

THE FIELD

The course of study in the Department of Art prepares students to become creative problem solvers, self-directed makers, and critical visual thinkers. The field demands (and our department promotes) the ability to be comfortable in situations where there are no clear answers and to examine questions from new perspectives. Students majoring in art balance their understanding of our increasingly digital world with a tactile and interpersonal intelligence and cultivate a mind that can engage with people, ideas, images, and things.

Studio art encompasses a wide range of media, and our students' work takes many forms: painting, drawing, sculpture, print media, video, animation, performance, and socially engaged artworks, to name a few.

Reflecting current practice, art in the department is defined as much by the issues it engages with as by the medium in which it is executed. The department seeks to educate artists who are intellectually flexible as well as technically proficient—students familiar with the intricacies of their primary media, but also able to pursue their ideas across media as their interests evolve.

A minor in art is available.

THE MAJOR

Majoring in art can lead to a bachelor of arts (BA) or a bachelor of fine art (BFA). The BA program provides a broad education in all facets of the liberal arts as well as a solid foundation in a range of art media. Students pursuing the BA have ample opportunity to augment their studies with a range of minors and double majors. To complete the BA, students must fulfill the foreign language and other requirements of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts, which include General Education courses in addition to departmental requirements.

The BFA is an intensive, professionally oriented degree in visual art intended for students pursuing careers in the fine arts. The BFA degree offers seven disciplines: animation, art education, ceramics, intermedia, painting, print media, and sculpture. BFA candidates in the six studio disciplines may opt to complete their art studies with a six-credit BFA thesis project in their senior year. The art education discipline combines in-depth coursework in studio art, art history, art education, and education. Field experiences in art education settings are an integral component of the program, including student teaching in both elementary and secondary school settings during the senior year. BFA majors in art education may pursue elementary and secondary visual arts licensure for Massachusetts, with reciprocity for teaching in other states.

All students completing the BFA degree must meet General Education course requirements and departmental requirements, but are exempt from the foreign language requirement.

First-year students take courses in the Art Foundations Program, designed to introduce students to the materials, techniques, language, and concepts of art. These courses aim to keep a healthy balance among formal concepts, hands-on skills, imagination, and critical thinking. They are also required to take a minimum of four art history courses.

Upon successful completion of the Foundations Program, BFA students select an area of concentration and are eligible to take upper-level art courses. BA students do not elect a discipline, but instead enroll in intermediate and advanced courses of their choice.

Art students are encouraged to take advantage of course offerings and internships beyond the department, including domestic and foreign exchanges. The Five College Consortium offers rich opportunities for expansive study in the arts.

ADMISSION TO THE MAJOR

Applicants with strong visual arts backgrounds can apply to the program when they apply to the university. UMass Amherst students in other majors (or exploratory track) can apply to the major while taking foundations-level studios and art history surveys. Admission to the major requires a successful portfolio review. For portfolio requirements and application deadlines, visit the Admissions section of our website (umass.edu/art).

Massachusetts community college graduates who have already completed the requisite art and art history courses need not submit a portfolio. If you believe you fall into this category, please contact a transfer specialist in the UMass Amherst Office of Admissions (mail@admissions.umass.edu, 413-545-0222).

HONORS

Contact the departmental honors coordinator for information on how to pursue honors opportunities within the major.

STUDY ABROAD

Majors are encouraged to study abroad. Students should contact the International Programs Office (413-545-2710, umass.edu/ipo) and work with their academic advisor to choose the appropriate courses in preparation.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Both the BFA and BA in studio arts provide an excellent foundation for a career in the arts. Graduates go on to careers as artists, art educators, designers, and makers of all kinds. Many graduates continue to work in their specific areas of concentration as painters, sculptors, animators, etc. A fine arts studio degree also prepares students for excellent opportunities in related areas, such as illustration, advertising, communications, arts administration, art therapy, custom fabrication, and scenic arts. The major is also an excellent foundation for graduate study in the visual arts (MFA).

Students who concentrate in art education are qualified to apply for certification in teaching at the elementary or secondary level. These graduates also teach in the education departments of museums and in community art programs. They often become art supervisors through additional training at the graduate level. In addition, they enroll in advanced degree programs (MA, EdD, or PhD) and develop and refine skills in research to further their training in studio art, or choose to specialize in fields related to art education.

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND FINE ARTS

The humanities focus on human creativity, endeavor, and culture. The imaginative and creative arts—literary and performing—derive from life and teach about human behavior and constructs of social reality. The history of social, political, and economic systems illuminates and shapes the present and future. Students in the College of Humanities and Fine Arts are expected to broaden their perspectives on individual and cultural expression within their own and other societies, to understand the development and evolution of the discipline of study in relation to the culture from which it emanates, and to learn the methods by which knowledge in the discipline is gained.

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