



MPS | **FILM DIRECTING**



School of Visual Arts
Graduate Programs

The MPS Film Directing program

at SVA offers emerging filmmakers—and those who want to make a career in narrative filmmaking—the opportunity to immerse themselves in the art and craft of directing film.

Great directors are great storytellers. Our one-year master's program in Film Directing is designed to provide an extensive education in visual storytelling. The program will challenge you to articulate your artistic vision utilizing the multifaceted medium of film. You will be encouraged and inspired to develop the intellectual and practical skills necessary for directing film.

You will learn the power of visual storytelling while working under the tutelage of industry professionals. Grasp how to evolve stories from script to screen, direct actors and choose the proper production crew, as well as understand and engage in the enormity of the postproduction opportunities available to aid in the success of your thesis film—all while

employing an arsenal of cinematic tools to craft a compelling visual narrative.

With the guidance and experience of our award-winning faculty, you will learn how to cultivate original ideas for successful, inventive films that communicate a narrative in an aesthetically interesting and innovative manner.

This course of study also addresses the historical and critical context of film as an art form, its political and sociocultural dimensions, and a comparative examination of theories for understanding film and video.

The MPS Film Directing program has a distinct personality and purpose—celebrating the truly independent art of filmmaking.

We will outfit you with the creative, technical and critical means needed to impart your artistic visions. With New York City as your classroom, you will do things you can't do anywhere else and will graduate ready to jump into a career that could change your perspective, your passions and, quite possibly, your life.

—Bob Giraldi, chair

About the Program

In less than one year, each student in the MPS Film Directing program directs a professionally produced short film and attains a master's degree.

Over the course of nine months, we empower our students to direct their own short films by providing them with the latest technology, an experienced film crew and instruction from award-winning filmmakers. High-level production values combined with strong storytelling equal success in the film industry. For this reason, the student films created in this program have gone on to be purchased for distribution by HBO and screen as official selections at such prestigious institutions as Cannes Film Festival, Slamdance, SXSW and Film Festival Internazionale di Milano, to name a few.

With a schedule designed for the working professional, classes are held Monday through Thursday, 5:00 to 8:00pm, with Fridays reserved for studio time, guest lectures, critiques, demonstrations and/or field

trips. Degree candidates must successfully complete 30 credits, including all required courses.

Thesis films will be screened in a juried film festival at the SVA Theatre. Each thesis film must be reviewed and approved by the thesis committee and the department chair in order for the student to be eligible for degree conferral.

This studio-based program is chaired by Bob Giraldi, the director who played a major role in the music video revolution and who continues to be a prolific creative force. As one of America's legendary commercial and music video directors, Bob uses his considerable expertise and experience to introduce each of our students to the film industry. Bob has directed some of the world's biggest icons, including Michael Jackson, Paul McCartney, Pat Benatar, Lionel Richie and Will Smith.



MPS FILM DIRECTING CLASS OF 2024 THESIS POSTERS:
After Dinner directed by Lasley Lui; *Sweet Thunder*
 directed by Haoyu Zhu; *The Closet* directed by Yiyu Ying;
I Want To Go Back directed by Ben Duffy.

Entering a Global Film Industry with a Boom

When Yang Wang (MFA 2013) decided film was her life calling, she came to New York looking for that “art feeling” and found it—an environment soaked in creative perseverance.

Initially studying visual arts at Hong Kong Baptist University and fashion at SCAD, Yang “never really thought [she] would be into filmmaking,” but after an opportunity to make a short film at the American Pavilion at the Cannes film festival, she fell in love with the aspirational atmosphere that film supplied. Almost done with her SCAD degree, Yang determined a master’s degree would offer the best path to filmmaking, and SVA was the only school Yang applied to. ►

Portrait of Yang Wang (MFA 2013).



Yang describes herself as “a person that’s quite full of action.” Her introduction to SVA was an unconventional one; she wanted to know firsthand what the film directing program was like, so she showed up at the department and asked for information at the front desk. She got more than the basic FAQ; the person at the desk told her to go sit in on the class in session. The star-studded alumni and ambitious students were her main reasons for choosing SVA. She valued the tight-knit community with many opportunities for hands-on work and says she is “still very good friends with my classmates.”

Exploring relationships is a core theme in Yang’s work. Her student thesis film, *The Little Violinist*, is set in Chinatown about a

young girl pursuing her dream as a violinist and her single father working as a garbage collector. Yang almost gave up on the film “because sometimes as a creator you kind of doubt if it’s good enough.” She wrote a new script and took it to MPS Film Directing Chair Bob Giraldi for approval. He told her, “I think you can do anything. You will be a great director,” giving Yang the confidence she needed to go back to her original story. *The Little Violinist* went on to win best film and best actress at SVA, and a feature film based on her thesis was an official selection at over 30 international film festivals.

After graduating, Yang worked as a full-time director and producer for IBM’s branding department. Yang still wanted to make theatrical feature films, so she wrote a



OPPOSITE: Yang at the Cannes film festival with the cast and crew of her film, *June*. THIS PAGE ABOVE: Yang’s feature screenplay based on *The Little Violinist* earned her a place as a quarterfinalist for the Academy Nicholl Fellowship. THIS PAGE BELOW: Behind the scenes of Yang’s film, *June*.



screenplay based on her student thesis. With newfound confidence from her awards, Yang reached out to actor Aaron Kwok—whom she describes as “the Brad Pitt of Hong Kong”—and sent him the script. Incredibly, he not only agreed to act in Yang’s film but also to invest in it, giving her the funds needed to make the film a reality. According to Yang, the movie is “hopefully coming out next year.”

Along with a feature film currently in production titled *The Girl in the Playground*, Yang is beginning to write another screenplay, “one about the Asian American community, identity and their stories.” Despite the doubts she’s had, it’s clear that Yang is still “full of action” and has an unwavering love for filmmaking. Regarding her current interests, she adds: “I saw a great booming of these artists in America, right? They’re from Asia and from Korea, all these films made by A24. It’s amazing. So I want to try.”

On the set of Yang’s film, *June*.



ABOVE: Behind the scenes of the MPS Film Directing's learning film, *The Book Signing*.
BELOW: Behind the scenes of MPS Film Directing alumnus Emili Weintraub's (MPS 2024) set.

Curriculum/ Sample Program

Learn filmmaking in this unique nine-month program chaired by legendary short-film commercial director Bob Giraldi.

FALL

CREDITS

Film Language, Analysis and Criticism I	3
Screenwriting	3
Producing for Film Artists	3
Directing	6

SPRING

Film Language, Analysis and Criticism II	3
Director's Toolbox	3
Editing as Storytelling	3
The Thesis Project	6

“My high point on set was definitely collaborating with my amazing cast and crew.”

—Emili Weintraub (MPS 2024)

Course Offerings

A sample of our course descriptions follows.
All course information can be found online at:
sva.edu/mpsfilmdirecting/curriculum.

MPS Film Directing is a one-year master's program and is designed to provide a holistic approach to the director's craft. Students will develop the intellectual and practical tools for directing film. The curriculum focuses on the art of visual storytelling: story development from script to screen, directing actors, and understanding and utilizing cinematic tools to create a compelling visual narrative. With the guidance of our award-winning faculty, students cultivate original ideas for successful, inventive films. The department uses a GPA-based grading system. Degree candidates must successfully complete 30 credits, including all required courses.

FILM LANGUAGE, ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM I

Narrative filmmaking has been at the forefront of cinema throughout the 120-year-plus history of motion pictures. Stories have played a critical part in the development and culture of film from the earliest projected images made by the Lumière brothers in the 1890s to works being made today by amateurs on smartphones and transmitted globally on the Internet. This course will analyze the language of narrative filmmaking with examples of significant short films that have expanded the boundaries of cinematic expression from around the world. The lectures, screenings and class discussions will cover the various strategies of telling a story in film and will suggest a critical framework for thinking about the modes of narrative expressiveness in cinema. A broad range of narrative cinema will be featured, including those films that mix fiction with documentary reality and those works that even question the idea of narrative itself. The concentration in the first part of this course will be on American and European cinema within a context of social responsibility.

FILM LANGUAGE, ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM II

This is the second part of a two-semester course. The spring semester features short works, primarily from Latin America and the East, and will focus on student-made films as well as digital works conceived in nontraditional modes, such as artist's narratives and single-channel videos.

SCREENWRITING

Serving as an intensive exploration of the basic principles of dramatic writing, this course will explore the practice and theory of storytelling through a wide range of contexts—from the ancient Greeks to contemporary Hollywood. With a focus on the elements common to all narratives, each student will develop a short screenplay (8 to 12 minutes). Students have the choice of writing their own screenplay, collaborating with a professional writer or optioning an original script from a professional writer. Each of these processes will lead to developing a shooting script under the guidance of the instructor. Students will submit numerous revisions until the screenplay is approved for the next phase of production.

PRODUCING FOR FILM ARTISTS

This course is geared specifically toward the practical and creative information needed by film artists to ensure they have the tools to both realize their artistic vision and find the appropriate media outlets once they've reached completion. While it is important to push the aesthetic boundaries in our field of the moving image, it is also invaluable to have an understanding of production and distribution options and general business information that is key to the independent media maker.

EDITING AS STORYTELLING

This course will focus on the role of editing in film storytelling. Students will be introduced to the interfaces for popular editing platforms, like Adobe Premiere and Final Cut Pro X, and learn advanced techniques for leveraging these applications. The course will cover postproduction workflow, working with an editor, technical and creative challenges of postproduction, and providing deliverables on a deadline. The course will also review the practical application of theories, conventional techniques and unconventional approaches in furthering story through examples screened in class.

DIRECTOR'S TOOLBOX

The director's job starts well before the call of "Action!" and doesn't end at the call of "Cut!" This course explores a variety of methods for utilizing the many tools at the director's disposal before production, during production, and beyond. Students will have the opportunity to workshop scenes—exploring techniques to articulate story through lens choice, lighting, camera position, blocking and composition, as well as optimizing the collaborative process to tell a compelling visual narrative. In the second half of the semester, this course shifts to deconstructing the various platforms for engaging on social media and uniquely marketing films directly to their intended audiences.

On the set of *Siren*, directed by chair Bob Giraldi and the MPS Film Directing students.



DIRECTING

Students are given firsthand experience in the creation and execution of a narrative short film within the context of an evolving industry. The course will advance the importance of telling a uniquely different story. We will discuss and analyze short films, commercials and scenes from feature films with the objective of studying various techniques. We will meet industry professionals from every discipline within the craft. Each student will be required to produce six narrative short video exercises to further explore the challenges of directing. This course is constantly in motion—discussing, criticizing and experiencing conceptual screenwriting; directing; crafting cinematography; and working with a production team to achieve a vision. Students will learn how to employ the tools of cinema to tell their stories.

THE THESIS PROJECT

In the final semester, emphasis shifts to preproduction and casting to find the best professional actors to fill the roles created by the student directors. Throughout the process, students continue to examine the art of directing while moving forward with the logistics of filmmaking: location scouting; hiring an experienced, independent line producer; finding a talented, experienced director of photography; and enlisting the necessary complement of crew. Shot lists, scheduling and rehearsals lead to on-set filming and then the emphasis shifts dramatically to the art of editing, where the story is told for the third and final time. Then, we prepare for the completion of the film with an eye toward marketing and what the future holds for our new directors.

Notable Alumni

Amanda Alvich

MPS 2017; producer, Paramount; formerly producer and editor, BuzzFeed; director of a 2018 Coca-Cola Regal Films program contest finalist

Nadia Bedzhanova

MPS 2012; director; photographer; clients include *Vogue Russia*, *Dazed* and *Metal*

Ed Cabán

MPS 2011; filmmaker; faculty, St. John's University; media arts teacher, All Hallows High School, New York

Alon Gelnik

MPS 2014; video editor, Vice Media

Rebecca Halfon

MPS 2018; director of the short film *Bodega*, which screened at SXSW, online on Short of the Week, was licensed by Air Canada and is a Vimeo Staff Pick

Dawn Han

MPS 2015; director/producer; director of the award-winning film *Cork Man*

Ji Hyun Kim

MPS 2016; producer and director, Curieyes

David Munz-Maire

MPS 2014; producer; director; head of AireBedd Productions; writer/director of the award-winning short *Chateau Sauvignon: Terroir*

Pam Nasr

MPS 2018; director of content strategy, Brooklyn Women's Film Festival; model, *Vogue*; director; sought-after fashion and set stylist

Miguel J. Soliman

MPS 2017; features programmer, New York Latino Film Festival; writer/director of award-winning film *Desde el Principio*, distributed by HBO

Katie Staab

MPS 2012; freelance writer/creative development; formerly head of video production, Talent Inc. Worldwide; video producer, Facebook Live; writer/producer, *People Now* magazine

Alcee H. Walker

MPS 2015; writer/director of the award-winning film *Inferno*, which won a jury award from the Directors Guild of America Student Film Awards

“That moment—with seagulls gliding outside the window, with fog around the skyscrapers on Seventh Avenue, with every one of my crew members helping me achieve my dream—is enough to make me feel like the luckiest director in the world.”

—Haoyu Zhu (MPS 2024)

OPPOSITE: Behind the Scenes of MPS Film Directing Alumni Lasley Lui's (MPS 2024) set.

Faculty

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

Bob Giraldi

chair, MPS Film Directing, School of Visual Arts; president, film director, GIRALDI MEDIA

Merle Augustin
producer

Laurence Kardish
film curator, writer, film festival director

Cailin McFadden

director of operations, MPS Film Directing, School of Visual Arts; filmmaker; producer

Alistair McMeekin
systems administrator, MPS Film Directing, School of Visual Arts; producer; editor

Nicole W. Solomon
editor

Natasha Soto-Albors
actor, screenwriter, producer

Todd Stephens
filmmaker

Jacob D. Williamson
actor, screenwriter



Lecturers

Below is just a sample of guest lecturers who have spoken with our students.

Nicolás Giacobone
writer

Denis Hamill
writer

Russell Hollander
national executive director,
Directors Guild of America

Alex Lasarenko
composer

Doug LeClaire
director, Asbury Shorts
festival

Barry Markowitz
director of photography

Beth Melsky
casting director

Eva Minemar
producer

Fred Murphy
director of photography

Chris Newman
sound engineer

Calliope Nicholas
director, FilmColumbia
festival

Richard Pepperman
editor

John Rivoli
designer

Gillian Robespierre
writer, director

Sofia Sondervan
producer

Bruce Van Dusen
director

Tim Van Patten
director, actor

Christopher Walters
director of photography

Danny Aiello
actor

Lily Baldwin
writer, director

Alexander Dinelaris
writer, producer, director

Stuart Dryburgh
cinematographer

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



Behind the scenes of MPS Film Directing alumnus Jialin Yu's (MPS 2024) set.

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.

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

Bob Giraldi, chair

Cailin McFadden, director of operations

Tel: 212.592.2705

Email: directing@sva.edu

Site: sva.edu/mpsfilmdirecting



Success: “My collaboration with the DP was exceptional. From preproduction to the final shoot, we were always on the same wavelength. Our communication was

seamless, and he understood my vision instinctively.” Challenge: “After much consideration, I made the tough decision to replace a key actor. I believe that a positive attitude from the cast and crew can significantly ease the flow of everything.”

—Lasley Lui (MPS 2024)

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 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), 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: Behind the scenes of the MPS Film Directing's learning film *The Book Signing*, picturing director of photography Guillermo Cameo.

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.

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) 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).

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School of Visual Arts

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sva.edu/grad