

BFA Handbook

**A guide to help you navigate your way through the
Bachelor of Fine Arts Program in 2D and 3D areas**

**Art Department
Central Michigan University**

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Congratulations on being accepted into the BFA Program in the Art Department at CMU.

The Bachelor of Fine Arts degree is a pre-professional program designed to prepare students for further development toward professional studio work as artists in two-dimensional and three-dimensional areas. Many consider the BFA to be good preparation for entry into MFA programs because of its focus on significant exploration and development of individually directed studio work, the requirement of an exhibition and the larger number of credit hours in the area of concentration required for this degree.

The BFA program is designed to help you recognize and develop your own work in a chosen studio area through regular feedback and support from faculty. It also includes ART 471, the capstone course for BFA students that enables you to prepare for a professional career in the visual arts. This course includes instruction in professional practices that will prepare you to work in the field, such as documenting visual material and writing an artist's statement.

BFA Program (at a glance)

Before Applying	Complete: ART 105, 115, 117, 118, 122, 6 credits in Art History, and 9 credits in Area of Concentration
Semester of Application	Meet with faculty advisor to prepare application and portfolio. Submit application with artist's statement, transcript, visual documentation, and visual documentation list by application deadline.
1 st Semester in program	Meet with faculty advisor and sign BFA major. Start developing thesis ideas. Participate in Full Faculty Critique during last four weeks of semester. Meet with BFA advisor to discuss faculty evaluations.
2 nd Semester in program	Meet with BFA advisor and BFA committee for BFA Committee Critique by week eight. There will be a sign up sheet for specific times in the Art office. The student must meet with the BFA committee and their BFA advisor on the date set by the BFA committee. Work with BFA advisor to develop a working thesis statement and thesis work. Participate in Full Faculty Critique during last four weeks of semester, present thesis statement and thesis work in progress. Meet with BFA advisor to discuss faculty evaluations.
3 rd semester in program	Enroll in and complete requirements of ART 471. Meet with BFA advisor and BFA committee for BFA Committee Critique by week five and present artist's statement, draft for artist's talk, and thesis work in progress. There will be a sign up sheet for specific times in the Art office. The student must meet with the BFA committee and their BFA advisor on the date set by the BFA committee. Work with BFA advisor to complete thesis exhibition work and Thesis Requirements. Install exhibition and conduct a Public Artist's Talk. Document thesis exhibition and complete all Thesis Portfolio requirements. Faculty review of artist's talk and thesis exhibition. Meet with BFA advisor to discuss faculty review and to submit portfolio.

Procedures for Completing Requirements for the BFA Program **2D and 3D Concentrations**

Following admission to BFA status, the student must meet the following requirements:

- a. **The student must meet with their faculty advisor to sign their BFA Major Form. The student's faculty advisor will serve as their BFA advisor representing the student's area of concentration.**

This must be done no later than the beginning of the third semester before graduation. The students will then be added to the active BFA candidate list and included in the schedule for full faculty critiques for the following three (or more) semesters. The BFA advisor will supervise the students progress through the BFA program and will assist in preparation for Full Faculty Critiques, BFA Committee Critiques, and the Thesis Requirements.

- b. **As part of the requirements for earning the BFA, the student will work toward and execute an exhibition of his/her work, which shows a focused direction and reflects the philosophical core of the student's artistic and visual goals.**

The work in the exhibition should be an individualized, self-directed body of work, which goes beyond class assignments and reflects the student's area of concentration. In many upper level studio courses students are given the opportunity to do individually directed work. In most cases, this work, with the consent of the instructor, can be part of the work that will go toward the BFA exhibition. Another way of facilitating this is to do an Independent Study- ART 556, 557, or 558 Independent Studio in the area of concentration.

- c. **For at least three semesters before graduation, the student must participate in Full Faculty Critiques and BFA Committee Critiques. In order to expedite the critique process there will be two Fridays scheduled for full faculty critiques at the end of the semester (one for 2-D in Powers and one for 3-D in NAS). Each student will be given a maximum of thirty minutes to present their work and to answer any questions presented by the faculty. The full faculty critique outline is as follows:**

1st Semester:

Each BFA candidate will participate in a Full Faculty Critique at the end of their first semester to assess their progress in the program. Evaluation forms will be filled out by the faculty and submitted to the student's BFA advisor for review with the student.

2nd Semester:

By week eight of the second semester, each BFA candidate will have a critique with their major advisor and the standing department BFA Committee to assess their progress towards a thesis idea and a thesis body of work. This meeting day and time will be scheduled by the BFA committee.

Each BFA candidate will participate in a Full Faculty Critique at the end of their second semester to present their thesis idea and thesis work in progress for evaluation. Evaluation forms will be filled out by the faculty and submitted to the student's major advisor for review with the student.

1st and 2nd Semester Evaluation and Assessment:

The evaluation forms for the Full Faculty Critiques will allow for an assessment of the candidates progress towards completion of the BFA program. If a student is not making sufficient progress towards completing the BFA degree, the faculty will place the student on "probation". If a student is placed on probation, they have until the next Full Faculty Critique to show significant progress. If the faculty does not feel that significant progress has been made, the student will be eliminated from the BFA program.

3rd Semester:

By week five of the third semester, each BFA candidate will have a critique with their major advisor and the standing department BFA Committee to assess their progress towards a completed thesis body of work. This meeting day and time will be scheduled by the BFA committee.

3rd Semester Evaluation and Assessment:

During the BFA Thesis Exhibition, the faculty will review the candidate's thesis exhibition work and public artist's talk. The candidate should meet with their BFA Advisor at the end of their 3rd semester to discuss the faculty's comments.

- d. The student may change a BFA advisor once the selection has been made by stating the reasons for a change in a letter to the Art Department Chairperson.**

BFA advisors can elect to remove themselves from the position of a student's BFA Advisor. In this case, it is the responsibility of the student to find a replacement.

- e. The student must register for ART 471 'BFA Exhibition' during the semester of his/her exhibition.**

This class offers guidance for the Thesis Requirements (artist statement, resume, exhibition materials, artist's talk, visual documentation, and BFA portfolio). The Gallery Director will assign an exhibition date during this class.

f. The BFA advisor will review her/his work with the student prior to installation.

Each student is responsible for completing all of the Thesis requirements outlined in ART 471 and for completing a thesis exhibition.

g. After the thesis installation, each BFA candidate is required to submit to his/her BFA advisor (in addition to the instructor of ART 471) the following:

- An artist's statement, reflecting the development of the work in the exhibition (including historical and contemporary influences, information on media and process, intentions, and concept).
- 10 to 20 slides, or a CD, or DVD, which visually documents the work exhibited and a visual documentation list.
- An artist's resume.

The instructor of the ART 471 course will place the student's BFA portfolio (submitted during ART 471) on file in the art department office.

Should the student fail to meet the requirements outlined above, he/she will return to the previously declared degree and major program.

Timeline for Completing Requirements

After being admitted into the program-

Schedule an appointment with your faculty major advisor to sign your BFA major. This should be done right away after admission to the program.

During first semester in the program-

Start developing ideas and work toward your thesis exhibition. This work may not end up in the exhibition, but it is part of the process of developing your individualized, self-directed work. This will give you the opportunity to get feedback and suggestions from faculty right away.

You are required to have a Full Faculty Critique at the end of the semester, so schedule a meeting with your BFA advisor to help you get things rolling. If you are interested in Graduate Programs in Art, this is a good time to discuss this with your faculty advisor and get help and suggestions.

You must participate in the scheduled Full Faculty Critique at the end of this semester. Schedule a meeting with your BFA advisor to discuss the faculty's evaluation of your work and your progress in the BFA program.

During second semester in the program-

By this time you should be in a position where your thesis work is becoming very clear in terms of concept, materials and process. The BFA Committee will schedule a date and time for the BFA Committee 2nd semester critiques during the first eight weeks of the semester. You will meet with your BFA advisor and the BFA Committee to present your thesis ideas and your work in progress. This is the last time you will have a full semester to work on your artwork for the thesis exhibition.

Make sure you sign up for ART 471 for the following semester, and, in preparation for this course, write a one-sentence working thesis statement about your work covering media, a very simple description and concept.

You are required to participate in the scheduled Full Faculty Critique at the end of this semester. Be prepared to present your working thesis statement, your thesis work in progress, and an exhibition plan. Schedule a meeting with your BFA advisor to discuss the faculty's evaluation of your work and your progress in the BFA program.

During third and final semester in the program-

The BFA Committee will schedule a date and time for the BFA Committee 3rd semester critiques during the first five weeks of the semester for those students in their final semester. During this meeting with your BFA advisor and the BFA Committee, you will present your artist's statement and your thesis work in progress. Because of the timing of the exhibition, and work that goes toward the display of your artwork, this semester usually provides less time for completing the thesis work than many students expect.

You will be working on your written Thesis Requirements at this time. It will be important to send drafts of this to your BFA advisor for review and suggestions. You must schedule a meeting with your BFA advisor before installation of your exhibition.

Your thesis work and public artist's talk will be reviewed by the faculty. You must schedule a final meeting with your BFA advisor at the end of your exhibition. At this time you will submit your portfolio to your BFA advisor and discuss the faculty's evaluation of your exhibition and artist's talk.

ART 471 BFA Thesis Exhibition

ART 471 is offered every semester for students in their final semester in the BFA program. This course is a capstone course that enables a student to prepare for a professional career in visual arts.

The main objectives of this course are:

- 1) to write a professional artist's statement
- 2) to create a professional portfolio including a resume, visual documentation, visual documentation list, etc.
- 3) to write a letter of intent for a gallery exhibition, grant, graduate school, or job
- 4) to deliver a concise and critical public artist's talk
- 5) to create a BFA thesis exhibition.

BFA Public Artist's Talk

Each BFA candidate will conduct a public artist's talk in the University Art Gallery during their BFA Exhibition. Artist's talks will be scheduled and supervised by the instructor for Art 471. Each candidate will have one half hour to conduct their talk and to answer questions regarding the work.

This public artist's talk will be in support of the candidate's BFA Exhibition work. The following is a suggested outline. The specific order of the outline may be altered, but all of the content listed in the suggested outline must be included in your Public Artist's Talk.

A. Introduction

1. Thesis statement
2. General information or background

B. Historical and Contemporary Influences

(Art, Artist, Art theory that influenced this body of work or individual components within the body of work. There should be 3 minimum)

C. Process and Medium

1. What process is used to create work
2. How is this process important to the work, how it is perceived, etc.
3. What medium is used
4. Why is this medium essential to communicate your conceptual ideas to the viewer

D. The Work Itself

1. Description of the Physical and Inherent Qualities of the Work
2. External Qualities of the Work that Inform on its Meaning (social, political, historical, economic, philosophical, biographical)

3. The Intention of the Work (what it is meant to communicate)
 4. Formal Analysis
- E. Conclusion (bring all of the above together in a cohesive closure)

Comments and Questions

This program, like any other, is open to revision and change to allow it to best serve the needs of students. Suggestions are welcome. Your BFA Committee, in particular your BFA advisor is your prime resource for help and direction through the program. In addition, questions and concerns can be addressed to the Chairperson of the Art Department BFA Committee for help and clarification.

We are here to help support and guide you toward your objectives.