The MFA Fine Arts Program reflects the diversity of New York’s many art worlds. Together, the faculty and students form a community of established and emerging artists from many backgrounds who work across disciplines and modes of practice. We respect craft and form, but we also encourage an approach to art-making in which ideas or questions serve as points of departure for artistic processes that may lead in unforeseen directions. While some students remain committed to a single medium for the duration of their study, most of them experiment with multiple modes of production. In addition to drawing, painting, printmaking and sculpture, students work in animation, digital art, installation, performance, photography, public projects, social practice, video and numerous other disciplines. Students in the MFA Fine Arts program have the freedom to reinvent themselves.

The close relationship between faculty and students gives students the confidence to take risks and to follow a personal course of intellectual and aesthetic investigation. The MFA Fine Arts program attracts ambitious emerging artists from many countries and backgrounds. Together, they create a foundation for artistic growth that extends beyond graduation and forms an ongoing platform of professional support.

Our main goals are to provide a stimulating and supportive environment in which students can thrive and develop as artists, to foster rigorous critical engagement with contemporary art and other cultural forms, and to produce an ongoing conversation, through work as much as through words, about what we make, how we make it and why.

—Mark Tribe, chair
MFA Fine Arts is a full-time, interdisciplinary graduate program in the practice of contemporary art. The normal course of study is two years of full-time enrollment. Our curriculum is designed to ensure that students form strong connections with faculty through multiple one-on-one meetings, usually in the student's studio. Each student selects a faculty mentor at the start of the program, and may continue with the same mentor for the duration of the program. In group critiques, students develop their ability to receive critical feedback and to offer constructive criticism by describing, analyzing and evaluating the work of their peers. Students deepen their knowledge of contemporary art, theory and art history in elective seminars, and develop the skills necessary to build sustainable careers in professional development workshops. Fieldwork courses take students to artists’ studios and galleries, and our weekly Talks course features lectures by artists, curators and art historians and presentations by our own students. The MFA Thesis includes an ambitious art project or body of work, a presentation and a catalog.

Each student is given a private studio with 24-hour access. MFA Fine Arts has an equipment library with cameras, lights, sound recorders, projectors, screens and other media gear used by students to make and show their work. Our media studio features Mac Pro workstations, a scanner and free printing on large-format Epson inkjet printers. Students also have access to extensive digital fabrication resources—such as 3D printing, CNC routing, laser cutting and digital embroidery—at the Visible Futures Lab, in addition to many other facilities at SVA, including the Bio Art Lab, Printmaking Studio, RisoLab and Sculpture Center.

Students are given multiple opportunities for professional exposure, including studio visits with visiting artists, curators and critics, open studios, curated exhibitions in SVA’s galleries and our annual MFA Thesis Exhibition. Many students also find opportunities to exhibit their work off-campus in galleries and other venues. Students often work on-campus at SVA’s galleries, Sculpture Center, Library and Writing Center. Students often find employment as assistants in artists’ studios.

Aya Rodriguez-Izumi (MFA 2017), Initiation.
Delano Dunn, a 2016 graduate, is a mixed-media collage artist focusing on African American social issues. His work uses predominantly historical photographs to illuminate and sharpen what he calls intersecting histories that most people see as running parallel to one another.
Dunn received an illustration degree in 2001 from another college, but soon felt disillusioned with the practical end of things. After suing clients for payment twice (and not collecting either time) he began working as a designer at Williams Sonoma, then moved to a position at the Whitney Museum. After he got married and his daughter Violet was born, his wife said, “If there’s ever a time for you to get an MFA, do it now.” He realized she was right, quit his job at the Whitney, and enrolled at SVA.

“I wanted to take ownership of the fact that I am an artist, learn how to navigate the art world, and to build a proper studio practice,” Dunn says. “I got all of that and more. I didn’t expect to gain the amount of personal focus and artistic growth, or that I’d build such strong relationships with instructors and contacts outside of school such as galleries and curators.”

He was quite a bit older than some of his classmates, and one of the few parents in the program. “The transition from being a nine to fiver and coming back to student life was difficult; I was dealing with challenges in my life that were 180 degrees different than what my classmates had in front of them,” says Dunn. “When they would go gallery hopping, for instance, I usually couldn’t join them because I wanted to spend time with my daughter.” Like every other parent who has figured out how to become a master juggler, he became super efficient, planning exactly what needed to be done in the studio to avoid wasting time so he could get home early enough to hang out with Violet.

Dunn has a studio space in Newark, NJ, where he’s also an artist in residence. He tries to get there three or four times a week, and does freelance installation work on the other days. His solo show curated by SVA faculty member Jasmine Wahi at the Long Gallery in Harlem ran through the spring of 2017. Dunn says, “Of all the connections I’ve made at SVA, Jasmine has had the most significant impact on my career. She runs Gateway Project Spaces in Newark, where my studio is and where I have my residency, and she curated our thesis show. She has been an unbelievable champion of my work.” Up next for him is another solo show in Harlem in 2018.

The business of being a full-time fine artist—finding a gallery, doing promotions and publicity, applying for grants, all while continuing to produce work—can be confusing, as there is no single prescribed career path. Dunn found that the confidence he gained during his time in the MFA program, plus the professional connections he forged, were key to his successful launch into the art world. “My experience at SVA was important,” he says. “If I had just quit my job at the Whitney in 2014 and tried to steam ahead as a fine artist on my own, I know I wouldn’t be at the same spot I am now.”

Wave, 2016, mylar, cellophane, vinyl, shoe polish, resin on board, 57 x 49".
After getting her undergraduate degree in painting and drawing, Leah Dixon moved to New York, where she made work, showed in exhibitions and bartended. In 2013—shortly before attending the SVA master’s program—she and five partners founded Beverly's, a Lower East Side bar/nightclub/art space, which is where we sat down for a chat with her.
After being involved in the art scene for several years, why did she decide to return to school? “I was ready. I had my involvement in the New York art world and I had been in a very emerging art scene—but I wanted to get a view of something a bit bigger,” she says. Her practice had started to evolve from 2D to 3D: “It was a hard switch. I started making sculptures, and that body of work—the first big body of work I had made that was not totally conventional—was what I applied to SVA with.

“I knew it was going to be quite a feat to pull off being in grad school full-time and opening a business. I was still carrying the full plate of my life before, and grad school was going to be on top of that. It was really hectic!” What made it worth it? “The first reason was the opportunity for mentorship, which was completely new to me. I had been very involved in the art world but people were really just my same age, so having access to more experienced artists who were my professors was invaluable to me. I had had zero access to that before grad school.”

She mentions a few of the professors who had a big impact on her: “Gary Stephan was amazing. I think the way he was like a New Yorker in a way that was really sociable, very curious about a large New York conversation, but he was coming to it from an entry point of a different generation. Kate Gilmore was also massive—I would say in terms of what my practice is now, she was the most influential person I worked with. And Laurel Nakadate—she and I were around the same age but she was in a different part of her career, further along. Her feedback was incredibly important.”

The relationships she had with her fellow classmates was also impactful: “The community at school was super diverse and there are probably six people from my class that I’m still really close with. We’re really involved in each other’s practices and are in each other’s lives. We were always going to openings or making weird collaborations or curating things. Having an idea of your work as part of a larger social discourse—that’s really important.”

How did these conversations with faculty and peers affect her work? “I toy with using symbols or misappropriating or re-appropriating symbols, and sometimes I think that what I’m trying to say is really obtuse, that I’m asking a lot of the viewers. At SVA it was really invaluable to have so many people wanting to give me feedback because my work is so much about an audience response. Over the course of two years, having people who really knew my work, who were able to come to it with such a high level of understanding—their criticism was super appropriate,” she says. “I really benefited from whole-class critiques, actually—you almost got attacked and overwhelmed [laughs] but I think, looking back, that is how I view an audience—this discordant giant moving body. I don’t view it as a one-on-one so much. Prior to grad school I would maybe have had more of a tendency to be ultra-direct or maybe didactic because I would be scared that people wouldn’t get it. And then in grad school I got the confidence to not be so concerned about that.”

OPPOSITE: A sample of Leah Dixon’s work. See more at leahdixonart.com.
# Curriculum/Sample Program

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Regina Viqueira (MFA 2018), YES Machine.
Course Offerings

A sample of our course offerings follows. Note that seminar and workshop topics change from year to year; those listed below are intended as examples and may not be offered every year. A complete list of our courses can be found online at: sva.edu/mfafinearts/curriculum.

TALKS
A weekly gathering of all students, the Talks course begins each fall with short presentations by students: returning students show the work they made in their first year, while incoming students focus on the portfolios with which they applied to the program. These are followed by lectures and panel discussions featuring influential artists, curators, critics and scholars. The last few meetings each spring are devoted to thesis presentations. This course exposes students to the ideas and practices of contemporary artists and those who curate and write about their work. Equally important, it develops the students’ ability to present and talk about their own work.

Élan Cadiz (MFA 2018), Mom, Self Portrait, and Dad.

MENTORSHIP
This course provides a framework for mentorship. Mentors give students individual feedback on their work, guide them through the curriculum and offer advice on matters of professional development such as internships, employment, grants, residencies and exhibitions.

CRITICAL THEORY
What is critical theory’s relationship to art? This course is designed to introduce MFA students to the critical issues at stake in contemporary artistic practice. The class is organized as a series of discussions around texts and artworks, with each session based on a different methodological perspective. We will look at the writings of artists alongside those of philosophers, theorists, critics and historians, paying particular attention to theoretical models that have been important to the art of the past half-century. Our goal is to build a philosophical foundation for understanding the terminology, ideas and issues of today’s critical discourse. Topics include foundational ideas such as Marxism, psychoanalysis and poststructuralism; theories of the subject’s relationship to race, gender and difference; and more recent socio-political debates around spectatorship, object-oriented philosophy and neuroscience. Our main goal is to learn to think through ideas—in conversation and writing—in ways that will deepen students’ understanding of their own practice and its contemporary context.

CRITS
What do we talk about when we talk about art? In Crit, we develop a shared language for discussing student work. This course provides each student with critical feedback from a group of peers and a faculty member. Students develop their ability to receive critical feedback and to offer constructive criticism by describing, analyzing and evaluating the work of their peers. The format and duration of each crit is determined by the instructor.

SEMINARS
Seminars focus on specific issues in art history, theory and practice. Topics vary from year to year, and assignments may involve reading, writing, presentations, field trips and various forms of research, including creative projects. Fieldwork seminars take place almost entirely outside the classroom: students take advantage of New York City’s unique cultural resources by visiting galleries, museums and artists’ studios.
ART AFTER THE INTERNET
How do we produce, disseminate and exchange images? How does the Internet challenge art conventions? This seminar is focused on the troubled relation between contemporary art and the Internet. We will analyze dozens of artworks from the mid-nineties to today and stimulate group discussion around the latest critical issues in contemporary art and media theory. Special attention will be given to how the Internet is reshaping art: its production and distribution, and how we experience it. Versions, dispersion and collaboration versus originality, uniqueness and authorship in art are crucial elements for class discussion. We will examine works by artists who use digital media to produce art or, inversely, use conventional media to explore the digitized condition of contemporary life. Topics include postproduction, Net Art, surf clubs, post Internet, branding vs. invisibility, meme-making, Internet ugly, image circulation, crowdsourcing, performing on the Internet, the Darknet, data mining, surveillance and anonymity.

FIELDWORK: THE STUDIO VISIT
The artist’s studio is regarded as sacred space: it’s where the “magic” happens, and the work is produced. How artists approach their studio practices is eternally fascinating and can be varied but have surprising similarities and overlaps. In this course, we will have weekly visits with artists in their studios. The selected artists will range in experience, working methods, discipline and styles. The objective of the course is to experience the work where it’s made, to gain access to a variety of artists and to learn about their respective practices.

SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART IN THE PUBLIC REALM
This seminar will explore socially engaged art practices that move beyond the conventions of traditional art spaces and into the public realm—where art as a social practice is grounded in its connection to alternative audiences and communities. Through readings, lectures, site visits and course assignments, students will learn about the processes and challenges in creating collaborative, interactive and community-based art projects in public spaces. We will also address the nuts and bolts of developing socially engaged public art projects, from site-specific research methodologies and community partnerships, to writing proposals, budgets and applying for grants. Throughout this seminar, students will develop and refine individual and/or collaborative projects that extend from their own studio practices.
WORKSHOPS

Workshops focus on skills and strategies for creating and taking advantage of professional opportunities. These courses are practical and participatory: students implement the skills they learn by, for example, shooting and editing documentation of a performance, applying for a grant or revamping their websites. The Internship course provides students with the opportunity to gain experience and develop professional skills in partnership with the SVA Office of Career Development.

WORKING WITH GALLERIES

This workshop will discuss in-depth the inner workings of the artist/gallery relationship. Participants will gain a comprehensive understanding of forging a meaningful and long-lasting gallery relationship. Artists will learn how to research and identify appropriate galleries, introduce their work to gallerists and conduct studio visits. Representation, sales, exhibition logistics, art fairs, and much more will also be covered.

ARTIST AS CATALYST

This workshop is for artists interested in extending their practices beyond the four walls of their studio and engaging in more expansive forms of support for their fellow artists and the greater arts community. This includes writing criticism, organizing exhibitions, running an exhibition space, participating in an artist collective, collaborating with an arts organization, as well as newer forms of proactive engagement with artists and the public. The primary motivation of an artist catalyst is to build a strong, sustainable artist community and facilitate a constructive discourse around art-making and ideas.

THE ARTIST AS EDUCATOR

Many artists teach as a complement to their studio practices, which keeps them closely connected to the artistic community while forcing them to stay sharp and current. This course will introduce students to the possibilities of teaching, from museum education to K12, and academia, and will provide them with the skills necessary to identify and secure those positions. Particular time will be spent on the unique and extensive process of applying to college teaching jobs, including the materials required, the process of review and the importance of each document you submit. Through in-class assignments and peer workshopping, students will leave the class with a teaching philosophy, cover letter, curriculum vitae and artist statement for their teaching packet, as well as an outreach plan.

NETWORKING AND FRIENDING: A PROFESSIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY

How does an artist move a casual conversation that occurs at a gallery opening to an exchange of contact details and social media handles, a studio visit, a write-up in a respected media outlet, or an exhibition? This workshop treats the cultivation of professional relationships strategically, as a critical tool for moving an artist’s career forward. Students will be shown how to systematically develop their connections to people encountered through social media platforms and informal settings, and shape their social media profiles to become more visible to curators, gallerists and critics. The workshop will include both theoretical tactics and real-life opportunities to engage these action plans.

Jihyun Lee (MFA 2018), Re-portal.
To learn more about the faculty members and to read their biographies visit: sva.edu/mfafinearts/faculty.
Application Process

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS
For detailed instructions, visit: sva.edu/grad/howtoapply
- Online Application and $80 Application Fee: sva.edu/apply
- Statement of Intent/Personal Statement
- Résumé
- Letters 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
- Portfolio—accepted at svagrad.slideroom.com
- 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

SCHOLARSHIPS
Each year, MFA Fine Arts awards several departmental scholarships to accepted applicants based on merit and financial need. Scholarships are competitive, and can be awarded up to 50% of the annual tuition cost. In rare circumstances, we are able to offer larger scholarships to exceptionally qualified applicants. Domestic students can apply for Federal loans and work-study through the SVA Office of Financial Aid. Application fees can be waived by the department upon request.

This intensive studio residency, hosted by the MFA Fine Arts Department at SVA, has been designed for artists working in both medium-specific and cross-platform modes of production that aim for the intersection of art and ideas. Taught by distinguished members of the MFA Fine Arts faculty, the residency fosters a culture of rigorous practice and contemporary thought.

Each artist will have use of a private studio in a location convenient to New York City’s gallery districts, museums and alternative hubs for culture and technology. Daily studio visits from renowned faculty support an ongoing discourse on art and thought. While the focus of the residency is on content and critical discourse, work in a variety of media is supported and encouraged, including drawing, painting, photography, performance, installation, digital and interactive media, electronics, sound and all modes of experimental practice. Artists committed to a single form or medium can expect to delve deeper into the material concerns of their practice. Residents are also invited to consider the sociopolitical potentiality of art practices situated outside the paradigm of individual authorship, via forays into social practice and public forms. Ultimately, the goal of the program is to create an inclusive space for artistic research, activated by the spirit of inquiry.

Faculty and guest lecturers have included Media Farzin, Mark Thomas Gibson, Kameelah Janan-Rasheed, Miguel Luciano, Jodie Lyn-Kee-Chow, Angel Nevarez, Mark Tribe and Caroline Woolard.

Fine Arts: Residency in Contemporary Practices

- Session 1: June 4–July 6, 2018 FID-4994-A
- Session 2: July 10–August 10, 2018 FID-4995-A
- 4 undergraduate studio credits per session
- $3,000 per session / $6,000 for both sessions
We encourage applicants to visit our department. Contact us directly to schedule a departmental 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.

Mark Tribe, chair
Alison Kuo, program coordinator
Mark Ramos, assistant to the chair
Michelle Sumaray, assistant to the chair

Tel: 212.592.2500
Email: mfafinearts@sva.edu
Site: sva.edu/mfafinearts
Department site: mfafinearts.sva.edu

I loved SVA immediately. It was the rawness, youngness and positivity. It was like a rough diamond. I wanted to be part of the bigger world.”
—Hrafnhildur Arnardottir, MFA 1996