initiate this process.

TGS requires the title of the candidate's Thesis Exhibition/ Monograph for the graduation program book that lists titles for all Thesis and Dissertations for terminal degrees. The title must be submitted to TGS in time for it to be printed.

A candidate for graduation must be classified as Unconditional by TGS. Candidacy also implies that the Thesis Exhibition, Gallery Talk, Oral Comprehensive Examination and Thesis Monograph will be successfully completed in the semester of graduation.

MFA GRADUATE COMMENCEMENT

The Graduate Commencement date and time will be announced at the beginning of Spring semester. Practice is required for MFA commencement participants, usually the day before or earlier the same day. This practice includes the MFA graduates and their Thesis Committee Chairs. The Graduate Program Director serves as a substitute if the Chair is not able to attend.

Each MFA graduate is individually hooded on stage by their Thesis Committee Chair and their name, the Thesis Chair's name, and the title of the thesis is read by the announcer, since this is a terminal degree. Non-terminal graduate degrees are also awarded at this event, but those students are awarded their degrees in groups like undergraduate commencement. This special, public hooding ceremony on stage is an honor for terminal degree recipients. All MFA recipients are strongly encouraged to attend to represent themselves and our program.

STUDIO ART MA

MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE

The Master of Arts with a concentration in Studio Art or Art Education requires a minimum of 30 credit hours.

MISSION

The mission for the MA in Art with a Studio Art Concentration is to support artistic growth beyond the level of the baccalaureate. Although the goals for the MA reflect those of the MFA, the MA degree is viewed as an option for study that does not result in a terminal degree in the visual arts.

GOALS

- To develop and improve artistic skills in two and three-dimensional art
- To promote the candidate's ability to develop ways of individual inquiry

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Candidates must meet the same admission requirements as candidates for the MFA degree.

The MA in Art with a Studio Art Concentration includes 15 hours of studio work, six hours of art history, three hours of Contemporary Art Theory and six hours of seminar credit. Near the end of the program of study, the candidate must produce an exhibition of their graduate artwork, a digital portfolio of the exhibition, and a written statement clarifying the student's work, its development, and its cultural and historical references. An Oral Comprehensive Examination, generally in conjunction with the exhibition and closely related to the written statement, will also be held. Up to nine hours of graduate transfer credit may be accepted toward the MA degree and must meet the same criteria as those accepted for the MFA degree. No more than six hours of transfer credit will be accepted in studio art.

MA IN STUDIO ART PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS	CREDIT HOURS
ART 601 Graduate Studio Practice	18
ART 593 Contemporary Art Theory	3
ARTH 572 Modern Art Since 1945	3
Art History Elective	3
ART 600 Graduate Integrative Seminar	6
TOTAL CREDIT HOURS	30

A program of study for the MA in Art, Studio Art degree must be approved by the student's advisor and Graduate Program Director immediately following acceptance into the program.

PROGRAMMING ATTENDANCE

To provide a broad background in contemporary art, MA students are required to attend the school's programming of exhibitions, lectures and art events that are scheduled for the graduate program, such as the Wampler Distinguished Professor and Encore Artist presentations.

STUDIO SPACE

Studio space will be assigned to MA in Art, Studio Arts students based on availability. The same criteria and rules apply for studio assignments as for MFA students.

