**MFA THESIS INFORMATION PACKET, 2015-16**

-- Committees, Outlines, The Written Thesis, Exhibition and Submission of Requirements
Shona Macdonald, Graduate Program Director, Art.

**IMPORTANT DEADLINES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>_forms/papers due</th>
<th>date due in the art office room 128 sab (your responsibility)</th>
<th>date due in grad school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>committee request form</td>
<td>October 24th</td>
<td>Immediately following-in case of problems with committee (we forward)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thesis outline</td>
<td>November 18th</td>
<td>Immediately following- at least 4 months prior to defense (we forward)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>date of oral defense</td>
<td>As soon as you know</td>
<td>ASAP-in case you need an extension of deadline (we forward)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>degree eligibility form</td>
<td>April 8th –along with a copy of your unofficial transcript from spire</td>
<td>April 15th (we forward)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>copies of thesis before orals (typed hard copy and email version)</td>
<td>e-version due to committee and GPD 3 weeks before orals</td>
<td>N/A- unless you're having thesis reviewed in advance by asking questions for 5-10 minutes at their window. You can pick up formatting information there or go online to the grad school website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>final thesis</td>
<td>One copy due 2 weeks after your orals, along with a copy of your signature page</td>
<td>Electronic copy due 2 weeks after your orals, along with 2 original signature pages (you forward)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE THESIS COMMITTEE

Size & Composition
A chair plus two members is both the minimum and the recommended size of a thesis committee. The manageable, reasonable maximum limit is four. All members must be graduate faculty. The chair and at least one member must be from the Art Department.

You should be working with all of your committee members on a regular, biweekly basis for the duration of your thesis project. Set up a meeting schedule with each member at the beginning of the semester. You must also set up at least one group committee meeting per semester so all the members of the committee and yourself are on the same page.

Approval of the thesis outline, the work, the exhibition, and the oral defense rests with the thesis committee. The Chair naturally assumes primary responsibility for first edit of the thesis paper, helps edit and select works for the final show and offers installation advice, writes letters of recommendations, provides guidance regarding jobs/residencies etc.

Other College / University: Faculty from the other Five Colleges, or from some other college, can serve as full committee members. An extra bit of red tape is required, however: a resume is to be given to the Graduate Director. Such faculty must first be approved by the Graduate School and are appointed to committees on an individual basis.

Adjunct & Consultants: Infrequent categories for MFAs, generally more applicable to grad Design students or to those in the hard or social sciences. (Resumes are needed to appoint these individuals.)
• Adjunct Faculty in this context means those who are teaching in our department but are not necessarily faculty at this campus (or any other). Adjunct faculty can be full committee members, but they cannot chair a committee.
• Consultants, on the other hand, are usually professionals in the field who are not faculty anywhere. For Studio Arts, a “consultant” could be a professional artist. Consulting members do not have to be graduate faculty and do not have to attend the defense, but they are not full, voting members. (The “vote” at the defense – re whether the student passes – has to be unanimous.)

See attached form for committee formation. The deadline for handing it in to the Art Office is October 24th.
**SAMPLE THESIS COMMITTEE FORM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MFA Candidate</th>
<th>(name)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.D.#</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 1. __________________________ | __________________________ |
| Chair’s Name—printed/typed | Chair’s signature |

| 2. __________________________ | __________________________ |
| Member’s Name—printed/typed | Member’s signature |

| 3. __________________________ | __________________________ |
| Member’s Name—printed/typed | Member’s signature |

| 4. __________________________ | __________________________ |
| Member’s Name—printed/typed | Member’s signature |

* (optional member)
After you turn in the form with signatures to the Art Department, MFA Graduate Director, another memo goes to the Grad School. Your committee is not officially formed until the Grad School approves it and sends appointing letters to confirm.

THE THESIS OUTLINE

Approval
Outlines must first be approved by each member of your committee, starting with the chair. After all members have signed, get the signatures of the Graduate Program Director and the Department Chair. Have the appropriate number of copies made and distribute as following: the ORIGINAL goes to the Graduate School / Office of Degree Requirements (534 Goodell). One copy is required for the Art Department, and you also need one copy each for your committee members – and one for yourself.

- Approving signatures must be original on the Grad School’s copy, in black ink.
- YOU are responsible for getting all the signatures and for getting the outline (original) to Degree Requirements, 534 Goodell.

The approval / signature page of your outline must be in the format shown on samples(s), although spacing, [under-]line length, and margins may vary. Otherwise, the outline is relatively simple and is not bound by the precise format requirements that the Grad School has for the thesis itself.

Form & Content
The outline, as outlines are supposed to be, is intended to briefly describe what your thesis will involve. You can use the standard outline format shown in the “Suggestions for” and the John Smith sample outlines or you can use some other format – as long as it falls within the acceptable range. (Consult your committee and / or books that deal with the how-to’s of research papers.)

- intent (as in statement of)
- elaboration on your intent, thesis work, etc.
- summation / conclusion
- technical information
- oral defense
- if doing an installation – diagram or floor plan of exhibit (separate attachment)

Your “intent” should be clearly stated, while the rest of the outline can be regarded as “work in progress”. Your topic may not be as easily outlined, defined, or straightforwardly presented as the sample one, but the example should be useful as a guide.
SAMPLE THESIS OUTLINE

[“Skeleton” Title/Approval Page for Thesis Outline]

TITLE

_____________________________________________________

A Thesis Proposal Presented

By

NAME IN FULL

Approved as to style and content by:

_____________________________________________________
[Chair’s name – typed]

_____________________________________________________
[Member’s name – typed]

_____________________________________________________
[Member’s name – typed]

_____________________________________________________
[Graduate Director’s name typed]
SUGGESTIONS FOR THESIS OUTLINE
[The format below is for a strictly hypothetical outline, e.g. John Smith’s on next page]

I. Intent [or wording to show that you are making a statement about your thesis/work]
   A. [Break down and expand your statement-of-intent.]
      1.
      2.
      a.
      b.
      c.

F. Summation/Conclusion  [In the written thesis this will be your evaluation or conclusions about the work in your thesis exhibit.]

II. Technical Information
   A. [Describe materials used in your work so generations of students to come can gain from your thesis.]
   B. [Key your information to the numbered color slides.]

III. Presentation
   A. One-person exhibition – give location
   B. Black & white photo showing you at work on your project
   C. CD or DVD of each piece in thesis exhibition
   D. One completed thesis book for the Art Department, one electronic copy to the Graduate School

IV. Oral Defense

[Sample Title/Approval Page of Outline – with Fictionalized Faculty]
EXPLORING A RESTRICTIVE THEME IN SCULPTURE

A Thesis Proposal presented

by

Art Welldon

Approved as to style and content by:

_______________________________
Absolutely Fiction, Chair

_______________________________
Forever Digital, Member

_______________________________
Mesmerizing Screens, Member

_______________________________
Anne Image, Member

_______________________________
Dee Construction, Member

Mission Impossible
Director of Graduate Programs
Department of Art, Architecture, and Art History

Will N. Dure, Chair
Department of Art, Architecture, and Art History

[sample outline]

John Smith
Thesis Outline
EXPLORING A RESTRICTIVE THEME IN SCULPTURE

I. Intent: Creating the illusion of weightlessness through shape, balance, material, surface, and presentation.

   A. Shape: Segmented blade forms derived from Aerodynamic shapes – i.e. airplane wings.
   
   B. Balance: Sculpture resting on thin edges and corners, moving along, working against the floor plane, and lifting into space.
   
   C. Material: Undisguised use of material and handicraft process contrasted with streamlined industrial form in the manner of industrial mock-up.
   
   D. Surface: Illusionistic “painterly” surface achieved through grain, joining patterns, reflections, and color.
   
   E. Presentation: Low pedestals with clean reflecting surfaces to exaggerate the illusion of weightlessness.
   
   F. Summation

II. Technical Information

   A. Laminated wood: carved, sanded, waxed.
   
   B. Bronze: built in wax, cast in bronze, and polished to a high gloss.

III. Presentation

   A. One-person exhibition on campus
   
   B. One or more black and white photos (showing me at work on my project.
   
   C. CD or DVD of each project in thesis exhibition
   
   D. One completed thesis book for the Art Department, one electronic copy to the Graduate School

IV. Thesis/Oral Defense
THE MFA THESIS EXHIBITION:
OPENING, LOCATIONS and PRESS

Although MFAs traditionally exhibit in Herter, Student Union, and Hampden, you are not restricted to these UMass campus galleries for your MFA thesis show. Alternative locations have included a student’s studio (Keller, 1981), private galleries in the Amherst-Northampton area (Graves, 1990), and Eastworks (Saphire, Kling, Painting, 2015). However, life may be simpler if you choose one of the campus galleries. If you choose an off-campus gallery site, you need to arrange that it will be open and available to the public for one week.

Receptions & Press
As you probably would expect, every gallery has its own policy about hosting exhibitions, e.g. publicity, openings, refreshments. Each student, working with his/her respective gallery, is basically responsible for the exhibition costs, publicity & posters, and refreshments for the reception. You may apply for a grant from the Arts Council to help defray costs for the exhibition.

Postcards
Always be sure to acknowledge any funding sources. This is usually done with words such as “sponsored by…”, “Supported by (or in part by)…” or wording to that effect at the bottom of your poster, in small print.

The words “MFA Thesis Exhibition” must appear on the final card (do not use quotation marks).

You might want to hang on to copies of your posters or announcement cards – they’re useful when submitting grant proposals, applying for jobs, or proposing exhibitions.
THE DEGREE ELIGIBILITY FORM

• Download the form from the graduate school website.

• The form must be TYPED. You can now type it online and print it out.

• Section A: You can fill out on your own.

• Section B: Get the information from Degree Requirements.

• Section C: Information is available from your file at Graduate Records. Download an unofficial “transcript” from “SPIRE”. Copy all credit, grade, course and semester information for the courses you are using towards graduation credit.

• Transfer credit (must be already officially approved!) gets listed below the regular Section C – as indicated at the bottom of the form.

• More than 60 credits? If you have and have fulfilled all course requirements, anything beyond those credits need not be listed—e.g., superfluous courses with a less-than desirable grade or “Inc.”

• Section D, Part I: Be sure to sign your name on the opposite side of the form.

• Bring the form to Room 128 (Art Department Office), along with a copy of your unofficial transcript for verification. This must be done at least 2 weeks before the Grad School’s deadline, or April 1st. The Graduate Director’s and Chair’s signatures will be obtained, and the form will be copied to your file and the original will be delivered to Degree Requirements.
THE WRITTEN THESIS

*Guidelines for Master’s Theses and Doctoral Dissertations* is the rule for your written thesis when it comes to form and format. The Graduate School is very strict on these format requirements.

Get the Guidelines from the Graduate School Website at www.umass.edu/gradschool.

The CD or DVD, image identification, photo, and technical information are uniquely Art Department requirements. The pages that follow are intended to explain these exceptions, and not to restate what is already in the Guidelines.

Thesis books from the inception of the MFA Program are available in 351 FAC (and are not to be removed from that office). Please remember that these are to be used as references only and that the guidelines from the Graduate School are the only ones to be followed. Digital versions can be downloaded from the Umass library archive. Call the circulation department for information on how to access these.

(In General)

A. Electronic Submission: You must submit your thesis electronically, unless otherwise arranged with the Graduate School, but you’ll still need a hard copy for the Art Department, and hard copies of your signature pages. Consult the Thesis Guidelines on the Graduate School’s website.

Paper: Please use 20 lb. ACID-FREE, Ph neutral, no holes or lines. There is no flexibility in these requirements. Again, consult the Guidelines.

C. Number of Copies: You will need two copies of your complete thesis: one electronic copy for the Graduate School, and one hard copy for the Art Department, and you should have one for yourself as well.

D. Graduate School Copy One electronic copy goes to the Graduate School. Again, consult the Guidelines. Please remember that you will still need to have a hard copy of your signature page with original signatures as noted below.

* The Graduate School’s copy of your signature page must have original signatures. Most thesis candidates find it easiest to have three “original” signature pages instead of making copies.

*Your copies of your thesis, whether electronic or hard copy, must contain the required CD or DVD images, and photograph of the artist.

*FYI: The Grad School copy will become available for viewing at the library through Scholarworks.

E. Art Department Copy: Submit in a 3-ring, black, stiff-cover notebook with clear plastic sheets to enclose the paper sheets of the book’s text (the Art Department’s copy gets looked at/handled the most, so plastic sheets will be necessary to preserve your written thesis for posterity). We provide the label for our copy of your thesis book.
F. Signatures: After the oral defense, the thesis committee, beginning with the committee chair, should sign complete thesis book, and signature pages. Those pages should be submitted to the Graduate Director and then the Department Chair for their approval/signatures.

G. Chapters or Sections: The typical MFA thesis is so brief that sections make more sense than chapters. In fact, sections are preferred (also, the requirements for sections are looser than for chapters).

*HEADINGS* must be in all caps whether you use chapters or sections.

a) Sections
   * Each section begins on a new page.
   * Sections don’t need numbers, but it is OK to use them.
   * Every section must have a heading.
   * Do not use the word “section” in the heading.

b) Chapters
   * The word “CHAPTER” must appear with each chapter heading.
   * You cannot use just a number and a heading.
   * Each chapter begins on a new page

(Note: From now on we will refer only to sections.)

H. Pagination To play it safe, use the bottom-centered position for page numbers. This is a suggestion from the recent veterans of thesis writing – and from the Grad School.

I. Preliminary Thesis Check – Grad School Policy
The Grad school no longer does thorough checks on your thesis book prior to the April 15th deadline. They will, however, help with any questions you might have if you stop in at Degree Requirements at Goodell. Keep in mind that they are extremely busy during April and May.

J. Corrections/Revisions If and when you need to make corrections to your thesis to satisfy the Graduate School, you must make the necessary changes to the Art Department copy as well.
THE ORAL DEFENSE

• It is required.

• It is held during/at your thesis exhibition. You are responsible to schedule the orals defense date during the week of your show. It must be held at the location of your show. It is one hour in length.

• It is a general examination – not necessarily limited to the topic of the thesis, though certainly covering the work used in preparation for the MFA degree, and often based on the written thesis as well.

• It is conducted by your thesis committee of at least three members of the Graduate Faculty and the Graduate Director.

• All members of your committee and the Graduate Director must be present, otherwise the orals will have to be rescheduled. Proxies are not allowed by the Graduate School.

• A unanimous vote of the thesis committee is necessary for the student to pass the oral defense.

II. The oral defense is restricted to the student and the thesis committee. Exceptions to this policy will be considered on an individual basis, and at the initiation of the student. Approval for such requests must come from the Graduate Director, who will consult with the committee chair.

III. The student is responsible for scheduling a date and time agreed upon by all members of the committee, and notifying the main office of that date.

IV. At least a full week before the orals each member of the committee must have a copy of your written thesis – the final draft, typewritten, and an email version. Committee members should have seen earlier drafts and major revisions should have been done prior to this point. The Department expects to adhere strictly to this policy.

V. It is the Committee Chair’s responsibility to notify the Graduate Director as to whether or not the candidate has passed the oral defense. 128 SAB provides the committee chair with the necessary form. This form, once returned to 128 SAB, generates one of the required pieces that goes to the Grad School for the student’s graduation.

VI. The Committee Chair (other than the student him or herself) bears the major responsibility for the student’s thesis and related matters.
THE COMPLETE THESIS BOOK

The complete thesis book should contain:

1. Title Page
2. Approval/Signature
3. Acknowledgement Page – optional
4. Quotation Page – optional
5. Preface – optional
6. Table of Contents
7. Introduction – optional
8. Main Body/Text
9. Summation/Conclusion
10. Technical Information Page(s)
11. Floor Plan (if work is installation oriented)
12. Bibliography
13. Photo of Artist-at-Work
14. Image Identification Sheet
15. CD or DVD

All material contained in a 1”, black, 3-ring binder, paper pages contained in plastic sleeves.

- **Title Page**  Self-explanatory (refer to sample).
- **Signature Page** (refer to sample.)
  * Both of the Grad School copies must have original signatures.
  * The Graduate Director’s name must be listed and the department chair’s name (this is a departure from the normal Grad School requirements).
- **Acknowledgements, Dedications, etc.** are preliminary pages and are
  * Numbered with small roman numerals.
• Quotation Page  Again, totally optional, and would be on a separate page (this is not the same as having quotations at the beginning of a regular section.)  
  * Number similar to Acknowledgement page with small, roman numerals.

• Preface  Also purely optional, and a preliminary page.  
  * Small, roman numerals.

• Table of Contents  (Required!) As of the acknowledgement, or other preliminary pages – basically everything that comes after the title and signature pages – all sections, etc. must be listed in the table of contents, including photo and slide pages.

• Introduction  (Optional) If you are using sections, it is a section. If you are using chapters, it is a chapter. And regardless of whether you use sections or chapters:  
  * The Intro always begins on page 1.  
  * The word “INTRODUCTION” must be all caps.

• Main Body/Text  This may comprise only one section if your thesis is really short, but usually there is more than one section/chapter to it.  
  * This section or sections must have a title.

• Summation (or Conclusion)  Should be written in the past tense where applicable. In a general way you should restate the proposed project (e.g. the Intent of your thesis outline), telling what you did, and making an evaluation or drawing a conclusion about it.  
  * Should be titled “SUMMATION” (or “CONCLUSION”).  
  * Is a section unto itself.

• Technical Information  
  * Should be titled “TECHNICAL INFORMATION.”  
  * Is a separate section.

• Floor Plan  If your thesis work is primarily installation, or has elements that are installation-oriented, then you must include a diagram or floor plan of your work in the gallery setting (documentation provided by your slides may not be sufficient for installation-type situations.) You can obtain layout drawings from the galleries and then superimpose your work. If you have questions, consult with the Graduate Director.

• Bibliography (if any)

• Photo of Artist at Work  Must be black and white, mounted photo or color laser print and must show you working on the subject of your thesis.  
  * Size: 5”x7” is both the minimum and the recommended size to avoid margin and formatting problems (8x10 is the maximum size – and does tend to result in those margin, etc. problems)  
  * Must be mounted on your regular thesis paper (see p.11)  
  * Number the photo page as a regular page.

• Image Identification Page  List your images by number with:  
  *Title, dimensions, media and date.  
  *Should be titled “IMAGE IDENTIFICATION.”  
  * Be sure this page conforms to format requirements.
• Images CD/DVD

Still Works / Images:
Work must be on a CD-R (standard size, not mini-disc) or DVD-R in JPEG FORMAT ONLY, sized at a maximum of 1280 x 1024 pixels (maximum 4 megabytes) for viewing on a computer via video projection. Each piece must be numbered (corresponding to the order of viewing) and include title and your name. Please DO NOT submit PowerPoint or Keynote presentations. You must also include a printed Digital Inventory, see description below.

Time Based Works:
QuickTime or DVD formatted videos can be a compilation of various works but the total running time cannot exceed ten minutes per video. Genres appropriate to video documentation include video art, performance, and animation, NOT documentation of sculptures or exhibitions. We do not accept VHS tapes. You must also include a printed Digital Inventory, see description below.

• A Digital Inventory:
Include a listing of the work in order of viewing, along with the file name, dimensions, date of work, medium, title and a thumbnail sized image, approximately 600 x 600 pixels, print resolution at 300 dpi. This inventory of works will be a word file(.doc).
Sample Title Page

TITLE OF THESIS

A Thesis Presented

By

SAMANTHA S. STUDENT

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Month*   Year

Department of Art, Architecture, and Art History

[*The month should be the actual month in which the degree will be officially awarded – February, May, or September.]
Sample Signatory Page

TITLE OF THESIS

A Thesis Presented

By

SAMANTHA S. STUDENT

Approved as to style and content by:

______________________________________________________
Name Typed, Chair

______________________________________________________
Name Typed, Member

______________________________________________________
Name Typed, Member

Name Typed, Graduate Program Director
Department of Art

______________________________________________________
Alexis Kuhr, Department Chair
Department of Art