

Philosophy & Curriculum

The MFA in Illustration Practice program prepares artists to elevate their artistic and business abilities, blend media within new cultural contexts, and integrate research and critical analysis into their work. MFA students are encouraged to find new directions for the practice in the 21st century and actively initiate projects. This intense program of study helps students revisit their creative process and use of materials while awakening their abilities to chart their own course as entrepreneurs—becoming their own client, building creative partnerships, and networking. This program embraces existing models of illustration practice while seeking what is new on the horizon and beyond into new markets. Through writing and research, students' abilities to communicate and disseminate ideas will expand.

Illustration practice is a public visual language inspired by the whole of art and design history. It is a remix of art and design—a field in the midst of exciting change yet rooted in storytelling and ideas that intellectually and emotionally engage the public. In this program, students find new directions for the practice, making visual and intellectual connections that examine illustration's cultural meaning.

The curriculum combines structured projects, independent exploration, and critical discussion with professionals and program peers. Collaboration is encouraged within and outside the program's community. Writing and theoretical research are designed to blend with commercial practices and historic investigations. Research distribution models and prototyping help students gain the skills and knowledge necessary to compete in both the national and international marketplace.

Students in this two-year, 60-credit, full-time program will:

- Investigate new materials and manufacturing models during a first year, 6-credit studio course, where faculty assign projects designed to spur creative and analytical thinking;
- Study a customization curriculum that includes critical seminars, and a rich slate of humanities and studio electives;
- Undergo research and writing that address concerns on the historic, social, and cultural contexts of illustration practice;
- Develop an independent, second year thesis project using a medium appropriate to their personal direction and emerging illustration markets, including an exhibition and accompanying case study book;
- Produce work at a professional level with real world applications to their career goals;
- Collaborate with fellow students, professionals, and organizations including Dolphin Press & Print at MICA, the Center for Design Thinking at MICA, the Modern Graphics History Library, and the Rockwell Center for American Visual Studies;
- Engage with full-time and visiting faculty, as well as critics-in-residence and artists-in-residence.

Program Facilities & Resources

This program is an advanced lab for interdisciplinary research and exploration centered at one of the nation's top art colleges. Facilities and resources available to students in the program include:

- An open-plan, state-of-the-art dedicated studio environment;
- Opportunities to collaborate with students from the MFA in Curatorial Studies and MFA in Graphic Design as well as with MICA research centers such as Dolphin Press & Print @ MICA and the Center for Design Thinking;
- MICA's ArtTech Center, which houses a number of technology resources including the Digital Print Studio for large scale and giclee prints, Z-Corp 3D printer, and Laser Cutters;
- 2D Prototyping Lab in development for 2011;
- Decker Library

Who Should Apply

Admission to the program is competitive, and successful applicants will include experienced illustrators and advanced students from related disciplines (including design, writing, fine art, animation, film, digital media, and others) who:

- Seek to contribute new ideas and directions to the practice of illustration, expand the range or reinvent the work they produce, and expand the research and writing available on illustration;
- Are actively engaged in the social, cultural, aesthetic, and technological issues transforming communication industries;
- Typically have real world experience, although motivated, professional-minded advanced students interested in contributing to supportive professional networks are also desirable.