

Programme options for the Master of Fine Arts (MFA)

Three programme options are available in the Master of Fine Arts degree at Elam: Studio Practice, Thesis or Research Portfolio. To be eligible for entry to any of these three programme options, you will need to have completed either the Bachelor of Fine Arts (Hons) or the Postgraduate Diploma in Fine Arts, or five years of equivalent study in fine arts (including at least one year at postgraduate level), and have an appropriate standard of achievement.

Please note: if you have a degree in another field altogether but have maintained a professional practice as an artist for some years, we may consider an application for direct entry into our Postgraduate Diploma of Fine Arts (PGDipFA). If your portfolio of work and associated experience is strong but not quite up to postgraduate level study we could consider a transitional programme of study to bring you up to a qualifying level. To enter a transitional programme your independent portfolio of work would need to be at an equivalent standard to that of good graduates of the third year of the Bachelor of Fine Arts.

MFA — Studio Practice

This option is suitable for practitioners focusing on either a creative specialisation or a cross-disciplinary creative endeavour. You will pursue advanced research, innovation and experimentation in theoretical and aesthetic aspects of contemporary art and design. You will also have the opportunity to explore interdisciplinary activities in fields such as painting, sculpture, installation, performance, printmaking, digital media and video.

In this programme it is expected that written components will account for approximately 20% of the course, with the balance of the submission consisting of artistic works. The Studio Practice MFA is the usual pathway to the Doctorate in Fine Arts (DocFA).

MFA – Thesis

This option is also suitable for theorists and some practitioners focusing on contemporary creative issues and theories. You will pursue advanced research, innovation and experimentation in theoretical and aesthetic aspects of contemporary art and design, and use this material to develop an entirely written thesis. The MFA by Thesis is the usual pathway to a written PhD in Fine Arts.

MFA – Research Portfolio

This option is also suitable for practitioners focusing on either a creative specialisation or a cross-disciplinary creative endeavour. You will pursue advanced research, innovation and experimentation in theoretical and aesthetic aspects of contemporary art and design, and use this material to develop a research project in a mode or modes appropriate to the topic, in a form approved by the Head of School.

The MFA Research Portfolio is designed to accommodate a more equal integration of theory and practice. Although there are no strict guidelines, your practice would not normally make up more than 50% of the final submission. This may suit an artist who is interested in putting more emphasis on, and time into, a dissertation that would sit alongside studio work. It is also a programme that could support a range of unique topics such as curatorial projects manifesting in thematically assembled exhibitions, supported by a detailed written curatorial position.

The MFA by Research Portfolio is the usual pathway to a PhD in Fine Arts with a creative practice component.

MFA – part-time (two years)

Elam School of Fine Arts accepts applications for part-time study in all three MFA Degrees. We recognise the financial burden of postgraduate study and will work with you towards negotiating alternative approaches to study. In most instances, part-time students work in studios within the School, attending for around twenty hours a week. The studio MFA programme has weekly critiques, seminars & reading groups. As a part-time student, you may attend all of these, or spread involvement with these facets of the course across the two year period. Structuring a part-time course depends on student needs and must be negotiated with supervisors and course leaders in relation to progression of the research/studio project.

The MFA programme is not offered extramurally.

More information

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The University of Auckland Student Information Centre
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To assist us in responding to admission enquiries, please include information about your prior study and qualifications (academic transcripts are ideal if they are available). If possible, include a curriculum vitae outlining your academic and artistic career and sample images of your recent creative work.