The Admissions Process: MFA

The deadline is always January 15th for the following Fall semester. We do not do spring admissions.

Contact the Graduate Program Coordinator, Kat Heatherington, at art255@unm.edu if you have questions or need assistance.

Application Procedure

ALL application materials must be submitted to the Department Graduate Office by the January 15th deadline. Incomplete or late application packets will not be processed. The GRE is not required for admission.

To apply for the MFA program, you need to submit:

- Online application, $50 fee, pay with credit card. http://www.unm.edu/apply
- Letter of Intent
- CV or Resume
- Artist Statement (no more than one page – upload in Writing Sample section)
- Three (3) letters of recommendation – in the application form, you will be asked to provide the email address of your letter-writers. Please do so; then they will receive an automated email asking them to upload your letter of recommendation and providing a link. This preserves the confidentiality of the process.
- Official transcripts from every college or university you have attended, whether you earned a degree there or not. (Unofficial transcripts must also be uploaded during application; official transcripts must be sent to the Admissions Office; see below. Electronic delivery is preferred if possible.)
- A PDF image portfolio, consisting of 15-20 images that best represent your work. Do not send print portfolios. List the title, medium, dimensions, and date below each image. If you would also like to include a link to an online portfolio, please feel free to do so. This should be in addition to your PDF portfolio, not instead of it. If you are including video work, please send vimeo links to excerpts of up to 2 minutes each.

All of these requirements should be uploaded on the application website, but official transcripts will still need to be mailed or digitally delivered to the Admissions Office at apply@unm.edu, or

Graduate Admissions
PO Box 489
Albuquerque, NM 87196-4895

Please format your portfolio as one PDF that contains 15-20 images of your best work, including the information about the image (title, medium, dimensions, date) below each image. Upload this during the online application process. There is a question in the application where you can (optionally) include a link to a website as well; this can supplement the portfolio but does not replace it.

Please see http://art.unm.edu for more information.
Graduate Program Coordinator:
Kat Heatherington
art255@unm.edu
505-277-6672
art.unm.edu/graduate-programs

Admission
The application deadline is January 15th every year for the following fall. Please see the detailed admissions handout for application instructions and details. All applicants must apply to one of the seven art studio areas:

- Art & Ecology
- Ceramics
- Experimental Art & Technology
- Painting & Drawing
- Photography
- Printmaking
- Sculpture

Once you are admitted to the program, you can take coursework in any of these studio areas, as well as Art History and Art Education, and you can work with faculty from any area. You can also take coursework outside of the department if you want. Funding, however, is determined by the area in which you are admitted, and you are expected to work with at least one faculty member from your area.

Funding and Tuition: Assistantships, Scholarships, and Links

All admitted students are given the opportunity (after admission) to apply for Teaching or Graduate Assistantships. Assistantships entail 10 hours/week teaching (TAship) or assisting (GAship) in an introductory course in your area, and come with about $700/month in stipend, as well as 6 hours of tuition paid for, additional hours billed at the in-state rate, and free health insurance.

We are able to fund over 85% of our MFA students with a TA or GAship. Assistantships are awarded each semester on a competitive basis, and funding is not guaranteed.

You cannot apply for an assistantship until you have been admitted to the program. All MFA students are eligible for up to a maximum of 6 semesters (3 years) of departmental funding. If you do not graduate in 3 years, you will not continue receiving departmental funding.

With an assistantship covering 6 hours, and the rest billed at the in-state rate, a student taking 9 hours (which is the required course load in order to graduate on time) can expect to pay a bit over $1200/semester out of pocket in tuition.
In general, tuition and fee rates are here: [http://bursar.unm.edu/tuition-fees/tuition-and-fee-rates.html](http://bursar.unm.edu/tuition-fees/tuition-and-fee-rates.html) If you do not have an assistantship, we recommend applying for New Mexico residency for tuition purposes after you have been here for one calendar year.

We recommend that all students investigate other funding possibilities as well, including:

Graduate Funding: [http://grad.unm.edu/funding/index.html](http://grad.unm.edu/funding/index.html)
Departmental Scholarships: [http://art.unm.edu/scholarships/](http://art.unm.edu/scholarships/)
University Scholarships: [https://scholarship.unm.edu/](https://scholarship.unm.edu/)
College of Fine Arts Scholarships: [http://finearts.unm.edu/advisement/cfa-scholarships/](http://finearts.unm.edu/advisement/cfa-scholarships/)

**Curriculum & Credit Hours**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Description</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art Studio 502, Interdisciplinary Seminar (offered Fall only)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Studio credits (in addition to 502)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art History credits</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electives:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside studio credits</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free electives</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>699 Dissertation (normally taken with the chair of the committee)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Hours</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In your first semester of graduate school, you are required to enroll in Art Studio 502 - Interdisciplinary Seminar. Normally, in the first semester, students will also enroll in 3 hours of art history and 3 hours of studio, either the area’s graduate level course (graduate printmaking, graduate photo) or a graduate tutorial (independent study) with a specific instructor.

Nine credit hours per semester is considered full-time, and is required for timely degree completion.

Your academic work after the first semester will be graduate credit art studio courses, art history or outside of studio courses, and one-on-one tutorial instruction.

You may transfer a maximum of 12 hours of graduate work from another institution, from graduate non-degree status, or from a previous master’s degree, to the MFA Program.

**Program Requirements**

**Graduate Reviews**

In each of your first two semesters, you will participate in a review of your current and ongoing studio work. All the studio reviews will last one hour and be scheduled for one day, approximately the 12th week of the semester. They are conducted by a four-member committee (three art studio faculty and an art historian) and intended to create a critical dialogue about
your work while introducing you to different points of view. They are open to the public. The Department Graduate Office will distribute a schedule and assign the faculty committee.

Two weeks prior to the review you will be required to submit a one-page statement about your work. Your committee will be concerned with the clarity of your ideas, both written and verbal, and the body of work you have produced. Following the review, a written evaluation will be available from each committee member regarding content and presentation.

Committee
In the third semester, you will select your Committee on Studies. The chair must be a tenure-track faculty member from your area. The remaining three members should be tenure-track faculty from art studio, art history, or art education, including at least one member who is not in art studio. You can also include one member who is non-tenure-track or an outside expert.

Qualifying
In your third or fourth semester, you will complete the Qualifying Exam, which is a 10-12 page process paper and comprehensive review of a selection of your work, with an accompanying committee meeting and oral exam.

Advancement
The Advancement establishes that your creative work is of sufficient maturity; that you can begin work on your dissertation; and that your general knowledge of critical and historical issues in art is at the level expected of a M.F.A. candidate. This examination, which may be written, oral, or both, is not limited to the areas of the student’s course work, but tests the student’s grasp of the field as a whole.

Dissertation
In the final semester, you will create and defend your MFA dissertation. This will consist of:
- A solo exhibition of creative work that you have organized and installed
- An exhibition catalog you have assembled and produced that includes a written essay related to the issues represented in the work
- A public presentation, talk or event that informs the audience about the nature of the creative process involved in the creation of the work.

Creative work submitted for the examination must be new work executed specifically for the final exhibition. The exhibition should in no way be a retrospective of work done in class or tutorial instruction.

Studios
All MFA students are assigned private studios in either the Art Annex or Mattox Sculpture Center. The program has 52 graduate studios, as well as graduate-only woodshop, metal shop, ceramics shop and kiln yard, and a press available for printmakers. Studio changes are made through the Graduate Office, and are first-come, first-served. Studios have a $250 refundable damage deposit in the first semester, as well as $100/semester rent (fall, spring, summer) each semester. All studio-holders must abide by the studio building rules. All MFA students are eligible to have an on-campus studio for 3 years; if you do not finish the program in 3 years, you risk losing your studio.
Faculty

Painting & Drawing
Associate Professors: Baochi Zhang, MFA, Florida State University, 1990 baochi@unm.edu
    Scott Anderson, MFA, scobin@gmail.com
    Bart Exposito, MFA, beexposito@unm.edu
Assistant Professors: Raychael Stine, MFA, raychaelstine@gmail.com
    John Abbott, MFA, jabbott01@unm.edu

Interdisciplinary:
Assistant Professor: Ellen Babcock, MFA, ebabelcock@sonic.net
Visiting Asst. Prof.: Amanda Curreri, MFA, acurrerir@unm.edu
Professor: Andrea Polli, MFA, PhD, apolli@unm.edu

Photography
Professors: Jim Stone, MFA, Rhode Island School of Design jimstone@unm.edu
    Meggan Gould, MFA, meggould@unm.edu
Associate Professor: Patrick Manning, MFA, University of New Mexico, pcm@unm.edu
    Michelle Murphy, MFA, michellemurphy@unm.edu

Printmaking
Professor: Yoshiko Shimano, MFA, Mills College, 1991 yshimano@unm.edu
Assistant Professor: Karsten Creightney, MFA, University of New Mexico, 2010 kcc1@unm.edu

3D
Professors: Constance DeJong, MFA, UNM, 1981 dejong@unm.edu
    Llewelyn Fletcher, MFA California College of the Arts, 2010, lfletcher@unm.edu
Assistant Professor: Randall Wilson, MFA, rgwilson@unm.edu

Ceramics
Associate Professor: Gina Voelker-Bobrowski, Contemporary Ceramics, MFA, gvbobrowski@unm.edu
Professor of Practice: Kathy Cyman, Arita Porcelain, MA Art Education, aritaunm@unm.edu
Assistant Professor: Clarence Cruz, Pueblo Pottery, MFA University of New Mexico, 2008, c108@unm.edu

Experimental Art & Technology
Professor: Mary Tsiongas, MFA, 1993 tsiongas@unm.edu
Associate Professors: Lee Montgomery, MFA, lee@undemocratic.us
    Stewart Copeland, MFA, (tbd)

Art & Ecology
Professors: Subhanker Banerjee, subhankar@unm.edu
    Szu-Han Ho, MFA szho@unm.edu
Associate Professors: Catherine Harris MFA, cphunm@unm.edu
    Jenn Hart-Mann, MFA, Land Arts of the American West, hartmann@unm.edu
Res Lecturer III: Ryan Henel, MFA, Land Arts of the American West rkhenel@unm.edu

Art History
Professors: Kirsten Buick, PhD, American Art , University of Michigan, 1999 kbuick@unm.edu
    Libby Lumpkin, PhD, Contemporary Art, rocket@unm.edu
Associate Professors: Susanne Anderson-Riedel, Graphic Arts , PhD, U of California, 2002 ariedel@unm.edu
    Justine Andrews, Byzantine and Medieval, PhD, jandrews@unm.edu
    Ray Hernandez-Duran, PhD, Spanish Colonial, University of Chicago rhernand@unm.edu
Assistant Professors: Kency Cornejo, PhD, Latin American Art History, kcornejo@unm.edu
    Margaret Jackson, PhD, PreColumbian Art History, UCLA, marn@unm.edu
    Kevin Mulhearn, PhD, Modern & Contemporary, Photography, CUNY, kmulhearn@unm.edu
Lecturer II: D. Aaron Fry, ABD, Native American Art, tsalagi1313@unm.edu
Letter of Intent and Portfolio Guidelines for Application to the MFA in Studio Art

The letter of intent and the portfolio are complementary; each completes the other. Both need to be strong for an application to be successful. We want to see coherence and excellence in both the art and the letter, and a solid connection between the two.

The letter can also complement the portfolio by filling in information. For instance, if your portfolio is all recent painting, but you also sculpt, you can discuss your sculpture and its relation to your painting, or how one grew out of the other, in the letter.

We highly recommend having a faculty mentor at your current school review your letter and portfolio, and acting on their informed feedback.

Letter of Intent

Your letter of intent should not be less than one page, and not more than three pages. Your name, address, phone number, and email address must be at the top of the first page. In the first paragraph or the title, indicate what area you are applying to (Painting & Drawing, Photography, Printmaking, Electronic Arts, Sculpture, Art & Ecology, or Ceramics).

The letter should demonstrate focus and direction. You should demonstrate a sense of what you want from the MFA program, and what you’re prepared to put into it. It should be both articulate and conceptual, and discuss the conceptual framework of your art, the ideas that tie the body of work represented in the portfolio together. Also focus on where you are going, what drives you. Our faculty are interested in students who are interested in learning, hungry to know as much as possible, who work hard at what they’ve done in undergraduate and on their own, who are deeply involved in what they’re doing in their art. What ideas motivate and drive your artwork; what concepts are you working with?

Express what you know about your discipline—and be aware that you are talking to intelligent and articulate people who are engaged in the field. Speak to your own strengths without an arrogant or condescending attitude. Write as you do to the professors you most respect—because that’s who’s going to review your letter. It’s a very good idea to have a current or former faculty mentor review your letter of intent before you submit it.

Avoid name-dropping unless you are discussing why you want to study with a particular professor, or discussing a particular influence on your work. The sentence that follows the name and provides context for it is of more interest than the name being dropped.

The relationship between what you write and what you show in your portfolio will show how you place yourself in the art world. We expect our students to have a strong background both in studio techniques, and what is going on and has gone on in the art world; hence the admissions requirement for 18 hours of art history coursework.
What are we looking for in a portfolio?

**Technical considerations:** The portfolio consists of 15-20 images of your best recent work. Images should be submitted as a single, high-resolution (compressed) PDF document, uploaded during the application process. If you are including video, please upload each of your videos to vimeo, and include the links in your application. Links to websites may be included but please include a PDF portfolio if at all possible.

**Artistic considerations:** We are looking for a high level technical expertise, suitable for graduate work, combined with focus and direction. Additionally, the quality of your images themselves should be high: good lighting, color balance, neutral background.

You should present a body of work that goes beyond undergraduate assignments—work that comes from yourself, and that stands out from the crowd. It is most important in the portfolio to show your best work. Not necessarily one sample from each medium worked in or body of work you’ve completed, but the very strongest pieces of all that you’ve done. We’re looking for a consistently high level of excellence. The work that is accepted is likely to be a relatively consistent body of work that sustains itself over 15 images, and is consistently excellent in skill and content, especially in self-motivated work. You should choose work that shows how you distinguish yourself from your peers.