

# Art and Social Practice MFA

## Community Based Art Practices

### Goal Description:

MFA students in the Art and Social Practice program will engage with communities through their creative practices.

**Providing Department:** Art and Social Practice MFA

**Progress:** Ongoing

### RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS

#### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

#### Participatory Acts

#### Learning Objective Description:

Students will demonstrate the ability to engage relevant audiences in the development and/or creation of art projects that are collaborative and accessible.

#### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

#### First Year Exhibition

#### Indicator Description:

Students will have an exhibition of work at the end of the second semester of the first year in the MFA program. This exhibition will include works that demonstrate audience participation in the concept development, creation, and/or implementation of the art works.

#### Criterion Description:

Academic Year 2021-22 is the first year of the program. It is desired that at least 50% of the work by each student includes audience participation and community partnership. In the assessment of the student work in the first year of the program, baseline data will be gathered.

In the second year of the program, students are required to defend their work to a faculty committee, the Graduate Review. The Graduate Review will be added as an additional indicator in the second year. In the third year of the program, students are required to have a thesis exhibition and publication at the conclusion of their final semester. The Thesis Exhibition and Publication will be added as an indicator in the third year of the program. These indicators will be used to chart the development of audience participation and community partnership in the student's studio practice.

#### Findings Description:

In the second year of the program, academic year 2022-2023, a graduate review rubric and schedule was created and a review committee conducted graduate reviews for all students in their first and second years.

Students in their second year were reviewed at the end of their third semester to determine eligibility to prepare for thesis work which will take place in their third year. Two students received a passing rating. One student received a probationary rating and is scheduled to re-review on August 25, 2023.

Students in their first year of the MFA program were reviewed at the end of their second semester. These students will be reviewed for a second time at the end of their third semester to determine eligibility to prepare for thesis work which will take place in their third year.

Students in their second year exhibited work in the NSARC at the end of their third semester. More than 50% of the work displayed demonstrated audience participation in the concept development, creation, and/or implementation of the art works.

Students in their first year exhibited work in X220 at the end of their second semester. More than 50% of the work displayed demonstrated audience participation in the concept development, creation, and/or implementation of the art works. Students in their first year also led a site-specific participatory event at the Good Shepherd Mission at the end of their second semester.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Action - First Year Exhibition

Action Description:

In the second year of the program, academic year 2022-2023, a graduate review rubric and schedule was created and a review committee conducted graduate reviews for all students in their first and second years.

Students in their second year were reviewed at the end of their third semester to determine eligibility to prepare for thesis work which will take place in their third year. Two students received a passing rating. One student received a probationary rating and is scheduled to re-review on August 25, 2023.

Students in their first year of the MFA program were reviewed at the end of their second semester. These students will be reviewed for a second time at the end of their third semester to determine eligibility to prepare for thesis work which will take place in their third year.

Students in their second year exhibited work in the NSARC at the end of their third semester. More than 50% of the work displayed demonstrated audience participation in the concept development, creation, and/or implementation of the art works.

Students in their first year exhibited work in X220 at the end of their second semester. More than 50% of the work displayed demonstrated audience participation in the concept development, creation, and/or implementation of the art works. Students in their first year also led site-specific community-based art projects in Huntsville during their second semester.

Higher Ed Teacher Preparation

Goal Description:

The MFA Art and Social Practice Program will prepare graduate students to teach art at the College and University levels.

Providing Department: Art and Social Practice MFA

Progress: Ongoing

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Pedagogical Methods

Learning Objective Description:

MFA students will prepare high-quality college-level syllabi, course outlines, lesson plans, rubrics, and teaching philosophies.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Syllabi and Course preparation

Indicator Description:

In the second semester of their first year, MFA students will take ARTS 5313 Teaching Seminar in Art. This course will examine teaching pedagogy in higher education and is a required course prior to awarding Teaching Assistantships to MFA students. At the conclusion of the course, students will

submit syllabi, course outlines, assignment descriptions, and grading rubrics to the Graduate Coordinator and Department Chair. These materials will be evaluated to determine students' preparedness to be awarded Teaching Assistantships the Fall semester of their second year.

**Criterion Description:**

MFA Students will submit syllabi that include

- Course description
- Course learning objectives
- Teaching Methodology
- Required assignments and grading criteria
- Policies regarding attendance, late work, and classroom behavior
- Required textbooks and materials
- Course outline by week

A rubric will be developed to assess the syllabi. Since this is the first year of the program, baseline data will be gathered. In subsequent years, students who have been awarded Teaching Assistantships will be assessed on teaching effectiveness and this evaluation will be added as an additional indicator.

**Findings Description:**

MFA students in the Teaching Seminar are given a detailed syllabus assignment that is assessed within the course.

All WASH faculty including GAs and GTAs use the same syllabi template that is provided - one for all studio sections, and another for Lecture. They do not write their own syllabi or make edits. Drawing faculty including GAs and GTAs were supplied a standardized template syllabi that the Foundations Committee created.

**RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3**

**Action - Syllabi and Course Preparation**

**Action Description:**

Graduate faculty will mentor GTAs with peer evaluations followed by verbal feedback. In addition, to address the lack of mentorship for GTAs in subjects other than WASH, one graduate faculty will be assigned to mentor all GTAs for continuity. Students will be asked to submit supplementary teaching methodology and a weekly class plan to be assessed according to the syllabi rubric designed by graduate faculty.

**New Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement Item**

**Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify):**

**Closing Summary**

- Graduate Faculty will prepare the new cohort of MFA students entering the program in Fall 2022 for exhibition of their work in Spring 2023.
- Three second-year MFA graduate students who have completed ARTS 5313 Teaching Seminar in Art and 18 graduate credits in Art will be assigned to teach one course each in Fall 2022. The Graduate Teaching Assistants will work closely with Graduate Faculty who will mentor them by assisting them with syllabi preparation and course content. Mentors will meet with the GTA's throughout the semester to monitor their progress and provide support as needed. At the conclusion of the Fall 2022 semester a written assessment will be made including recommendations regarding future teaching assignments.

## **Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:**

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

In 2022-2023, first-year and second-year MFA students engaged with various communities through their creative practices including immigrants, people experiencing homelessness, and laborers. Agency partnerships have included the Good Shepherd Mission, Creekside Retirement Community, Office for International Students at SHSU, and the Wynne Home. Dispersive publics were also engaged through participatory installations in public spaces throughout Huntsville. Excellence in community engagement projects was incentivized by launching a competitive \$1000 grant to fund an MFA student project in Huntsville, juried by a panel of community leaders and arts professionals. Student success was assessed through Graduate Reviews and followed a corresponding Review Rubric. Out of three second-year MFA students being reviewed at the end of their third semester, two received a passing rating, and one received a probationary rating. Out of three first-year students being reviewed at the end of their second semester, two received a passing rating, and one received a probationary rating.

### **PARTICIPATORY ACTS**

The newest MFA cohort demonstrated facility with participatory methods of socially engaged art more quickly than expected. By the end of their second semester, their practice was centered on socially engaged art as a primary medium. For example, at the end of their second semester, students in this new cohort had already tackled issues of poverty and social isolation, generating projects that activated various communities and enacted creative solutions. Their projects took place at sites including the Office for International Students at SHSU, the Wynne Home, and the Good Shepherd Mission. These students also used various methods for translating their community-based art to an art-viewing public by exhibiting installation, photography, and video in X220: mediums the students did not previously include in their studio practice. However, two first-year students in the newest MFA cohort were under-performing and despite individual meetings and encouragement from MFA faculty members, two new students dropped out of the program in the 2022-2023 academic year.

### **FIRST YEAR EXHIBIT**

Participatory work was exhibited publicly in site-specific installations. Students obtained permission from various community partners and stakeholders to exhibit these works in public spaces. In addition, first-year and second-year students exhibited their work in the NSARC and in X220.

### **HIGHER ED TEACHER PREPARATION**

MFA curriculum includes Teaching Seminar in the Spring of their first year as a required course. This course, in addition to GA and GTA positions, prepares graduate students to teach art the University level.

### **PEDAGOGICAL METHODS**

Students' syllabi, course outlines, and lesson plans were scored according to a rubric designed by graduate faculty. Three student syllabi were assessed. Two received a score of 50/70 and one received a score of 55/70. Teaching philosophies were assessed within the Teaching Seminar course.

### **SYLLABI AND COURSE PREPARATION**

MFA students in the Teaching Seminar are given a detailed syllabus assignment that is assessed within the course.

All WASH faculty including GAs and GTAs use the same syllabi template that is provided - one for all studio sections, and another for Lecture. They do not write their own syllabi or make edits. Drawing faculty including GAs and GTAs were supplied a standardized template syllabi that the Foundations Committee created.

## New Plan for Continuous Improvement Item

### Closing Summary:

#### New Goals:

- Prepare graduate students to be community-based artists:
  - Create opportunities for students to create community-based work
  - Prepare students to exhibit their work outside of Huntsville
  - Thesis procedure
- Increase student recruitment and retention:
  - Include more faculty in Department of Art in the grad program in order to support students working in various media.
  - Request second tenure track line for professor of art & social practice who can also teach core curriculum in the Department of Art
  - Earlier and repeated advertisement schedule with e-flux
  - Increasing visibility of MFA program locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally
  - Attract students who have enough knowledge about social practice to succeed in the program
  - Identifying undergraduate SHSU students with potential to become MFA candidates
  - Maintain at least the same number of GA and GTA positions for graduate students
- Create a well-rounded and robust social practice program
  - Create opportunities for students to work with more social practitioners.
  - More interdisciplinary collaborations
  - Continue strengthening community collaborations in the local area
  - NSARC galleries

Though not every student met program standards for participatory acts and community-based art, as a whole, students achieved course objectives and worked in social practice earlier and more ambitiously than expected as evidenced by community-based projects undertaken by the new first-year cohort of students, and the growth of the second-year students. These findings do not suggest a need for significant revision in course materials or teaching methods. Thesis requirements will be developed and communicated with third years. A thesis rubric will be designed by graduate faculty to assess graduating third-year students. Graduate faculty will seek opportunities for third-year students to exhibit thesis work in Houston.

Indicators show a decline in student enrollment, with 5 students enrolling the first year of the program, 4 students enrolling in the second year, and 3 students enrolling in the third year. We need to increase numbers on student enrollment. In the area of student retention, the indicator results show the same retention as the previous year. Two second-year students have left the program, and two first-year students have left the program. We want retention to gradually improve, not stay the same or decline. Although each student leaving had a range of personal reasons for doing so, a theme emerged: some students entering the program are not always prepared for what social practice entails and expect to make representative studio work about social issues rather than undertaking direct community engagement. Current students have requested more professors who work in social practice to bolster the program. In response, the program will request a second tenure-track line for a professor in art & social practice who can also teach core curriculum in the Department of Art. Several students also would like more support in pursuing traditional fine art media while pursuing social practice. To address these issues, the current graduate faculty will work on including more Department of Art faculty working in various media to teach in the graduate program. This may include a standalone MFA class or a Studio Seminar with a special focus on a traditional fine art media in relationship with expanded and social practice. This change can help support students who wish to root their socially engaged practice in more traditional fine art mediums or who work concurrently in a studio-based practice. To improve both student enrollment and retention, grad faculty will work to advertise

the program earlier and more frequently to attract candidates with enough knowledge about social practice to succeed in the program. Part of attracting more qualified candidates is increasing visibility of the grad program. Graduate faculty will also work to increase the visibility of the MFA program by seeking opportunities to highlight the MFA program in visible ways such as conference presentations, news publications, and publicizing student projects in area media. Affordability is a factor for our students and we need to maintain the same number of GA and GTA positions to entice new students with an affordable option for graduate school.

A more robust social practice program would include students having contact with a wide variety of social practitioners. To meet this need, faculty will explore various possibilities such as a Social Practice Artist in Residence who teaches an MFA class in the Spring semester, a second faculty member in the program who works primarily in social practice, and/or special workshops taught by visiting artists. Furthermore, interdisciplinary collaborations with departments outside of art and cross-disciplinary cohorts will help round out the program and enhance student learning. Graduate faculty will explore the viability of a dual master's track combining an MFA with other master's programs such as MA, MSW, MHS, M.Ed, M.Ag, etc. and will meet with other area program coordinators to explore this possibility. Graduate faculty will also pursue offering electives in other departments for MFA students, and offering courses in the MFA program as electives for other departments.