

MFA | FINE ARTS



Graduate Programs

The MFA Fine Arts program reflects

the diversity of New York's many art worlds. Together, the faculty and students form a community of established and emerging artists from various backgrounds who work across disciplines and modes of practice. We respect craft and form, but we also encourage an approach to art-making in which ideas or questions serve as points of departure for artistic processes that may lead in unforeseen directions. While some students remain committed to a single medium for the duration of their study, most of them experiment with multiple modes of production. In

addition to drawing, painting, printmaking and sculpture, students work in animation, digital art, installation, performance, photography, public projects, social practice, video and numerous other disciplines. Students in the MFA Fine Arts program have the freedom to reinvent themselves.

The close relationship between faculty and students gives students the confidence to take risks and to follow a personal course of intellectual and aesthetic investigation.

The MFA Fine Arts program attracts ambitious emerging artists from many countries and backgrounds. Collectively, they create a foundation for artistic growth that extends beyond graduation and becomes an ongoing platform of professional support.

Our main goals are to provide a stimulating and supportive environment in which students can thrive and develop as artists, to foster rigorous critical engagement with contemporary art and other cultural forms, and to produce a continuous conversation, through work as much as through words, about what we make, how we make it and why.

—Mark Tribe, chair

About the Program

MFA Fine Arts is a full-time, interdisciplinary graduate program in the practice of contemporary art. The normal course of study is two years of full-time enrollment. Our curriculum is designed to ensure that students form strong connections with faculty through multiple one-on-one meetings, usually in the student's studio. Each student selects a faculty mentor at the start of the program and may continue with the same mentor for the duration of the program. In group critiques, students develop their ability to receive critical feedback and to offer constructive criticism by describing, analyzing and evaluating the work of their peers. Students deepen their knowledge of contemporary art, theory and art history in elective seminars, and cultivate the skills necessary to build sustainable careers in professional development workshops. Fieldwork courses take students to artists' studios and galleries, and our weekly Talks course features lectures by artists, curators and art historians and presentations by our own students. The MFA Thesis includes an ambitious art project or body of work, a presentation and a catalog.

Each student is given a private studio with 24-hour access. MFA Fine Arts has an equipment library with cameras, lights, sound recorders, projectors, screens and other media gear used by students to make and show their work. Our media studio features Mac Pro workstations, a scanner and free

printing on large-format Epson inkjet printers. Students also have access to extensive digital fabrication resources—such as 3D printing, CNC routing, laser cutting and digital embroidery—at the Visible Futures Lab, in addition to many other facilities at SVA, including the Bio Art Lab, Printmaking Studio, RisoLAB and Sculpture Center.

Students are given multiple opportunities for professional exposure, including studio visits with visiting artists, curators and critics; open studios; curated exhibitions in SVA's galleries; and our annual MFA Thesis Exhibition. Many also exhibit their work off-campus in galleries and other venues. Students often work on campus at SVA's galleries, Sculpture Center, Library and Writing Resource Center. A number of them have found employment as assistants in artists' studios as well.

Degree candidates must successfully complete 60 credits, including all required courses, with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 (B). A residency of two academic years is required. Each student must complete a thesis project, a thesis catalog and a thesis presentation, and pass an annual review of work.



LaTonia Allen (MFA 2020) demonstrating *(t)here*, an installation by Ridhima Mukim (MFA 2019).

An Artist's Eclectic Journey

Yam Chew Oh's story is a testament to the idea that the path beyond an MFA is wide, open and eclectic. The possibilities are endless, and one should not be afraid to take some risks—who knows where they might end up? Yam Chew graduated from the MFA Fine Arts program in 2019; how he got there and where he went after illustrate this. ►



Yam Chew is currently teaching writing and literature to first-year students at SVA. He is keen on helping those in his class improve their critical thinking through argumentation and persuasion with a focus on critical theory. Yam Chew finds that being a practicing artist helps him relate to his students. He considers teaching as a part of his artistic practice: “It so happens that I’m also an artist, so I can relate to you,” he often tells them.

His experience in the MFA program at SVA was both inspiring and challenging: “The two years were intense in a crazy city like New York, but that was invigorating to me.” It remains as “one of the best things [he’s] ever done for [himself] in so many years.” Not only did it allow him to look very closely at himself and his practice, but it also allowed him to deepen it.

Yam Chew has always had a passion for writing—he publishes widely and variedly—and also serves as a strategic development fellow at Asia Contemporary Art Week in the curatorial and educational platforms.

Before coming to the MFA Fine Arts program at SVA, Yam Chew had quite a journey: he spent his formative years in a few of the now-extinct villages of Singapore, majored in human geography and Southeast Asian studies, and had an 18-year established career in international public relations. He led a completely different life until he reached a point where he decided to dedicate more attention to being an artist. It coincided with a move to Baltimore, prior to which he was living and working in London. There he discovered the Maryland Institute College of Art, to which he applied and where he completed a post-baccalaureate certificate in fine art. From there on, everything changed.

Yam Chew felt an incredible urge to pursue a career in the arts: “Something just

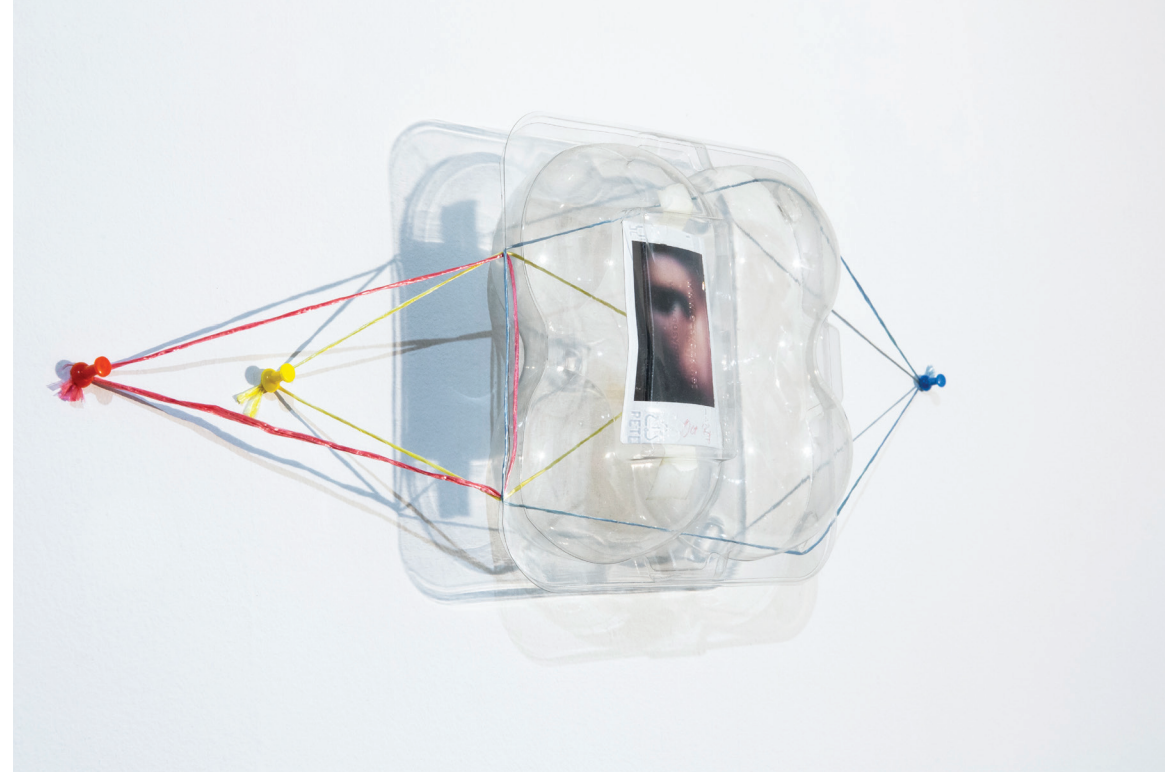
exploded; it was as if someone had a key to my heart somewhere and opened a door where everything that’s been repressed for years came out.” That’s when Yam Chew had an “unraveling,” as he calls it, which struck the core of his being and his identity. He waited a year after completing his program at MICA to see if he should commit to and pursue this path. The desire to be in the arts was too strong to deny, and Yam Chew felt the need to honor that avenue by giving it a real chance. He gave up a very successful corporate trajectory and applied to the MFA Fine Arts program at SVA. Yam Chew wanted to accomplish two goals: the first was to deepen his practice and engagement with the arts, and the second was to teach.

Beyond expanding his knowledge in the arts and his practice, one of the most important aspects of the MFA program was building a community. Yam Chew made amazing friends in the program, even though he was older than most MFA students. He suddenly found himself surrounded by a great group of people that he truly bonded with. He believes that it’s the environment at SVA that allowed for that.

How did he end up a teacher? His years of studying fine arts rekindled his passion for teaching. Yam Chew was influenced by many of the educators in his life, and his passion for being one had followed him throughout his studies. He sees it as a way to “pay it forward,” to pass on to the next generation all the wisdom that his teachers have passed on to him.

OPPOSITE, TOP: *The time bender* (detail), 2018, used fruit packaging, Instax photo, artist tape, raffia string and pins, 19 1/2 x 7 1/2 x 3 6/8”.

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM: *You’ve also been naughty lately!*, 2018, found wooden block and sculpture, LED light strip, used air bubble bag and plastic bag and screw, approximately 38 x 12 6/8 x 15 7/8” (left), approximately 12 x 12 x 1 6/8” (right).



Curriculum/ Sample Program

FIRST YEAR/FALL	CREDITS
Crit I	3
Mentorship I	3
Colloquium	3
Studio I	1
Talks	2
Seminars or Workshops	3
FIRST YEAR/SPRING	
Crit II	3
Mentorship II	3
Studio II	1
Talks	2
Seminars or Workshops	6
SECOND YEAR/FALL	
Crit III	3
Mentorship III	3
Studio III	1
Talks	2
Seminars or Workshops	6
SECOND YEAR/SPRING	
Crit IV	3
Mentorship IV	3
Studio IV	1
Talks	2
Seminars or Workshops	3
Thesis	3

OPPOSITE: Ferguson Amo (MFA 2019), *Contingent Identity Cards of The African Diaspora*.



Course Offerings

A sample of our course offerings follows. Note that seminar and workshop topics change from year to year; those listed below are intended as examples and may not be offered every year. A complete list of our courses can be found online at: sva.edu/mfafinearts/curriculum.

MENTORSHIP

This course provides a framework for mentorship. Mentors give students individual feedback on their work, guide them through the curriculum and offer advice on matters of professional development such as internships, employment, grants, residencies and exhibitions.

STUDIO

The studio plays a vital role in the program as a space for reflection, conversation and presentation. The Studio course gives students an additional opportunity to meet with faculty in one-on-one studio visits for individualized feedback and dialogue. It also provides a context for meetings with the chair and visiting artists, curators and critics.

CRITS

What do we talk about when we talk about art? In Crits, we create a shared language for discussing student work. This course presents each student with critical feedback from a group of peers and a faculty member. Students develop their ability to receive critical feedback and to offer constructive criticism by describing, analyzing and evaluating the work of their peers. The format and duration of each crit is determined by the instructor.

Owen Keough (MFA 2019), *Freshkills Place #1*.

TALKS

The Talks course, a weekly gathering of all students, begins each fall with short presentations: returning students show the work they made in their first year, while incoming students focus on the portfolios with which they applied to the program. These are followed by lectures and panel discussions featuring influential artists, curators, critics and scholars. The last few meetings each spring are devoted to thesis presentations. This course exposes students to the ideas and practices of contemporary artists and those who curate and write about their work. Equally important, it develops the students' ability to present and talk about their own work.

CRITICAL THEORY

What is critical theory's relationship to art? This course is designed to introduce MFA students to the critical issues at stake in contemporary artistic practice. The class is organized as a series of discussions around texts and artworks, with each session based on a different methodological perspective. We will look at the writings of artists alongside those of philosophers, theorists, critics and historians, paying particular attention to theoretical models that have been important to the art of the past half-century. Our goal is to build a philosophical foundation for understanding the terminology, ideas and issues of today's critical discourse. Topics include foundational ideas such as Marxism, psychoanalysis and post-structuralism; theories of the subject's relationship to race, gender and difference; and more recent sociopolitical debates around spectatorship, object-oriented philosophy and neuroscience. Our main goal is to learn to think through ideas—in conversation and writing—in ways that will deepen students' understanding of their own practice and its contemporary context.



SEMINARS

Seminars focus on specific issues in art history, theory and practice. Topics vary from year to year, and assignments may involve reading, writing, presentations, field trips and various forms of research, including creative projects. Field-work seminars take place almost entirely outside the classroom: students take advantage of New York City's unique cultural resources by visiting galleries, museums and artists' studios.

ART AFTER THE INTERNET

How do we produce, disseminate and exchange images? How does the Internet challenge art conventions? This seminar is focused on the troubled relation between contemporary art and the Internet. We will analyze dozens of artworks from the mid-'90s to today and stimulate group discussion around the latest critical issues in contemporary art and media theory. Special attention will be given to how the Internet is reshaping art: its production and distribution, and how we experience it. Versions, dispersion and collaboration versus originality, uniqueness and authorship in art are crucial elements for class discussion. We will examine works by artists who use digital media to produce art or, inversely, use conventional media to explore the digitized condition of contemporary life. Topics include postproduction, net art, surf clubs, post Internet, branding versus invisibility, meme-making, Internet ugly, image circulation, crowdsourcing, performing on the Internet, the dark net, data mining, surveillance and anonymity.



FIELDWORK: THE STUDIO VISIT

The artist's studio is regarded as sacred space: it's where the "magic" happens, and the work is produced. How artists approach their studio practices is eternally fascinating and can be varied, but there are surprising similarities and overlaps. In this course, we will have weekly visits with artists in their studios. The selected artists will range in experience, working methods, discipline and styles. The objective of the course is to experience the work where it's made, to gain access to a variety of artists and to learn about their respective practices.

SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART IN THE PUBLIC REALM

This seminar will explore socially engaged art practices that move beyond the conventions of traditional art spaces and into the public realm—where art as a social practice is grounded in its connection to alternative audiences and communities. Through readings, lectures, site visits and course assignments, students will learn about the processes and challenges in creating collaborative, interactive and community-based art projects in public spaces. We will also address the nuts and bolts of developing socially engaged public art projects, from site-specific research methodologies and community partnerships to writing proposals, assessing budgets and applying for grants. Throughout this seminar, students will develop and refine individual and/or collaborative projects that extend from their own studio practices.

Arantxa Rodríguez (MFA 2019), *Mind Observing Mind*.

WORKSHOPS

Workshops focus on skills and strategies for creating and taking advantage of professional opportunities. These courses are practical and participatory: students implement the skills they learn by, for example, shooting and editing documentation of a performance, applying for a grant or revamping their websites. The Internship course provides students with the chance to gain experience and develop professional skills in partnership with the SVA Career Development office.

WORKING WITH GALLERIES

This workshop will discuss in-depth the inner workings of the artist/gallery relationship. Participants will gain a comprehensive understanding of forging a meaningful and long-lasting gallery relationship. Artists will learn how to research and identify appropriate galleries, introduce their work to gallerists and conduct studio visits. Representation, sales, exhibition logistics, art fairs, and much more will also be covered.

ARTIST AS CATALYST

This workshop is for artists interested in extending their practices beyond the four walls of their studio and engaging in more expansive forms of support for their fellow artists and the greater arts community. This includes writing criticism, organizing exhibitions, running an exhibition space, participating in an artist collective and collaborating with an arts organization, as well as newer forms of proactive engagement with artists and the public. The primary motivation of an artist catalyst is to build a strong, sustainable artist community and facilitate a constructive discourse around art-making and ideas.

THE ARTIST AS EDUCATOR

Many artists teach as a complement to their studio practices, which keeps them closely connected to the artistic community while forcing them to stay sharp and current. This course will introduce students to the possibilities of teaching—including pre-K through K-12, higher ed and museum education—and will provide them with the skills necessary to identify and secure those positions. Time will be

spent on the unique and extensive process of applying to college teaching jobs, including the materials required, the process of review and the importance of each document you submit. Through in-class assignments and peer workshopping, students will leave the class with a teaching philosophy, a cover letter, a curriculum vitae and an artist statement for their teaching packet, as well as an outreach plan.

NETWORKING AND FRIENDING: A PROFESSIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY

How does an artist move a casual conversation that occurs at a gallery opening to an exchange of contact details and social media handles, a studio visit, a write-up in a respected media outlet or an exhibition? This workshop treats the cultivation of professional relationships strategically, as a critical tool for moving an artist's career forward. Students will be shown how to systematically develop their connections to people encountered through social media platforms and informal settings, and shape their social media profiles to become more visible to curators, gallerists and critics. The workshop will include both theoretical tactics and real-life opportunities to engage these action plans.

Shannon Stovall (MFA 2019), still from *Gold/Milk/Dresser/Lampshade*.



Notable Alumni

Katherine Bernhardt	Joe Fig	Michelle Lopez
Luca Buvoli	Asya Geisberg	Suzanne McClelland
Steve DeFrank	Kate Gilmore	Steve Mumford
Delano Dunn	Johan Grimonprez	Sarah Sze
Inka Essenhigh	Christine Sun Kim	Phoebe Washburn

Faculty

To learn more about the faculty members and to read their biographies, visit: sva.edu/mfinearts/faculty.

Mark Tribe, chair	Media Farzin	Suzanne Joelson
Dara Birnbaum	Kenji Fujita	Brad Kalhamer
Franklin Boyd	Rico Gatson	Baseera Khan
James Clark	Tsibi Geva	Sophie Koo
Mira Dayal	Thyrza Nichols Goodeve	Thomas Lanigan-Schmidt
Matthew Deleget	Johan Grimonprez	



Ferguson Amo (MFA 2019), *Dual Self*.

Omar Lopez-Chahoud	Sheila Pepe	James Siena
Sharon Loudon	William Powhida	Gary Stephan
Miguel Luciano	Mark Ramos	Julianne Swartz
Jodie Lyn-Kee-Chow	Aya Rodriguez-Izumi	Jennifer Wen Ma
Eva and Franco Mattes	Mika Rottenberg	
Suzanne McClelland	David Row	
Glendalys Medina	Nelson Santos	
Marilyn Minter	Dread Scott	
Laurel Nakadate	Accra Shepp	
Alix Pearlstein	Jean Shin	

Fine Arts: Residency in Contemporary Practices

- See sva.edu/mfinearts for up-to-date information
- 4 undergraduate studio credits per session
- \$3,000 per session/\$6,000 for both sessions

This intensive studio residency, hosted by the MFA Fine Arts Department at SVA, has been designed for artists working in both medium-specific and cross-platform modes of production that aim for the intersection of art and ideas. Taught by distinguished members of the MFA Fine Arts faculty, the residency fosters a culture of rigorous practice and contemporary thought.

Each artist will have use of a private studio in a location convenient to New York City's gallery districts, museums and alternative hubs for culture and technology. Daily studio visits from renowned faculty support an ongoing discourse on art and thought. While the focus of the residency is on content and critical discourse, work in a variety of media is supported and encouraged, including drawing,

painting, photography, performance, installation, digital and interactive media, electronics, sound and all modes of experimental practice. Artists committed to a single form or medium can expect to delve deeper into the material concerns of their practice. Residents are also invited to consider the sociopolitical potentiality of art practices situated outside the paradigm of individual authorship, via forays into social practice and public forms. Ultimately, the goal of the program is to create an inclusive space for artistic research, activated by the spirit of inquiry.

Faculty and guest lecturers have included Media Farzin, Mark Thomas Gibson, Kameelah Janan-Rasheed, Miguel Luciano, Jodie Lyn-Kee-Chow, Angel Nevarez, Mark Tribe and Caroline Woolard.



Bayin Jiang (MFA 2019), *I Become a Plant While Falling Asleep*.

Application Process

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

For a full list of application requirements and detailed instructions, visit:

sva.edu/grad/howtoapply

- Online Application and \$80 Application Fee: sva.edu/apply

DEADLINES

For information on application deadlines, visit: sva.edu/grad/timeline

IMPORTANT LINKS

- FAQ: sva.edu/grad/faq
- International students: sva.edu/grad/intl
- Tuition and fees: sva.edu/tuition
- Visit SVA: sva.edu/grad/visit

Contact Us

We encourage applicants to visit our department. Contact us directly to schedule a departmental tour or sign up to attend an Information Session. For more information and to register, go to: sva.edu/grad/visit.

If you have any questions about the application process, contact Graduate Admissions at 212.592.2107 or email: gradadmissions@sva.edu.

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Site: sva.edu/mfafinearts

Department site: mfafinearts.sva.edu

“I loved SVA immediately. It was the rawness, youngness and positivity. It was like a rough diamond. I wanted to be part of the bigger world.”

—Hrafnhildur Arnardóttir (MFA 1996)

ACCREDITATION

The School of Visual Arts has been authorized by the New York State Board of Regents (www.highered.nysed.gov) to confer the degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts on graduates of programs in Advertising; Animation; Comics; Computer Art, Computer Animation and Visual Effects; Design; Film; Fine Arts; Illustration; Interior Design; Photography and Video; Visual and Critical Studies; and to confer the degree of Master of Arts on graduates of programs in Art Education; Curatorial Practice; Design Research, Writing and Criticism; and to confer the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching on graduates of the program in Art Education; and to confer the degree of Master of Fine Arts on graduates of programs in Art Practice; Computer Arts; Design; Design for Social Innovation; Fine Arts; Illustration as Visual Essay; Interaction Design; Photography, Video and Related Media; Products of Design; Social Documentary Film; Visual Narrative; and to confer the degree of Master of Professional Studies on graduates of programs in Art Therapy; Branding; Digital Photography; Directing; Fashion Photography.

The School of Visual Arts is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (msche.org), 1007 North Orange Street, 4th Floor, MB #166, Wilmington, DE 19801, 267-284-5011. The Commission on Higher Education is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council on Higher Education Accreditation.

The Interior Design program leading to the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Interior Design is accredited by the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (accredit-id.org), 206 Grandville Avenue, Suite 305, Grand Rapids, MI, 49503-4014.

The School of Visual Arts' Department of Art Education is a member in good standing of the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP), a national accrediting organization recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). The School of Visual Arts' Department of Art Education is currently pursuing accreditation of its educator preparation programs under the AAQEP standards with an anticipated quality assurance review in fall 2023. Pursuant to Section 52.21 of the

Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, the educator preparation programs offered by the School of Visual Arts are therefore considered to be continuously accredited for purposes of meeting the New York State requirement that all such programs maintain continuous accreditation. The School of Visual Arts' Master of Arts in Teaching in Art Education program was previously accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).

The Master of Professional Studies in Art Therapy degree program is approved by the American Art Therapy Association, Inc., and as such meets the Education Standards of the art therapy profession.

CREDITS

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COVER: Dana Robinson (MFA 2019), *Fashion Fair, Another Fine Product from Ebony*.

School of Visual Arts

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