

**MFA | PHOTOGRAPHY,**

**VIDEO**



**AND**

**RELATED MEDIA**



**School of Visual Arts**  
**Graduate Programs**

# Why get your MFA in Photography, Video and Related Media?

Because we are the lens and screen arts—both still and moving—graduate program.

Mastery of today's "vision machines" is the stuff of our professional practice. Our MFA program pushes the boundaries of lens and screen arts education by deeply exploring the techniques, history and expertise of image technologies. An internationally celebrated faculty actively works with students to develop contemporary and responsible creative initiatives in all aspects of the lens and screen arts—still and moving. These art forms include experimental, narrative, documentary, installation and conceptual art, tableau and real-world witness. The program utilizes the resources of New York City, which offers an invaluable network of experts that provide creative and professional support for students throughout their matriculation and long after graduation.

Emphasis is on the still and moving image as a multidisciplinary pursuit that encompasses science, arts and the humanities. Images are a significant matrix for our human encounters, judgements and inquiries. Lens artists must be engaged in the understanding, creation and management of not just how to make imagery, but also how to make relevant imagery to interpret a changing world. A visual education is essential to expanding ideas and to making notable contributions to our social and cultural worlds. Students in the program are encouraged to challenge their own assumptions as they engage in meaningful practices for themselves and their audiences. A remarkable roster of graduates flourishes as exhibiting artists, journalists, curators, scholars and educators. The MFA in Photography, Video and Related Media is the credential for the serious pursuit of the arts.

—Charles H. Traub, chair

# About the Program

The MFA in Photography, Video and Related Media program is dedicated to the creative practice of the lens-based arts. We encourage diversity in our student body and welcome applicants from a wide range of educational and professional backgrounds.

The program is designed for full-time study over a two- or three-year period. Candidates for the master of fine arts degree must complete at least 60 credits and all course requirements, maintain a 3.3 grade point average and produce a successful thesis project to be eligible for degree conferral. Students are approved to proceed to each successive level of study based on yearly faculty assessments.

Students personalize their program by choosing from a wide variety of electives. Certain courses in other SVA undergraduate or continuing education departments are also available as electives via the audit program. Fulbright, DAAD scholars, and other students on similar scholarships or grants are encouraged to apply.

## TWO-YEAR PROGRAM

Applicants accepted to the two-year program have met specific artistic standards and academic prerequisites for graduate study. The focus of the two-year curriculum is a required Master Critique course in each semester. Other first-year requirements include Studio: Imaging I and II as well as at least three other academic courses chosen out of four subject categories (historical perspectives, criticism and theory, studio

and contemporary issues). Students in the two-year program will take Thesis Forms I in the fall of their thesis (final) year and focus on completing the thesis in the spring during Thesis Project, Thesis Forms II and Thesis Project Presentation courses.

Entry to the second year is based on successful completion of all first-year requirements and a portfolio review.

## THREE-YEAR PROGRAM

The unparalleled three-year program is designed to give exceptional students with baccalaureate degrees in fields other than photography or video an opportunity to pursue the lens and screen arts at the graduate level. The first-year course of study allows students to engage in coursework such as history, theory and criticism as well as studio practice, which may not have been included in their undergraduate education. With the successful completion of the first year of the three-year program, students automatically continue on to the two-year MFA Photography, Video and Related Media program. These students are given the time and exposure to develop as fully matured artists and practitioners, and many of our most renowned graduates have matriculated in this manner. The curriculum is tailored particularly to those who have not concentrated on the lens arts during their undergraduate studies, adults interested in pursuing a career change and international students who may need additional support adapting to a new educational environment.

“The MFA Photo program at SVA illuminated my understanding of photography, and it opened the door for me to accomplish works that I’d never thought I could have done before.”

—Yi Hsuan Lai (MFA 2021)

Much of what we know about the culture in which we live in the 21st century is, for good and bad, the result of what is captured through the lens and displayed on the screen. The record of events and the stories we tell are abstractions, but the issues that create those narratives are very real. This MFA program, as a very diverse, multicultural community, embraces the responsibility of image-makers to highlight the need for change in our human relations and to find ways through creative practice toward a common humanity. We stand for freedom of expression, civil liberties and justice.



# Sharpening the Artist's Point of View: Studying the Historic Non-Western Lens-Based Object

One of the distinguishing elements of SVA's MFA Photography, Video and Related Media program is its emphasis on developing critical thinking skills. Underscoring this distinction is the belief that critical thinking is a tool necessary for artists to expand their ideas and make notable contributions to both social and cultural environments. Kunbi Oni, lecturer in the program's Historical Perspectives: Non-Western Practice course, believes critical thinking is not only a necessity to artists, but it is also essential to equip artists with a wider, sharper personal lens. In order to do so, artists must possess the ability to engage with their audiences in an inclusionary and historical context. ►





“I think history is fundamental. If you’re practicing something that stems from history, it enables you to maintain your veracity with the subject because there’s just so much for you to pull from,” explains Kunbi Oni, who is also one of two collections specialists in the Department of Drawings and Prints at The Museum of Modern Art. “Students are stepping into this long line of history and artists, and it’s really important that they make art history a part of what they produce.”

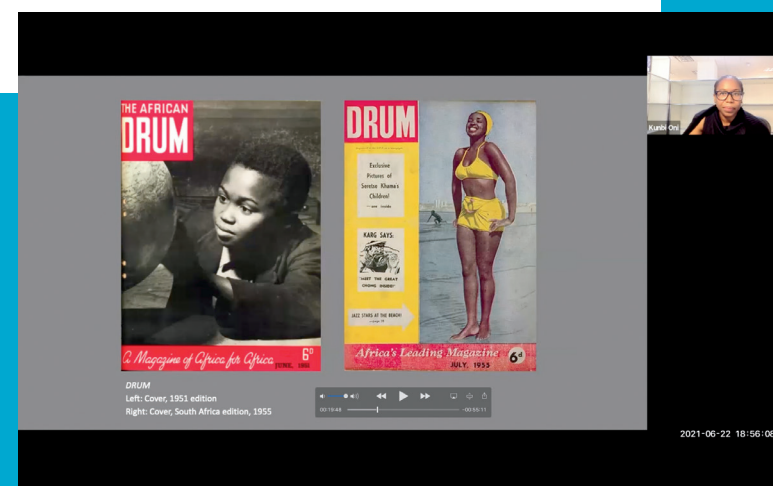
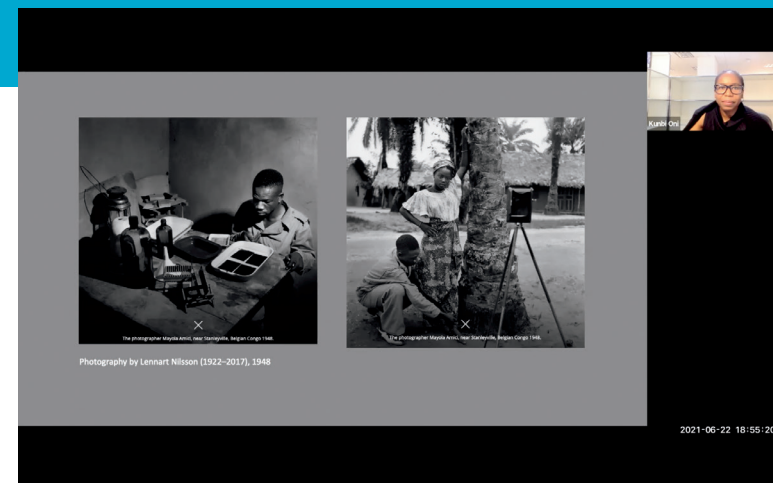
Central to the course is its focus on non-Western artists and their catalog of historic works. The first half of the semester begins with students analyzing the theoretical meaning of perspective, which leads to examining a historic piece of lens-based work (any innovative practice that involves photography or video) from Africa, West Asia, Latin America, Southeast Asia, China and Japan, in the second half.

“It’s important to know that it’s not only a Western thing to be an artist,” Kunbi says. “It’s simply important that you know that art is something that has been practiced by everyone through time.”

As a Black student who studied art history in London, Kunbi knows all too well how easily non-Western perspectives can go unacknowledged in an artist’s course of learning: “When I was doing my MA in England, one of the subjects that I researched was African photography. Back then, the subject was basically disregarded. It always fascinated me that African photographs have been in existence as long as any other photographs, but they only really joined the art history conversation in 1990.”

Essentially, the goal of the MFA Photography, Video and Related Media program is to create artists with a strong point of view and to give them space to express it in traditional and nontraditional ways. “I think at the core is a group of instructors invested in people being artists. The program is not a finishing school—it’s really about creating longevity in an artist and tooling those people with what they will need to be able to work as an artist,” Kunbi remarks about the program’s strength. Formulating an informed perspective rooted in diversity and history is essential to that ethos.

OPPOSITE: Kunbi Oni lecturing.





ABOVE: Yiwen Phoenix Gou (MFA 2022).  
BELOW: Steven Uccello (MFA 2022).

# Curriculum/ Sample Program

Degree candidates must successfully complete 60 credits for the two-year program and 72 – 90 credits for the three-year program.

## Two-Year Program

FIRST YEAR/FALL	CREDITS
Criticism and Theory: Critical Reading	3
Critique	3
Studio: Imaging I	3
Historical Perspectives: Past Tense, Present Tense	3
Video Projects I	3
FIRST YEAR/SPRING	
Critique	3
Studio: Imaging II	3
Contemporary Issues: Video Culture	3
Criticism and Theory: Aesthetics of the Machine	3
Studio: Related Media	3
SECOND YEAR/FALL	
HP: Non-Western Practice	3
Master Critique	6
Studio: Film and Video Installation	3
Thesis Forms I	3
Studio: Photo Books—Past, Present and Future	0
SECOND YEAR/SPRING	
Contemporary Issues: Past and Future Looking	3
Thesis Forms II	3
Thesis Project	6
Thesis Project Presentation	3
Contemporary Issues: Photography and Film—A Practical Relationship	0



# Three-Year Program\*

## FIRST YEAR/FALL

	CREDITS
Bases of Critique	3
The Laws of Light and How to Break Them	3
Modern Art I	3
The Social History of Photography	3
Studio: Imaging I	3
Contemporary Issues: Right Here, Right Now	0

## FIRST YEAR/SPRING

The Aesthetic History of Photography	3
Critique	3
Modern Art II	3
Studio: Imaging II	3
Studio: Video Projects I	3
Criticism and Theory: Global Issues and Strategies	0

\*After successful completion of the first year, students in the three-year program continue into the first year of the two-year program.



Nick Alciati (MFA 2016).

# Course Offerings

This is a sample of our recent course listings. For our full curriculum, visit: [sva.edu/mfaphotovideo/curriculum](http://sva.edu/mfaphotovideo/curriculum).

## THE AESTHETIC HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY

This course examines the history of photography from the perspective of aesthetic theory and networks of crossovers with fine arts, particularly with respect to avant-garde painting of the 19th century and experimental art practices throughout the 20th century. We also consider the historiography of photography, with an eye toward revisionist texts that valorize women's practices and explore colonial usages as well as key exhibitions and collections that facilitate the canonization of photography as bona fide fine art. What criteria apply when photographs function or are designated as fine art? This and other questions that arise will point us to an exploration of present-day issues. A research paper and short in-class presentation will be required.

## CRITICISM AND THEORY: AESTHETICS OF THE MACHINE

Though we tend only to think of "technology" as relating to tools and advancements, the term is defined as a systematic practice or knowledge of an art. This clarification is the basis of this course in which we will closely examine the range of possibilities that various technical tools afford creativity as well as their often-overlooked limitations and impediments in order to continuously shape and push how we perceive, experience and interpret the world around us through myriad outputs. This course will cover the major historical, theoretical and practical issues of emerging technologies and artistic production that ultimately yield new aesthetics. We will consider the effects of mechanical reproduction, speed and immediacy; conditions of cliché; the influence of database organization and computational thinking; the character of immaterial objects; the promotion of fantasy, subversion, alterity. Weekly readings will frame our discussions and critical analyses. Assignments will be open-ended, allowing for both creative and analytical works and writing that use and/or respond to the techniques and theories studied.

## HISTORY OF VIDEO ART: 1985 TO PRESENT

As video art became more widely accepted and the tools became increasingly affordable and available, the medium quickly emerged as a primary site for the global dialogue that characterizes contemporary art practice. Among the topics to be addressed in this screening, lecture and discussion course will be the emergence of Asian, Latin American and European video art; the continued development of sculptural video installation work; and the emergence of the market for video art. The blurring of the lines between video and digital art forms, digital cinema and art made for the Internet will also be addressed. Artists whose works will be viewed and discussed include Nam June Paik, Wolf Vostell, Bruce Nauman, Yoko Ono, Peter Campus, Vito Acconci, Frank Gillette, Juan Downey, Joan Jonas, Chris

## STUDIO: LIGHTING I— FUNDAMENTALS AND BEYOND

This course is an opportunity for students to acquire a systematic understanding of principles and methods to design and manipulate lighting in the image-making processes. The course begins with an exploration of the physics of light in order to explain its behavior. Sessions and assignments will introduce and discuss a variety of tools and approaches, as well as related historical and artistic examples. Collaborative teamwork, utilization of lighting equipment and digital photographic studio workflow are required and practiced throughout the course. A solid understanding of the principles covered, coupled with hands-on experience, will enable students to effectively shape the visual look of their work.

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES: NON-WESTERN PRACTICE

The significance of non-Western perspectives in the history of photography is the focus of this course. Beginning with an overview of Western history, we will examine how the non-Western perspective is determined, and its contemporary status within the practice of photography. To this end, a range of discourses will be considered, including historical context, politics and identity as well as individual artists and their work.

Burden, Lynda Benglis, Ira Schneider, Andy Mann, Martha Rosler, Allan Sekula, Shigeko Kubota, Bill Viola, Gary Hill, Mary Lucier, Steina and Woody Vasulka, Ilene Segalove, William Wegman, Tony Oursler, Antoni Muntadas, Keith Sonnier, Bruce and Norman Yonemoto, Dara Birnbaum, Ant Farm, TVTV, Videofreex, Marcel Odenbach, Dan Graham, Doug Hall, Richard Serra, Terry Fox, Howard Fried, Paul Kos, Paul McCarthy, Mike Kelley and Ernie Kovacs.

## STUDIO: VIDEO PROJECTS I

Designed for students with a variety of backgrounds in the moving image, this workshop-based course prioritizes video production and postproduction. Combining craft and critique, it emphasizes the camera, sound, lighting and editing skills necessary to create well-produced and conceptually interesting projects. Students are expected to be active participants in the class, as their work will be screened and critiqued on a regular basis throughout the semester. In the fall semester, editing, lighting and sequencing will be focal points. The spring semester will emphasize advanced workflows, equipment and techniques through practical demonstrations, exercises and assignments.



Kathy Ryan (director of photography, *New York Times Magazine*) and Dina Litovsky (MFA 2010).





## STUDIO: FILM AND VIDEO INSTALLATION

This project-based course explores the conceptualization and production of film and video installations. It will examine ways in which video installation exceeds dominant forms of movie consumption, such as screening environments, multichannel and projection mapping. These topics will be studied through a range of moving image works: artists' films, cinema, television, documentaries, animations and the Internet. The course will include student presentations, lectures with screenings, workshops and field trips. Each student will be guided through the different stages of production. Workshops for specialized equipment will be offered, including operating and editing RED cameras, green screen, sound recorders, media players, monitors, digital and film.

## CRITIQUE

Critique seminars are a focal point of any given semester. Guided by prominent figures in the visual arts, and assisted by their peers, students will concentrate on producing a coherent body of work that best reflects their individual talents and challenges the current boundaries of their media. The program is designed to expose students to divergent points of view.

Yitong Wang (MFA 2024).

## THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography manifests a distinct desire to capture and represent the entire world. Through a thematic survey of photography from its invention to the mid-20th century, this course examines its early practitioners and uses of photography as it spreads from private to public spheres. The rapidity with which photography spread will be discussed in relation to nascent consumer culture, myriad applications in the sciences and industry, colonial expansion, and snapshots and candid imagery, among other topics. A research paper and short in-class presentation will be required.

## STUDIO: MOVING IMAGE—POSTPRODUCTION STRATEGIES

A fundamental issue of time-based works is structure: the temporal shape and flow of a work are major determinants of its impact and meaning. What principles determine a work's shape in time, its temporal architecture? What binds image and sound components into a comprehensible unit? This course will examine in detail specific topics that emerge during the post-production phase of a moving image project. It will focus on the organization of materials and workflow strategies as well as sound, color, special effects and installation issues. Students will use their current projects as material in a series of exercises and assignments addressing macro- and micro-movie structures, including sound-picture relationships, multichannel and installation architectures, and image manipulations and compositing. Student presentations will be balanced by examples drawn from movies, documentaries, television, online sources

and artists' cinema works for the white cube, the black box and public space.

## STUDIO: PHOTO BOOKS—PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

This course aims to expand each student's sense of the possibilities of the photo book. The history of 20th-century illustrated magazines and photo books will be introduced, as well as recent developments in zines and e-books. Students will research and present historical and current examples and produce new work in traditional and electronic formats.

## THESIS PROJECT

The thesis project represents a unique and original vision that furthers an understanding of creative visual expression. It is the culmination of the student's matriculation, suitable for public viewing, and it is accompanied by written documentation that explains the historical precedents, evolution and generation of the project. Each student works in an integrated set of relationships with the Thesis Forms instructor, fourth-semester Critique class and an outside advisor chosen from the community at large.

## STUDIO: RELATED MEDIA

This course will introduce students to a variety of tools and platforms at the forefront of lens-based imaging. It will combine readings and discussions with hands-on tutorials. Beginning with a discussion of technology and its relation to art practice, the class will move on to explore the following topics: coding for artists, 3D capture and printing, computational photography, VR and immersive video technologies. Guest lecturers will supplement the material covered in class.

# Notable Alumni

**Jacqueline Bates**  
editor

**Joeonna Bellorado-Samuel**  
director, Jack  
Shainman Gallery

**Corinne van der Borch**  
visual artist

**Kyung Ah (Jesse) Chun**  
visual artist

**Kevin Cooley**  
artist/photographer

**Renee Cox**  
artist/photographer

**Gerald Cyrus**  
artist/photographer

**Jeremy Dawson**  
filmmaker

**Maureen Drennan**  
photographer

**Jade Duskow**  
artist/photographer

**Erin Gleeson**  
artist/photographer

**Sharon Harper**  
artist/photographer

**Murray Hill**  
performance artist

**Thomas Holton**  
artist/photographer

**Amy Jenkins**  
artist/photographer

**Dinh Quang Lê**  
artist/photographer

**Jeff Chien-Hsing Liao**  
artist/photographer

**Dina Litovsky**  
photographer

**Shiyuan Liu**  
installation artist

**Vera Lutter**  
artist/photographer

**Sara Macel**  
artist/photographer

**Yamini Nayar**  
visual artist

**Thenjiwe Niki Nkosi**  
artist activist

**Brian Palmer**  
artist/photographer

**Rachel Papo**  
artist/photographer

**Jamie Permuth**  
artist/photographer

**Ryan Pfluger**  
photographer

**Matthew Pillsbury**  
artist/photographer

**Aida Ruilova**  
artist/photographer

**Maggie Shannon**  
artist/photographer

**Lynn Shelton**  
filmmaker

**Christian Siekmeier**  
gallerist

**Pacifico Silano**  
artist/photographer

**Quinn Tivey**  
artist activist

**Shen Wei**  
photographer

**Amani Willett**  
artist/photographer

# Faculty

To learn more about the faculty members and to read their biographies visit:  
[sva.edu/mfaphotovideo/faculty](http://sva.edu/mfaphotovideo/faculty).

**Charles H. Traub**  
chair, MFA Photography,  
Video and Related Media,  
School of Visual Arts;  
photographer; fine artist

**Shimon Attie**  
visual artist

**Jan Avgikos**  
art critic, historian, curator

**Kiki Bauer**  
graphic designer; owner,  
Kiki Bauer Design

**Adam Bell**  
photographer,  
student advisor

**Marc Joseph Berg**  
visual artist

**Robert Bowen**  
principal, Robert  
Bowen Studio

**Elinor Carucci**  
photographer

**Natasha Chuk**  
curator critic, philosopher

**Erin Davis**  
visual artist

**Liz Deschenes**  
fine artist, photographer

**Simin Farkhondeh**  
filmmaker, fine artist, activist

**Ben Hagari**  
visual artist

**Marvin Heiferman**  
curator; writer; contributing  
editor, *Art in America*

**Sarra Idris**  
editor, filmmaker

**Elizabeth Kilroy**  
interactive designer;  
educator; owner,  
Elizabeth K Studio

**Liz Magic Laser**  
fine artist

**Richard Leslie**  
art historian, critic,  
editor, curator

**Craig Lowy**  
visual artist

**Andrew Moore**  
photographer

**Huy Nguyen**  
visual artist

**Kunbi Oni**  
curator

**Laura Parnes**  
film and multimedia artist

**Mary M. Patierno**  
film and video producer, editor

**Gus Powell**  
editorial photographer,  
fine artist

**Lyle Rexer**  
writer; critic;  
curator; columnist,  
*Photograph* magazine

**David A. Ross**  
chair, MFA Art Practice,  
School of Visual Arts;  
writer; curator

**Steel Stillman**  
visual artist; writer;  
contributing editor,  
*Art in America*

**Amy Taubin**  
filmmaker, curator, performer,  
film and cultural critic

**Penelope Umbrico**  
fine artist

**Grahame Weinbren**  
film, video, installation artist;  
editor, *Millennium Film Journal*

**Randy West**  
fine artist; director of  
operations, MFA Photography,  
Video and Related Media,  
School of Visual Arts

**Alex F. Yuan**  
photographer





# Application Process

## APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

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

[sva.edu/grad/howtoapply](https://sva.edu/grad/howtoapply)

- Online Application and \$80 Application Fee: [sva.edu/apply](https://sva.edu/apply)

## DEADLINES

For information on application deadlines, visit: [sva.edu/grad/timeline](https://sva.edu/grad/timeline)

## IMPORTANT LINKS

- FAQ: [sva.edu/grad/faq](https://sva.edu/grad/faq)
- International students: [sva.edu/grad/intl](https://sva.edu/grad/intl)
- Tuition and fees: [sva.edu/tuition](https://sva.edu/tuition)
- Visit SVA: [sva.edu/grad/visit](https://sva.edu/grad/visit)

# Contact Us

We encourage applicants to visit our department. Contact us directly to schedule a department tour or sign up to attend an Information Session. For more information and to register, go to: [sva.edu/grad/visit](http://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](mailto:gradadmissions@sva.edu).

**Charles H. Traub**, chair  
**Randy West**, director of operations  
**Eliza Newman**, assistant to the chair  
**Adam Bell**, academic advisor  
**Erin Davis**, senior systems director

**Tel:** 212.592.2360

**Fax:** 212.592.2366

**Email:** [mfaphoto@sva.edu](mailto:mfaphoto@sva.edu)

**Site:** [sva.edu/mfaphotovideo](http://sva.edu/mfaphotovideo)



“Every project I worked on at SVA was bigger and better than the last. The department gave me opportunities to not only deepen my existing skills but to explore new techniques and mediums. The faculty, staff and student body have such a broad range of expertise, I knew I would be supported no matter what I tried to do next.”

—Joseph O'Malley (MFA 2024)

## ACCREDITATION

The School of Visual Arts has been authorized by the New York State Board of Regents ([www.highered.nysed.gov](http://www.highered.nysed.gov)) to confer the degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts on graduates of programs in 3D Animation and Visual Effects; Advertising; Animation; Comics; 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; Fashion Photography; Film Directing.

The School of Visual Arts is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education ([msche.org](http://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.

COVER: Sunhong Park (MFA 2022).

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](http://accredit-id.org)), 206 Grandville Avenue, Suite 305, Grand Rapids, MI, 49503-4014.

SVA 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. The MAT program in Art Education has been awarded full accreditation by AAQEP through December 31, 2030. Accreditation acknowledges that a program prepares effective educators who continue to grow as professionals and has demonstrated the commitment and capacity to maintain quality.

The MPS Art Therapy program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs ([www.caahep.org](http://www.caahep.org)) upon the recommendation of the Accreditation Council for Art Therapy Education. Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs, 25400 US Hwy 19N, Suite 158, Clearwater, FL 33763, 727-210-2350. The program meets all educational requirements for licensure in New York State as a Creative Arts Therapist (LCAT) and Registered Art Therapist (ATR) with the Art Therapy Credentials Board (ATCB).

---

© 2024, Visual Arts Press, Ltd.

The School of Visual Arts does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, color, creed, disability, age, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin or other legally protected statuses.

The College reserves the right to make changes from time to time affecting policies, fees, curricula and other matters announced in this or any other publication. Statements in this and other publications do not constitute a contract.



# School of Visual Arts

---

209 East 23rd Street, NYC  
[sva.edu/grad](http://sva.edu/grad)