### MFAVisual Narrative



## The MFA Visual Narrative program offers

a fresh perspective and bold alternative to traditional MFA programs. We do so by recognizing that a command of story is the most powerful and fundamental foundation an artist in any creative profession can possess. Exceptional and effective storytelling isn't conveyed in beautiful words, images or character plot alone. Audiences only become invested with an insatiable "need to know what happens next" when they connect and empathize with a story's message or protagonist on an internal level—the challenges they face, why they make the choices they do, and how they become forever fundamentally changed by them. That realization and empathy with the true meaning and purpose of a story's

message or a protagonist's struggle is what makes stories so powerful, immersive and moving—and why stories matter to us all.

Our educational mission is to inspire all students to harness their collective creative writing and visual development talents to amplify their visual narrative skills and to master their personal command of story. Our graduates are empowered to be the next generation of transformational, relevant original content creators. The MFA in Visual Narrative program prepares them for leadership with the confidence to own their personal voice and the visual narrative expertise to change the world through story.

If you are ready to test the limits of your skills and what your stories are capable of, we invite you to join us!



-Nathan Fox, chair

## Why MFA Visual Narrative?

### MASTER YOUR VISUAL LANGUAGE AND NARRATIVE SKILLS

Founded in 2013, the SVA MFA Visual Narrative Department remains the only MFA program that puts the art and language of storytelling first through the combination of creative writing and development of visual narrative techniques. In the process, we give each student the:

- Confidence to have agency in their creative process, elevate their personal voice and define their career path.
- Opportunity to explore new media and push what their imagination and abilities are capable of within a supportive community of storytellers.
- Expertise to craft visual narratives with purpose, meaning and empathy in order to generate original and innovative stories.
- Skills to create relevant and powerful stories that reach new audiences.
- Connection to a world of professional storytellers and markets curated to meet the specific needs of their artistic medium and practice.

### COLLABORATE IN A MULTIDISCIPLINARY COMMUNITY

Students join a cohort of creative trailblazers from an array of traditional and nontraditional backgrounds, from animation and puppetry to PR and science. Students therefore bring, and share, a range of professional skill sets, building a collaborative new foundation of story craft. This broad range of talent is

echoed in the faculty, with expertise in such varied areas as theatre direction, photography, picture books, visual mapping and brand marketing.

### **MAINTAIN A FLEXIBLE SCHEDULE**

During the three summer intensive semesters in the heart of New York City, students attend courses, supported by a network of industry and market experts. Throughout the four semesters of online study during the fall and spring, students are able to work remotely and travel—without having to uproot their professional careers and family or change their personal lifestyles.

### DEFINE YOUR VOICE AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

From day one, students learn to communicate their message clearly, with meaning and purpose, in every visual narrative they make. We are a pass/fail program, so our students are encouraged to be bold, to fail and experiment in order to achieve their personal vision. As the future gatekeepers and creators of contemporary culture, our graduates are prepared to respond with the knowledge, vocabulary and skills necessary for true innovation and leadership in visual narrative.

If it's all about story for you, you are in the right place. You have to be willing to explore and explode your world to be a better storyteller."

-Anelisa Garfunkel (MFA 2016), writer, filmmaker, educator



### ELEVATE YOUR CAREER AND EXPAND YOUR NETWORK

Alumni have moved into careers in creative direction, animation, comics, game development, film, toy design, information and motion design, education, and many other disciplines. Recent graduates have worked for such organizations as Apple, Fisher-Price, Penguin Books, Disney+, Chase,

Deloitte Digital, Nickelodeon, MTV2, Exploding Kittens, Major League Baseball, Nike, Google, *The Boston Globe* and the White House. Others have gone on to successful teaching positions at prestigious institutions such as NYU, Rutgers, Gallaudet, College of Marin, CCS, UConn, CCNY, KCAI and the School of Visual Arts.

**CASE STUDIES** 

Feifei Ruan Eva Hall Melissa Malzkuhn

## A Community of Storytellers

Game designers, illustrators, animators—at MFA Visual Narrative, storytellers of all kinds learn what it means to put story first. A big part of the program's success comes from a focus on story craft, shared by a community of peers, teachers and mentors.

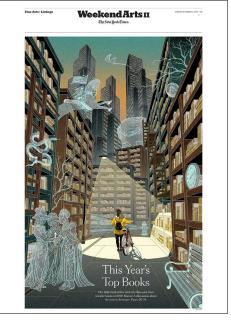
Feifei Ruan (MFA 2015) is a Chinese illustrator and visual storyteller. Her works can be seen on book covers, magazines, websites, merchandise and billboards. Her style ranges from Eastern classic to science fiction and fantasy. Feifei's work has been recognized by the Society of Illustrators, AI-AP, AOI, Spectrum, 3x3, Communication Arts, the Library of Congress and Creativepool. If she sounds like a hard worker, that's because she is. "[MFA Visual Narrative] was very intense and things were rolling really fast. It pushed me to find the most efficient way to work. It felt like a part of me was unlocked—the power to manage [a] heavy workload and stress," says Feifei. "It helped connect my different skills together and formed me into a professional narrative illustrator."

Her clients include *The New York Times*, the Office of the Mayor of New York City, WWF, Penguin Books, HarperCollins, Albert Whitman & Company, Boom! Studios, BuzzFeed News, Tor.com, *Variety, ELLEMen*, Wissen, *Modern Weekly*, Nautilus, The Jim Henson Company, Illumicrate, HCB Health, R/GA, BBC Studios, Vanke, Mercedes-Benz and Fendi Baguette.

Feifeiruan.com
Behance.net/feifeiruan
instagram.com/ruan0v0









Eva Hall (MFA 2020) is an animator, filmmaker and artist who has long pushed the boundaries of visual storytelling, "I had always approachedstorytelling with an experimental lens," she says, "and found myself wanting to better study how to create complex and impactful stories that could allow me to connect with and challenge my audience in new ways." Her experience at MFAVN changed her perspective on the craft of storytelling and gave her a chance to grow. "Going through this degree has really refined and strengthened my writing abilities," says Eva. "I've learned so much about myself as an artist and as a storyteller. The process was intimate and transformative for me." While personal, her journey was shared with passionate peers who specialized in many media. Eva explains, "We all have that central thread-our love and dedication to the art of story-that connects our process and work."











Melissa Malzkuhn (MFA 2015) is an activist, academic, artist and digital strategist with a love for language play, interactive experiences and community-based change. Community was a big part of her experience at MFA Visual Narrative. "The best thing about the program is the friendships and the networking you develop with your cohort," says Melissa. "I'm still in touch with my cohort, faculty members, and I enjoy following new students of the MFAVN family!"

In 2018, Melissa was appointed one of the first class of the 20 inaugural Obama Foundation fellows. She founded and leads creative development at Motion Light Lab at a Gallaudet University research center. Her production company, Ink & Salt, developed an app to teach American Sign Language, the ASL App, which has been downloaded over two million times. Third-generation Deaf, she has worked with international Deaf youth

programs, fostering leadership and self-representation. "For a very long time, Deaf people's stories have been told by everyone else but them," she says. "Now all I think about is how I want to tell our narratives, in all their complicated truths, and let it be."

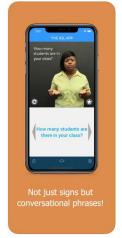
instagram.com/motionlightlab











## Curriculum/ Sample Program

MFA Visual Narrative is a flexible, low-residency program designed for working professionals and students of visual storytelling alike. Three on-site summer sessions are connected by two years of online study during the fall and spring semesters. Candidates for the degree must complete at least 60 credits and all course requirements as well as produce a successful thesis project to be eligible for degree conferral.

FIRST YEAR/SUMMER  Framing the Story Analog to Digital Writing Studio: Narrative Writing Visual Narrative: Graphic Media Visual Narrative: Photography Storyteller Series I  FIRST YEAR/FALL Story Visualized Writing Studio: Creative Script	CREDITS  3 2 3 2 2 0  CREDITS 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2		
		Visual Narrative: Film and the Moving Image	2
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		Narrative Color	2
		Visual Narrative: Interactive Media	2
		Writing Studio: Mythology and Folklore	2

The most difficult thing as an artist-writer is to define a personal style and voice, something that someone else recognizes as 'yours.' MFA Visual Narrative encouraged me to explore and take chances in my work. Not to be the next Hemingway or Picasso, but the first Ryan Ansel."

-Ryan Ansel (MFA 2015)

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Anna Eveslage (MFA 2015) was awarded a Minnesota State Arts Board Grant to create her thesis book project, *Eating Alone*, a collection of fictional vignettes and staged portraits.







"I think the biggest lesson is that it's okay to fail. In the end, all those extra drafts create a better story and more holistic piece of work."

-Liz Enright (MFA 2017)





"I like to make images and tell stories, but I also was drawn to design. I realized when I found out about this program that it was really narrative story that was at the heart of all that."

-Michelle Nahmad (MFA 2017)



## RISOLAB A Hub for Creativity

The RisoLAB is an educational print lab dedicated to empowering self-publishing and production of Risograph-based printed works, accessible to all SVA departments. Chair Nathan Fox explains why he launched the lab: "For a story-focused interdisciplinary visual storytelling program where the artist is author, understanding the printing process and project management is invaluable. Playing around with what print publishing and storytelling can do together is a crucial skill set and a critical thinking process to learn for any profession."

As Fox notes, the Riso printing phenomenon is yet another case of artists transforming a technology intended for mundane use into a powerful tool for self-expression. He continues, "Risographs were originally created as automated low-cost, high-yield image duplicators for churches and schools. Recently, Risographs have enjoyed a resurgence through the visual storytelling community, with zines, comics, book arts and experiments in printed matter. It was this perfect opportunity to generate a new creative print center on campus and a truly effective way to provide an accessible print production education in a box."

While the RisoLAB is available for the entire SVA community as well as outside creatives from fields as diverse as fine art, graphic design, illustration and even the worlds of poetry and literature, it has become a crucial physical hub that underpins



the on-campus summer semester of the MFA Visual Narrative program. All MFAVN students undergo rigorous training in Risograph printing in their first semester, after which they have unlimited access to the facilities to expand their design and print skills.

"As a low-residency program, many students are freelancers or working professionals," Fox says. "All students are encouraged to experiment and access the lab for personal work production, gallery shows, testing publishing concepts and pushing the capabilities of these amazing machines. Risographs provide an immediate way to prototype and explore alternative print methods and publishing, which was a big draw for our students and SVA at large."

See more at risolab.sva.edu.

### Course Offerings

This is a sample of our recent course listings. For our full curriculum, visit: sva.edu/mfavn/curriculum.

### **MYTHOLOGY AND FOLKLORE**

This survey course will explore the history, universality and use of mythology and folklore across literature, the arts. entertainment and popular media. We will review a diverse list of stories from around the world, studying the symbolism, archetype, structure and intent, and what these stories reveal about our shared humanity. How these stories influence contemporary storytelling across media will be discussed. In addition to analysis, the course will focus on application of the structures and characters found in mythology and folklore through creative writing and peer response. Students will concept and create new forms and works of myth and fiction.

### **INTERACTIVE MEDIA**

This course will examine the transformative ways that information, stories, games and ideas are presented through creative digital technologies and platforms. The evolution of analog and interactive digital media, web design and mobile technology, game platforms and user interface design will be examined as we undertake a historical survey of these interactive art forms and their various points of intersection. Guest artists and lecturers will address the class.

### **POWER OF STORY**

This lecture survey takes a critical and bold look at the power and influence storytelling has employed throughout history as a force for both good and evil. Through discussion and research, students will look at historical movements and cultural shifts in major religions, literature, art, digital media, entertainment and politics through a global lens and assess the narrative concepts, messaging and impact of storytelling. As content creators and future gatekeepers of change, students will be challenged to reflect upon the past and consider how the power of their stories can shape culture and society.

### **SHAPING YOUR STORY**

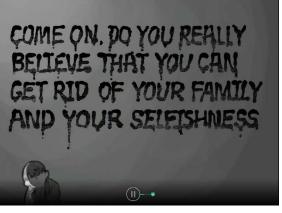
What is the best way to research, develop and produce a particular story? How do you get to the root of what that story is about? These are the core creative questions this course will consider as students begin to develop their thesis idea. Students will be asked to dig deep and put the why of their story first, ahead of the visual or scripted end product. As they start tackling pre-production tasks (asking "why" and "how" every step of the way) students will analyze their chosen medium's strengths and weaknesses in the service of their story. Alongside story development, students will answer questions of scope, budget and other pre-production criteria in pursuit of an ambitious, but feasible, outcome. The ultimate goal is to present a carefully considered and professional thesis pitch wherein students will demonstrate a clear, focused understanding of their story and be poised to hit the ground running as they begin production in the following fall and spring thesis courses.

### **PORTFOLIO AND PROMOTION**

Serving as a production course for portfolio completion and the launching of promotional materials, students will work on their website presence and on bringing their work to a finished, professional level. In addition, students will develop their exhibition curation skills in advance of the thesis gallery exhibition at the end of the semester. Industry professionals will share their studio practice and portfolio expertise.

### FORM, EMPATHY AND CHARACTER PLAY

Character and narrative are symbiotic; character + choice = story. Sometimes the only way to find a character's "voice" as a storyteller is to get into character-we must become the character in order to understand them. This course is designed to further develop skills in character creation through examining what makes characters behave the way they do. With lectures on character archetypes, character crisis, defining moments, unconscious desire and design, students will examine the elements necessary for creating their own characters. Through improv and role-playing techniques. students will understand how their characters will behave in fictional settings. better enabling them to write and visualize their character creations.







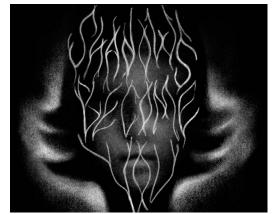




"When you get people together with this kind of talent in the world of story and the world of visual art, all kinds of magic can happen. And it does."

-Craig Coss (MFA 2015)





















TOP ROW, FROM LEFT: Binhua Chen, Anna Eveslage, Pilar Newton, Dani Diaz; SECOND ROW: G. Davis Catchcart, Jenny Bee, Susannah Lohr, Elizabeth Gu; THIRD ROW: Alison Paul, Jenny Bee, Sarah Shaw, Eva Hall; LAST ROW: Feifei Ruan, Marissa Jones, Alex Barsky.

### Notable Alumni

### Jenny Bee (MFA 2018)

freelance animator; motion graphic designer; graphics designer, NY1. Clients include: Google, Zagat, MTV2's Joking Off, Raphael Mostel, Frederator Studios. Purchase College Design. Technology Showcase

### jennybee.design Alexandra Beguez

(MFA 2016)

illustrator, comic book artist. Awards: Latin American Ilustración 6, Chosen Winner; 3x3 Professional Show No. 14, Honorable Mention; General Scholarship, Fine Arts Work Center alexandrabeguez.com

### Jon Bero (MFA 2016)

designer and producer at Apple overseeing animation, production and design jonbero.com

### Tony Chao (MFA 2021)

animation director, Animated Storyboards; comic creator, HazMatt; currently being published in Infinite Worlds Science Fiction Magazine tonychaoillustration.com

### Ann Coddou (MFA 2015)

designer; Fisher-Price Toy Box. Clients include: Nickelodeon, Disney, Target, Walmart, Toys"R"Us anncoddou.com Anndorphin.tumblr.com

### Mary Georgescu (MFA 2017) game designer, Exploding Kittens; co-designed Nothing to See Here, an adult storytell-

ing party game; MFA in Game Design, NYU

### marygeorgescu.com

### Eva Hall (MFA 2020)

freelance animator; motion graphic designer; Student Scholarship recipient, Animators Educators Forum; SVA Alumni Scholarship recipient; full-time assistant professor, Kansas City Art Institute evalouisehall.com

### Melissa Malzkuhn (MFA 2015)

Obama Foundation Fellow; founder/creative director, Motion Light Lab; digital innovation and media strategies manager, the Science of Learning Center on Visual Language and Visual Learning, Gallaudet University; co-founder/producer, Ink & Salt

### mezmalz.com

### Pilar Newton (MFA 2020)

freelance animator; motion graphic designer; faculty, SVA BFA Animation; self-published author, *The Snozzlewinks*; panelist on careers in animation, Black Girls Code pilartoons.com

### Feifei Ruan (MFA 2015)

illustrator, comic book artist.
Awards: Promax Awards,
Gold; Hiii Illustration international competition, Grand
Prix; SOI: MoCCA Awards,
Gold. Clients include: Penguin
Books, *The New York Times*,
Tor.com, BuzzFeed, *Variety*,
BBC Studios, Mercedes-Benz
feifeiruan.com

### Andrea Schmitz (MFA 2016)

freelance animator, motion graphics designer. Clients include: Vulture, The Cut, Jen Kwok. Showcased in: Things Took a Turn animation anthology, Ladies in Mograph Girl Gang Gif Challenge, School of Motion Holiday Card andreaschmitzzz.com

### Sarah Shaw (MFA 2020)

visual arts teacher, The Woodward School (Massachusetts); faculty, SVACE; instructor, Maine College of Art; recipient, MICE Mini-Grant for her 32-page zine The Repatriation. Recent narrative illustration clients include: The Boston Globe, the White House saraheshaw.com

### **Thomas Slattery (MFA 2017)**

freelance writer/artist, art director for films. Clients include: Public Art Fund, Mary Kay, Disney+, Interpop and Benefit Cosmetics for Sarah Kehoe tslattery.com

### Notable Thesis Mentors

Details on all our mentors can be found online at: mfavn.sva.edu/people/mentors.

### **Paul Briggs**

head of story, Disney

### **Elinor Carucci**

photographer elinorcarucci.com

### **Bee Grandinetti**

director, designer, illustrator, animator beegrandinetti.com

### **Melanie Hoopes**

storyteller melaniehoopes.com

### **Jeff Lemire**

cartoonist imagecomics.com/creators/ jeff-lemire

### **Ross MacDonald**

illustrator, prop designer ross-macdonald.com

### David Mazzucchelli

penciller, artist, inker

### Richard McGuire

illustrator, comic book artist richard-mcguire.com

### **Summer Pierre**

cartoonist, writer summerpierre.wordpress.com

### Julia Pott

animator juliapott.com

### **Martin Salisbury**

illustrator aru.ac.uk/people/martin-salisbury

### Christina (Steenz) Stewart

cartoonist, editor, professor oheysteenz.com

### Justin K. Thompson

production designer shinypinkbottle.tumblr.com

### **Robbie Tilton**

interactive VR design robbietilton.com

### Thu Tran

visual artist, writer, producer thutran.com

### Andrea Tsurumi

author, illustrator, cartoonist andreatsurumi.com

### Ru Xu

comic artist, illustrator ruemxu.com

### Alexandra Zsigmond

art director, artist alexandrazsigmond.com

## Faculty

Our faculty represent a breadth of expertise, including children's literature, data visualization, theater direction, graphic novels, printing, publishing and writing. Full biographies of our chair and faculty can be found online at: sva.edu/mfavn/faculty.

**Nathan Fox** 

chair, MFA Visual Narrative; illustrator; comic book guy

Anna Eveslage photographer, writer

Nicholas Fortugno game designer, educator

Anelisa Garfunkel
writer, director, producer

Jenny Goldstick artist, narrative designer

Jonathan Gottschall author, The Storytelling Animal and The Story Paradox **Bill Kartalopoulos** 

series editor, *The Best American Comics*;
publisher. Rebus Books

Leonard S. Marcus critic, writer, editor

Susanne Reece writer, illustrator

**Stacy Renee Morrison** photographer

**Jonathon Rosen** painter, illustrator, animator

Lee Aaron Rosen actor, researcher

**Matt Rota** 

illustrator
Christina Roussos

theater director, producer

Mark Sable

writer for comics, film, live-action television, animation and theater

Lucea Spinelli artist. writer

Tim Szetela

designer, animator, technologist, mapmaker

Robert Thill

artist, author, independent scholar

If you come in with 100 percent energy, the faculty are going to come back with 200 percent, so there's this never-ending Ping-Pong game of idea and idea and idea and idea."

-Mary Georgescu (MFA 2017)

## 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

### Where our alumni have worked:

- Abrams
- Apple
- Boston Art Review
- Brandywine
- River Museum of Art
- Budweiser
- Buzzfeed

- Disnev
- Fisher-Price
- Google
- IDW Publishing
- Kit Kat
- MLB
- MTV2
- Motion Light Lab
- New Balance

- Nickelodeon
- Nike
- Paramount
- Penguin Random House
- Target
- The Believer
- The Boston Globe
- Vulture

### Where our alumni have taught:

- College for Creative Studies
- Cornish College of the Arts
- East Texas Baptist University
- Gallaudet University
- Kansas City Art Institute
- Lesley University
- New York University
- Parsons

- Penn State
- Pratt
- Rutgers
- University of Connecticut
- Yeshiva University

# ontact

We encourage potential students to visit our department and welcome exploratory conversation at any time. If you are a visual artist with the spirit of a storyteller, sign up for our newsletter at mfavn.sva.edu. For questions about the application, contact Graduate Admissions at 212.592.2107 or email gradadmissions@sva.edu.

Nathan Fox, chair
Joan McCabe, director of operations
Lucea Spinelli, manager of communications
and special projects

Tel: 212.592.2388
Email: mfavn@sva.edu
Site: sva.edu/mfavn

Department site: mfavn.sva.edu

instagram.com/mfavn

in linkedin.com/school/mfa-visual-narrative

twitter.com/mfavn

### **RISOLAB**

Facebook: RisoLAB

o Instagram: @RisoLAB

Twitter: @RisoLAB

### **CONTINUING ED CLASSES**

MFAVN offers a range of classes, currently including Risograph printing and aspects of narrative design and visualization. Learn more: sva.edu/ce.

I felt like I found a home and people who thought about things in a similar way to me but translated them so differently."

-Ella Romero (MFA 2017)

### **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; Comics; 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 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; Directing; Fashion Photography.

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.

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.

The School of Visual Arts' Department of Art Education 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 (CHEA). The School of Visual Arts' Department of Art Education is currently pursuing accreditation of its educator preparation programs under the AAQEP standards with an anticipated quality assurance review in fall 2023. Pursuant to Section 52,21 of the

Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, the educator preparation programs offered by the School of Visual Arts are therefore considered to be continuously accredited for purposes of meeting the New York State requirement that all such programs maintain continuous accreditation. The School of Visual Arts' Master of Arts in Teaching in Art Education program was previously accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).

The Master of Professional Studies in Art Therapy degree program is approved by the American Art Therapy Association, Inc., and as such meets the Education Standards of the art therapy profession.

### **CREDITS**

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## School of Visual Arts

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