“The platform of a publication still provides a creative shelter to develop a practice and navigate the fraught proposition of showing one's work, creating networks of creative exchange and managing a space to collaborate with others.”

Do you care about design and its impact on the individual, society and the environment? Are you interested in honing your research skills and developing your unique point of view?

Whether your background is in design, journalism, science, history or something else entirely, the SVA MA in Design Research, Writing and Criticism might just be the next step in your career trajectory. If you’re interested in improving your current practice, or in changing direction completely, feel free to email, call or drop by the department for a visit. We’re always happy to talk about our exciting curriculum, show you our lovely studio, and introduce you to faculty, alumni and students.

We study design in all its manifestations, with a focus on its implications. This means we don’t just consider designed products or buildings, but also the infrastructure that connects them, and the policy that shapes them. We try to look at what happens after a designed product is launched. We go beyond the glossy images supplied by the manufacturer to discover how things actually get used and discarded, and how they impinge upon our daily reality.

Here in the MA Design Research, Writing and Criticism Department we learn to build arguments, based on reporting and research, and to develop compelling narratives, which we then aim to get out into the world in the most targeted way possible. Central to the MA in Design Research, Writing and Criticism are workshops in radio podcasting, video, exhibition curation, conferences, events and online media.

We’ve had remarkable success so far, with our graduates going on to work at museums and institutions like MoMA, the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, Vitra Design Museum, Storefront for Art and Architecture, Public Policy Lab, the Glass House and Institute of Play; at publications including Metropolis, Domus, Curbed, Arch Daily, Surface, PIN-UP and Architizer; at companies such as Real Art and Facebook; and design firms like Ziba Design, Steven Holl Architects and Project Projects.

Additionally, our graduates have gone on to teach at RISD, Pratt, NYU, Rutgers, University of Lisbon and California Institute of the Arts among others; to pursue post-graduate research at the V&A Museum and Harvard University; to publish books with Thames & Hudson, MoMA, the Cooper Hewitt Design Museum and Princeton Architectural Press; to launch their own enterprises such as CLOG and Superscript; and to contribute to publications including Design Observer, Dezeen, New York magazine, Works that Work, Core77, Designers & Books, Disegno, Los Ange-
The SVA MA in Design Research, Writing and Criticism offers a high-impact, targeted program, well-suited to the circumstances of established professionals, in addition to graduates wishing to continue their studies at an advanced level. With a two-semester time frame, the MA in Design Research, Writing and Criticism provides intensive instruction in the tools and techniques for researching, analyzing and interpreting design, and its cultural and environmental implications.

This rigorous, one-year MA program features an unparalleled core faculty, comprised of celebrated curators, editors, critics, and designers such as: The New York Times culture reporter Robin Pogrebin; author and SVA MFA Design co-chair Steven Heller; architect, writer and media consultant Pierre Alexandre de Looz; BBC producer and filmmaker Adam Harrison Levy; and urban design critic Karrie Jacobs. With more than 30 guest lecturers and critics visiting the department per year—including humorist and author Sloane Crosley; design historian and archivist Russell Flinchum; StoryCorps executive producer Michael Garofalo; MoMA design director Rob Giampietro, director of NEW INC, the New Museum’s technology and design incubator, Julia Kaganskiy; MOSS design gallery founder Murray Moss; executive director of American Institute of Architects New York Chapter (AIANY) Benjamin Prosky; Design Museum director Deyan Sudjic; critic and curator Mimi Zeiger; Gawker founding editor Elizabeth Spiers; and IBM Watson researcher Caroline Sinders— the program takes particular care to connect students to inspirational mentors and help them to forge relationships with potential employers, mentors and colleagues.

The program’s curriculum charts the cutting edge of design practice and is responsive to exciting developments in the media landscape. It aims to generate provocative new thinking about design and to help shape the ways in which design is engendered, presented and evaluated. In providing the tools for constructing compelling narratives about design in multiple formats, the program amply prepares students for future-facing careers in research, publishing, education, museums, institutes, design practice, and entrepreneurship, or for continued studies in a design-related subject.

All successful candidates will be offered a significant scholarship, bringing the tuition cost below market rate. We believe that this, plus the fact that the program runs for just nine months, makes our MA in Design Research, Writing and Criticism a very appealing and viable proposition to mid-career professionals as well as recent graduates who want to deepen their knowledge of design and its consequences.

What do you think? We look forward to discussing your individual goals for graduate study in design research.

—Molly Heintz, chair
California native Derek Love graduated from SVA’s MA Design Research, Writing and Criticism program in 2016, and quickly landed a job at one of the world’s most respected design firms, Pentagram. Natasha Jen, a partner at Pentagram whose team he joined, was familiar with his work even before his interview—she’d seen it at SVA, saw his thesis presentation at AIGA Fresh Grads and had read his article about the vernacular typography found on everyday paper receipts. Love says, “Natasha appreciates my straight-up design skills, but also the extra rigor I bring to the team in terms of writing and research.” We asked Love a few questions about his graduate experience at SVA and how it supports his practice as a designer at Pentagram.
What made you want to attend D-Research?  
I received my undergrad degree from San Diego State University, where I studied with Susan Merritt, a student of Wolfgang Weingart at the Basel School of Design and also a Design Research graduate; in fact, I first heard about the program through her. I was fascinated by what she was doing and wanted to learn more. I had been working as a graphic designer for a while and hoped to find a way to elevate the conversation I was having with clients to a level that was about something more profound than a formal exploration of design. I'd always been interested in writing and using it in the design process as a way to come at a problem from a different angle. I did it intuitively but didn't have a formal practice, so I used the program at SVA to dive deeper into that.

What was your thesis topic?  
I'm interested in everyday graphic vernaculars: the lettering on the side of trucks or industrial shipping containers have a raw kind of honesty I wanted to explore more deeply. My thesis was about how the design of New York City storefronts describes place and value. The general discourse on design these days is so superficial, and what the program addresses very well is how to create quality content, deeply researched from multiple vantage points.

Was there any single part of the program you found most helpful?  
I was most surprised by the sheer amount of presentation that we did. We were always up in front of the class, talking, always on the soap box. You begin to feel comfortable in presenting your position on anything, a skill that’s valuable across all situations with any subject matter.

How has your work changed since graduating?  
My process before I entered the program was very similar to what it is now, and I still tend to look at a design problem from as many different angles as I can. But now I know much sooner when something is not working. I can tell when I’ve hit upon a worthwhile idea so much faster.

Like having a sharper pencil!  
Yes.

Do you have any advice for a prospective student?  
Get ready to have your mind totally blown. It’s a very immersive program. I didn’t know what to expect but I was so, so happy with the program’s focus on understanding design from a much wider ranging perspective. The theoretical aspects of the program are so rich. I now have a solid theoretical foundation that helps me approach even a simple action such as reading in a very different, more informed way.
## Curriculum

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"What I really enjoyed about the program are the people. I’ve made really great friends and I’ve learned so much —my vocabulary has expanded by dictionaries."

—Anja Laubscher, class of 2018
Course Offerings

Through workshops, seminars, lectures and site-visits, students examine the issues and policies that shape the designed environment; learn research methods, reporting techniques and theoretical models; and experiment with a range of media vehicles for communicating their research, including online writing, podcasting, video, exhibitions and events. Each student identifies an individual research territory to explore during the year, culminating in a thesis portfolio of written and applied media projects. Degree candidates must successfully complete 30 credits, including all required courses, with a cumulative grade point average of 3.0. A residency of two academic semesters is required. This is a sample of our recent course listings. For our full curriculum, please visit: designresearch.sva.edu/program.

APPROACHES TO DESIGN HISTORY
In the Design Research, Writing and Criticism Department, we define design broadly. As such, design becomes a lens through which to view the world, rather than a defined set of information fitting neatly into a survey course. To that end, we treat design history differently and in ways that we hope will be most useful to graduate students in this program. We consider ways of approaching design history—from an objects and materials perspective, from a systems-based perspective, and finally from the perspective of political and social issues such as race and gender. By zooming in and zooming out, we hope to underscore that any 20th and 21st-century design history is a complex constellation of issues, and a story with many possible starting points. The first part of this course deals with approaches to design history through objects and systems. The second part will address approaches to design history through political and social issues.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN DESIGN, ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN PLANNING
This course will provide an overview of some of the social, economic, political, institutional and personal forces giving shape to our contemporary designed environment—both in New York City and globally. Through seminars, a selection of walking tours, site walk-throughs and visits to some of the city’s design and architecture studios and planning offices, students will be introduced to the issues, controversies and development conflicts that impact the urban environment, and the protagonists who play a role in them. They will investigate how everything from the tallest skyscraper to the smallest bit of ephemera is part of the design ecosystem that is otherwise known as a city, and will also attend at least one local community board meeting to find out how urban design is affected by the political process. By the end of this course, students will be familiar with the work of a broad range of international designers, architects and urban planners, and will be conversant with many of the policies and processes that determine the material form of the 21st-century city.

CULTURAL THEORY AND THESIS DEVELOPMENT
Through group meetings and one-on-one consultations, each student will choose a thesis topic that is innovative and rich enough to withstand extended inquiry. Students will be guided through the process of identifying problems, developing critical questions, conducting a literature review and embarking on primary research. This seminar also exposes students to key issues in cultural theory and criticism, with a view to the study and interpretation of designed space and objects. Special consideration will be given to the development of critical positions that serve as a lens for reading the complexity of the built environment within a larger context. Sessions will focus on key texts drawn from disciplines that include philosophy, critical theory, art criticism, cultural studies, anthropology and media studies. These readings offer different perspectives on cultural economies, politics and systems of meaning.

“One of the things the program gives students is an incredible sense of focus and motivation in knowing how to define a story.”
—Akiko Busch, faculty

— Akiko Busch, faculty
My idea of design before coming to SVA was more siloed between different divisions of design—so looking at it from a graphic design point of view, looking at it from an architectural point of view—whereas now it’s much more fluid.”

— Cassandra Gerardo, class of 2018
Faculty

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

Molly Heintz
color, MA Design Research, Writing and Criticism; founding partner and managing director, Superscript

Molly Heintz
Chair, MA Design Research, Writing and Criticism; founding partner and managing director, Superscript

Akiko Busch
design, culture, nature writer

Akiko Busch
design, culture, nature writer

Pierre Alexandre de Looz
arts writer, architect, media consultant

Pierre Alexandre de Looz
Arts writer, architect, media consultant

Steven Heller
co-chair, MFA Design, School of Visual Arts; editor, writer

Leital Molad
Senior producer, WNYC’s “Studio 360”

Leital Molad
Senior producer, WNYC’s “Studio 360”

Karrie Jacobs
author, contributing editor, Architect Magazine

Rob Pogrebin
culture reporter, The New York Times

Rob Pogrebin
Culture reporter, The New York Times

Adam Harrison Levy
writer, documentary filmmaker, producer

Jennifer Rittner
author; principal, Content Matters

Jennifer Rittner
Author; principal, Content Matters

Kurt Andersen
author, critic, host, WNYC’s “Studio 360”,

Kurt Andersen
Author, critic, host, WNYC’s “Studio 360”

Michael Bierut
partner, Pentagram; co-founder, Design Observer

Jennifer Kabat
journalist; contributing editor, Metropolis

Jennifer Kabat
Journalist; contributing editor, Metropolis

Rob Pogrebin
culture reporter, The New York Times

Robin Pogrebin
Culture reporter, The New York Times

Justin Davidson
architecture, classical music critic, New York magazine

Alexandra Lange
author and design critic, Curbed

Justin Davidson
Architecture, classical music critic, New York magazine

Daniel D’Oca
principal, co-founder, Interboro Partners

Geoff Manaugh
writer, former director Columbia Studio X

Daniel D’Oca
Principal, co-founder, Interboro Partners

Stephen Duncombe
cultural and political writer, educator, activist

Alexandra Lange
Author and design critic, Curbed

Stephen Duncombe
Cultural and political writer, educator, activist

Rob Giampietro
director of design, Museum of Modern Art, New York

Geoff Manaugh
Writer, former director Columbia Studio X

Rob Giampietro
Director of design, Museum of Modern Art, New York

David Hadju
author, music critic, The New Republic

Chee Pearlman
design curator, TED

David Hadju
Author, music critic, The New Republic

Stephanie Murg
critic, writer, editor, UnBeige

Rick Poynor
design, visual culture critic

Stephanie Murg
Critic, writer, editor, UnBeige

Rob Walker
technology, culture columnist, Yahoo News

Khoi Vinh
Principal designer, Adobe

Sam Tanenhaus

Khoi Vinh
Principal designer, Adobe

Roberta Smith
co-chief art critic, The New York Times

Mimi Zeiger
editor, publisher, loud paper

Kurt Andersen
Author, critic, host, WNYC’s “Studio 360”

Jennifer Kabat
Journalist; contributing editor, Metropolis

Cassim Shepard
Author, founding editor Urban Omnibus

Natasha Jen
Partner, Pentagram

Cassim Shepard
Author, founding editor Urban Omnibus

Jennifer Kabat
Journalist; contributing editor, Metropolis

Meredith TenHoor
Author, educator, researcher, architectural history and theory

Khoi Vinh
Principal designer, Adobe

Rick Poynor
Design, visual culture critic

Mimi Zeiger
Editor, publisher, loud paper

Students with faculty member Karrie Jacobs for her “Complexity and Contradiction in Times Square” seminar, part of the course Contemporary Design, Architecture and Urbanism.

Selected Critics, Readers & Lecturers

Kurt Andersen
Author, critic, host, WNYC’s “Studio 360”

Jennifer Kabat
Journalist; contributing editor, Metropolis

Cassim Shepard
Author, founding editor Urban Omnibus

Roberta Smith

Sam Tanenhaus
Editor, The New York Times Book Review

Meredith TenHoor
Author, educator, researcher, architectural history and theory

Khoi Vinh
Principal designer, Adobe

Rob Walker
Technology, culture columnist, Yahoo News

Mimi Zeiger
Editor, publisher, loud paper

Students with faculty member Karrie Jacobs for her “Complexity and Contradiction in Times Square” seminar, part of the course Contemporary Design, Architecture and Urbanism.
APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS
For detailed instructions, visit: sva.edu/grad/howtoapply
- Online Application and Application Fee: sva.edu/apply
- Statement of Intent/Personal Statement
- Résumé
- Letter of Recommendation
- Official College Transcript

Some applicants may be required to submit the following:
- Proof of English Proficiency
- Copy of Permanent Residency Card
- Declaration of Finances
- Verification of Finances
- Foreign Transcript Evaluation

DEPARTMENTAL REQUIREMENTS
For specific guidelines about these requirements, visit: sva.edu/grad/deptreq
- Writing Sample
- Interview

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
We encourage applicants to visit our department. Contact us directly to schedule a department tour, meet with the chair, attend a lecture, sit in on a class 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.

Molly Heintz, chair  
Eric Schwartau, director of operations

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It was one of the best decisions I’ve made professionally. This program really ignites your curiosity about what the world around us looks like and why it is the way it is.”

—Kimberlie Birks, MFA 2011

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; Cartooning; 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 the programs in Critical Theory and the Arts; Curatorial Practice; Design Research, Writing and Criticism; and to confer the degree of Master of Fine Arts on graduates of programs in Art Practice; Art Writing; 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 the programs in Art Therapy; Branding; Digital Photography; Directing; Fashion Photography; Data required by the U.S. Department of Education on “Gainful Employment” for each of the above programs may be found on each individual program page at sva.edu/ge.

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CREDITS

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