Guidelines for Application to the MFA in Studio Art:
Letter of Intent, Artist Statement, and Portfolio

The letter of intent, artist statement, and portfolio are complementary. All three should be strong for an application to be successful. We want to see coherence and excellence across all three, and a solid connection amongst them. We highly recommend having a mentor or trusted faculty advisor review your letter of interest, artist statement, and portfolio for feedback and guidance on putting your best foot forward.

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 which area(s) you are applying to (Painting & Drawing, Photography, Printmaking, Experimental Art & Technology, Sculpture, Art & Ecology, or Ceramics). Please describe why your work should be considered in each area. **The MFA Program is interdisciplinary–once admitted, students can move freely to take courses and work with faculty from all areas.**

Review Process:

If you select as your primary interest any of the following areas, your application will *first* be reviewed by the faculty in that individual area: Painting & Drawing, Photography, Printmaking.

If you select as your primary interest any of the following areas, your application will *first* be reviewed by faculty in all four areas under the "4D" framework: Experimental Art & Technology, Sculpture, Art & Ecology, or Ceramics.

Any secondary interest area that you choose will be reviewed by faculty in that area *after* the primary interest area review.

We want to emphasize that our MFA program facilitates interdisciplinary study and that admitted students can study with faculty in all areas; choosing your primary area of interest helps direct your application to the appropriate areas for review and can inform teaching assistantship assignments.

Further Guidelines:

The letter should demonstrate focus and direction. Include a brief introduction of yourself. Describe why you are applying to grad school, what you hope to gain from the MFA program, and why our program would be a good fit for you. Discuss your goals for the program, as well as for your professional career. Even if your goals are not 100% clear at this point (which is why you might be interested in grad school), try to project what you would like to accomplish, as clearly as possible.

Further Guidelines (continued):

This will help us learn more about you and your art practice. Our faculty are interested in students who are highly engaged, deeply involved in their art practice, and willing to work hard–as evidenced in their undergraduate studies and outside of the classroom. Express what you know about your discipline and your specific approach to it. Speak to your own strengths and include anything significant that you think we should know about you.

The relationship between what you write and what you show in your portfolio will indicate how you place yourself in the art world(s). We expect our students to have a strong background both in studio techniques as well as in the history and practice of contemporary art.

ARTIST STATEMENT:

Your artist statement should be no more than 1 page. The artist statement provides the opportunity to describe the ideas, methods, and motivations driving your work. *Why do you make the work that you make? Why is it important to you? Describe your work, in terms of mediums, materials, or practices. Why does it matter in the world? Who are the artists or theorists that you see yourself in conversation with? How and why might other people connect to it?*

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 your work is collaborative, please explicitly state your role in the project: which parts did you complete? How many other collaborators were involved, and what were their roles? If you are including video, please upload each of your videos to Vimeo, and include the links in your application. **Please make sure all links are functional before submitting your application!** Links to websites may be included as supplements, but **a PDF portfolio is required.**

Artistic considerations: We are looking for conceptual thinking and technical competence, suitable for graduate work, combined with inquiry, focus, and direction. Additionally, the quality of your images themselves should be considered: good lighting, high resolution, and color balance help to showcase your work.

You should present a body of work that goes beyond undergraduate assignments—work that comes from your unique perspective, and that stands out from the crowd. It is important to show your best work, not necessarily one sample from each medium worked in, but the strongest pieces that you've created that speak to your interests. We're looking for a consistently high level of excellence. The work that is accepted is likely to be a relatively coherent body (or bodies) of work, and is rigorous in skill and content.

ASSISTANTSHIP INTEREST (Optional):

If you would like the opportunity to apply for an assistantship if you are admitted, please include a brief, one paragraph statement of financial need, and indicate whether teaching is a career goal for you.

Additionally, please indicate:

1) Which Areas* are you currently qualified to teach?

2) List relevant technical proficiencies (software, hardware, skills/techniques).

3) List any teaching experience you have in the Areas* designated (institution, semester(s)/year(s) taught, name of course).

4) Which Areas* are you *interested in* teaching (no prior experience necessary)?

*Areas at UNM: Painting & Drawing, Photography, Printmaking, Experimental Art & Technology, Sculpture, Art & Ecology, Ceramics, Art Practices (Art Practices I and II are foundation studio courses at the introductory undergrad level)