

SVA MFA Computer Art

Thesis Packet 2006-2007

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DEFINITIONS

Thesis Project:

The Thesis Project consists of the body of creative work, writing and research that you produce to earn the MFA degree. It should express your own individual aesthetic and unique style. In order to make your graduate Thesis unique, you must go beyond your current existing body of knowledge. The final form can be an animation, digital video, DVD, gallery installation, website, series of digital illustrations, a performance or any other creative expression using digital methods. A series of smaller finished pieces, experiments, prototypes, etc. is also acceptable.

It should be a personal exploration of your specific creative interests, concepts, context, and aesthetics. Apply the concepts and theory that you have learned during your first year with your digital art interests. It should be a continuation of the personal research of art and ideas that you have developed during your lifetime.

Do not focus on making your Thesis Project a commercial art piece or portfolio piece that will get you a job. Creativity is what really sells, anyway. A well thought out project, full of creative ideas and techniques, is far more interesting and valuable than any showcase of your software skills could ever be.

Thesis Course:

The Thesis Course guides each student through an individualized Thesis process from concept to finished

work. The course is divided into several sections corresponding to specific areas of interest. You will be enrolled in the appropriate Thesis Section based on your Thesis Proposal. The Thesis Instructor will help you with all aspects of your Thesis including such issues as the topic and scope of your Thesis, development of your production schedule, research and reference information, critique of your written and creative Thesis work, and other general questions you may encounter.

This course is centered on group critique, discussion of work-in-progress and discussion of student's research. The course meets weekly and all students are expected to attend every class. You are also encouraged to meet with Thesis Instructors from other sections for more critique on an individual basis.

In addition to weekly class meetings and group critiques, it is **your responsibility** to keep your Thesis Instructor informed of your progress.

Thesis Committee:

Thesis grades are determined by the Thesis Committee, which consists of the Thesis Instructors, Advisor, and the Chair. If your creative work meets the standards of the Thesis Committee by the required deadline, your grade will be P (Pass). If your work is unsatisfactory, or you miss the deadline, your grade will be F (Fail). A grade of F means you cannot proceed with your degree until the requirements are met. In special circumstances, a grade of I (incomplete) may be given, at the discretion of the Thesis Committee.

Thesis Advisor:

Thesis Advisors are an **optional** resource to assist you in the development and completion of your Thesis project. You are not required to have a Thesis Advisor.

A Thesis Advisor can be a faculty member or a recognized professional in your field of interest. Thesis Advisors are generally chosen for technical advising expertise or conceptual advising expertise for additional critique and creative input. Your Thesis Instructor, the Chair, or the Advisor can help you select an appropriate Thesis Advisor.

It is important that you consider the availability of your Thesis Advisor before making the commitment. You must meet with him/her at least once per month to review your progress. It is your responsibility to maintain contact with your Thesis Advisor, and schedule meetings. Thesis Advisors are paid a small honorarium. Do not expect unlimited time or access. Be respectful of your Advisor's professional commitments and be prepared for your meetings.

If you decide to select a Thesis Advisor, submit to the Advisor a copy of their resume or curriculum vitae with the signed Thesis Advisor form and W-9 form.

Written Thesis Component:

Clarity of thought nurtures clarity of creative vision.

Students are required to document and expound on their personal Thesis research, i.e. the theories, concepts, context, history, experiments, interviews, readings, screenings, etc. undertaken during the development and

production of their Thesis. A digital MS Word format copy of all drafts of your **Research Paper** and **Artist Statement** will be submitted to a designated server dropbox.

You are also required to submit a brief one page **Artist Statement/Bio**.

Thesis Writing and Research Course:

The primary function of the Thesis Writing and Research course is to assist you with Written Thesis Component. This course is intended to help students better articulate their Thesis research, concepts, and ideas. Being able to speak and write literately about your work is as important as the work itself. Although your creative work does need to stand on its own, so do you. Our goal is that three to five years down the road, you become Creative Directors, Art Directors, Producers, Animation Supervisors, Famous Artists, etc. Writing and clearly expressing your ideas verbally are vital to professional success. For example, Fine Artists must fill out grant applications with descriptions of their work, proposals to galleries, artist statements, etc. This class focuses on the Thesis Proposal, Thesis Research Paper, Artist Statement, and Short Artist Statement/Bio. There will be 3-4 REQUIRED Group meetings per semester and the remaining classes will consist of scheduled individual meeting with the Thesis Writing Instructor.

Thesis Writing and Research Instructor:

The Thesis Writing Instructor will help guide you in all aspects of your written Thesis component. This includes helping you to clarify and articulate your concepts and

ideas, making the most of your research and assistance with your writing. You should turn to the Thesis Writing and Research Instructor to seek advice on such things as the topic and scope of your Thesis research, thorough development of your documentation, research and reference information, critique of your written Thesis work, integration of your written and creative work, and other general questions you may encounter.

In addition to your scheduled Thesis Writing sessions, it is **your responsibility** to keep the Thesis Writing Instructor informed of your progress and to meet all Written Thesis Component Deadlines.

Thesis Proposal:

The process of developing your Thesis Proposal is a central part of your Thesis work and often the most difficult. The Thesis Proposal is intended to be a starting point for both your creative Thesis Project and for your Thesis Research Paper. It is a way of clarifying for yourself, your Thesis Instructor, and the Chair, what the direction and scope of your work will be.

You will submit the First Draft Thesis Proposal to the Advisor, Russet Lederman on **May 12, 2005**. You may submit your proposal by email <russet@mfaca.sva.edu>, fax (212-592-2509), or mail to (Russet Lederman, c/o MFA Computer Art, School of Visual Arts, 209 E. 23rd Street, NY, NY 10010) or drop off in person. You must submit your First Draft Thesis Proposal on time. Your proposal will determine to which Thesis section you are assigned.

Further development of the Thesis Proposal will be done in consultation with your Thesis Instructor and the Thesis Writing Instructor at the beginning of the Fall Semester.

Thesis Documentation:

Completed Thesis Documentation consists of printed Written Thesis Component, Thesis Forms, Dvcam tape of final animation, video, or Thesis Documentation Video, and a DVD-R that contains various items and files specified in the Thesis Documentation Checklist. You must submit 3 complete and separate sets of Thesis Documentation each packaged in separate plastic folders. Refer to the Thesis Documentation Checklist for exact list of requirements.

Thesis Presentation:

There are two formal Thesis Presentations. The first is a Thesis Presentation of your work in progress to the Thesis Committee and fellow Thesis Students at the end of the Fall Semester. It is not open to the public.

The second formal Thesis Presentation will be of your completed work just before graduation. This presentation is open to the public and held in the SVA Amphitheater. You will have 10 minutes to present your Thesis and show your animation, video, or Thesis Documentation video.

Stage I: Thesis Proposal

The Thesis Proposal is a document that clearly describes the creative components and research intended for your Thesis. You must first identify the central focus of your Thesis and the form in which it will be completed. Your creative work and research must make an original and relevant contribution to your field of study through creative, conceptual, technical, and written investigation. Your First Draft and Final Proposal should follow the outlined guidelines below.

Stage I: Thesis Proposal: First Draft

The first draft of the Thesis Proposal should be a statement of the conceptual/creative and technical processes with which you intend to become involved during your Thesis work. You should make every attempt to clarify for yourself what your Thesis work will be. By clarifying your questions, goals, central concepts, working assumptions, technical processes, and historical basis, in writing, you are starting to participate in a real creative discourse. It is the foundation upon which your work and our dialogue will be based.

The first draft of your Thesis Proposal must include:

1. A **one or two sentence** description of the basic theme or content of your Thesis. For example “This Web site will explore the issues surrounding an artist and their search for identity in cyberspace.” or “This animation pays tribute to the

Amazon rain forest and laments its impending destruction.” (50-100 words)

2. A **one page** description of the theme, content and form of your Thesis. It should describe the who, what, when, where, why and how of your Thesis, and be similar to a press release. It should also outline what software/hardware you intend to use. (200-250 words)
3. A Proposed Reading List that specifies at least 5 printed works and 10 online sources that you plan to research during the summer.

You are encouraged to make appointments with the Advisor and/or Chair to discuss the first draft of your proposal, if you feel you need more guidance.

Note to Animators: First Draft sketches/sample storyboards must be included.

You will submit the first draft of your Thesis Proposal to the Advisor, Russet Lederman on **May 12, 2005**.

It is MANDATORY that you submit your First Draft Thesis Proposal on time. Your proposal will determine to which Thesis Section you are assigned.

Stage I: Thesis Proposal: Final

Introduction (1/3 page)

The Introduction is a short paragraph describing the topic of your Thesis, its scope, and final form. This means raising the key issues of your subject, and the relevance your work has to the field of digital art. The introduction should include a compact Thesis statement, ideally one sentence, which summarizes your research position.

Research Outline (1-2 pages)

The Thesis is expected to reflect the student's individual direction and interests within the field of possibilities brought about through an awareness of digital art and its potential uses in the chosen area of practice. A Thesis is a self-directed study, in which you define your own territory as a computer artist in context with other artists and themes. The nature of your research should be determined by the central questions, issues or themes that you are addressing. In order to make your graduate Thesis unique, you must go beyond your existing body of knowledge. The way to do this is through research, both online and at a library.

The research section of your Thesis facilitates the creative work by clarifying the ideas behind it. It should support the ideas with historical references and by placing it in the wider context of digital art. You need to learn about and describe the creative and theoretical work that other people have done before you.

The springboard for your Thesis will be your own past creative work and the work of artists who have influenced

you. Draw upon your strengths and then find an area of digital art that inspires you. It is expected that you will meet with your Thesis Instructor to formulate your research outline.

Project Description (1-2 pages)

Give a detailed description of the content of your creative work, as well as the proposed final form(s) of your Thesis, i.e. Web site, DVD, installation, videotape, etc. There should also be a step-by-step description of the process (including software and hardware) that you will go through to complete your creative work. Please include a description of any work already done, such as your early experiments.

Detailed Schedule (1 page)

Provide a 32-week production plan with dates for deadlines, important meetings (Instructor, Thesis Advisor, conferences, lectures, meetings, openings, etc.), defining the achievement of specific phases of your production and writing.

Bibliography (1-2 pages)

Give a working list of intended readings and reference materials, i.e. articles, books, videotapes, web sites, films, audio tapes, programming code. This bibliography should have at least 20 references.

Stage I: Creative Thesis Work

Animation

1. Animatic with audio track.
2. Shot list or rough script.
3. Model sheets (top, front, side, various expressions, etc.)
4. Layouts of scenes, camera & character movements.
5. Inspirational sketches of key scenes, color scheme, style & mood.
6. Software/hardware list.

Video

1. Animatic with audio track (if appropriate).
2. Shot list or rough script.
3. Layouts of scenes, camera & character movements.
4. Inspirational sketches of key scenes, color scheme, style & mood.
5. Software/hardware list.

Interactive Media

1. Detailed flow chart that includes:
Complete diagram of interaction and content
describe original graphics
2. Describe source content, images, photographs, video, audio, etc.
3. Main screen designs & sketches
4. Software/hardware list.

Networked Media

1. Detailed flow chart that includes:
Complete diagram of interaction and content
2. Explanation of each section.
3. Explanation of hardware and software to be utilized or created.
4. Network services to be utilized and/or created
5. Software/hardware list.

Installation Art

1. Detailed flow chart and layout of proposed installation/interaction and content.
2. Describe physical interfaces, digital content, images, photographs, video, audio, etc
3. Drawings, plans, and/or diagrams that illustrate the physical nature of the work.
4. Software/hardware list.

Stage II: Written Thesis Component

The **Written Thesis Component** chiefly consists of two separate papers, the **Research Paper** and the **Artist Statement**. In the Research Paper, you will explore and document the various historical, philosophical, aesthetic, technical, and cultural discourses that inform your creative practice. This research is intended to drive and develop your unique Thesis concepts. In the Artist Statement, you will synthesize the knowledge gained in the Research Paper and expound on its impact on your creative practice. The Artist Statement expresses the personal vision of your art practice. It will be used to introduce people to your ideas and your approach to making art. See the separate **Written Thesis Roadmap** for additional information. All **First Draft** papers will be returned with comments, suggestions, etc. to assist students with the submission of the **Final Draft**.

Lastly, you must submit a one page **Artist Statement and Biography**. The Artist's Statement and Bio can be used in catalogs for exhibitions, as a promotional statement or introductory text in galleries, for grant applications, or as part of a press kit or other means of introducing yourself in professional situations. The Artist's Statement should be a 100-150 word summary describing your creative philosophy and creative work. Your Bio should be a brief description of who you are and what you have done in 75-100 words. These two items should be on one page using Arial 11 point type, single-spaced.

All drafts must be written in clear, grammatically correct English. In addition to the mandatory Thesis Writing class, all students should take advantage of the services offered by the Writing Resource Center (located in the basement of 141 W. 21 Street). The Writing Resource Center was established for exactly this purpose: To assist all SVA students with writing papers and research.

Stage II: Creative Thesis Work

This should consist of the following work-in-progress:

Animation:

Refined animatic with cut in low-res motion tests and rendered scenes.

Installation Art, Video, Interactive Media, Networked Media:

Working prototypes, models, sketches, websites, rough edits, or experimental studies.

Stage III: Completed Thesis Project

The Stage III Deadline is the final deadline for Thesis Documentation to be submitted to the MFA Computer Art Department. Failure to meet one or more of these requirements will delay the completion of your degree. (See Thesis Documentation Checklist for exact requirements.)

Final Thesis Presentation- REQUIRED

You are required to make a public presentation of your completed Thesis Project in the SVA Amphitheater on the date scheduled for your Thesis Section during the last week of April. The presentation should state your Thesis topic, briefly recount your progress, and describe the final work in layperson's terms. You may conclude with a summary or a projection of your future goals. The final Thesis Presentation MUST BE LESS THAN 10 MINUTES LONG.

All students must submit as part of their Thesis Documentation a DVcam tape and DVD-R with a QuickTime movie of their final animation, video, or Thesis Documentation Video, with color bars and tone, to the MFACA office on the Stage III Deadline. This will be used for editing a master tape for each Thesis Presentation night and may be used on the MFACA website.

Other Events for Graduating Students:

MFACA Open Studios

The Open Studios are a public viewing of work created by students in the 132 W 21St 7th Floor Studio Space.

The first Open Studio will be held in December and the final Open Studio will be held in early May.

MFACA Thesis Exhibition, Visual Arts Gallery

You are also invited to exhibit your Thesis project at the Visual Arts Gallery in Chelsea in June. This exhibition is not required, but it is a good opportunity to show your creative work in a Chelsea gallery setting, where visitors can see and interact with the work. The department will make every effort to supply equipment to exhibiting students, but unfortunately cannot guarantee that each student will be supplied with all requested equipment. Installation Art students are encouraged (if possible) to purchase and supply all the needed equipment, so that they may enter their work in future exhibitions without relying on department equipment. Any student wishing to exhibit their work in the show must coordinate with the Thesis Exhibition Curator regarding equipment and space requirements.

2006-07 Thesis Deadlines

Written Thesis Component Deadlines

- Stage I Thesis Proposal**
First Draft - May 12, 2006
- Final - September 25 & 26, 2006
-
- Stage II Research Paper**
First Draft - October 23 & 24, 2006
- Final - November 20 & 21, 2006
-
- Artist Statement**
First Draft - Jan 30 & Feb 1, 2007
- Final - March 13 & 15, 2007
-
- Stage III Completed Thesis Documentation**
April 16, 2007
See Thesis Documentation Checklist.

Creative Thesis Work Deadlines

- Stage I October 23, 2006**
- Animators:
Animatic & Storyboard
Animatics submitted without audio will be rejected.
- Other Focuses:
Drawings / Plans / Flowcharts / etc.
-
- Stage II Fall Thesis Presentations –
December 11 & 18, 2006**
- Animators:
Lo-Res Motion and Rendering Tests
Final Animatics
Animatics submitted without audio will be rejected.
- Other Focuses:
Working Prototypes or Models
Rough Draft Video Edits
Interface Layouts and Design
-
- Stage III Final Completed Creative Thesis Work
Apr. 16, 2007**
See Thesis Documentation Checklist.

General Thesis Schedule

May:

Stage I Deadline: Thesis Proposal First Draft due May 12.

June

Start a Thesis Journal. Begin to sketch and write down your ideas. Do exploratory creative work and begin to develop Stage I Creative Thesis Work. Begin to research and read items on your Proposed Reading List.

July

Continue reading, research, creative work, and add new ideas to your journal.

August

Continue reading, research, creative work, and adding to your Journal. Refine Thesis Proposal, animatic, flow charts,

September

Present Thesis Proposal in Thesis Course. Develop research and Creative Thesis Work with Thesis Instructor, Thesis Writing and Research Instructor, and Thesis Advisor. Develop bibliography. Meet with Chair. Stage I Deadline: Final Thesis Proposal due September 25 & 26.

October

Develop Stage I Creative Thesis Work and present work in progress. Research and formulate Research Paper. Read over Journal and add new ideas. Stage I Deadline: Creative Thesis Work due October 23. Stage I Deadline: First Draft Research Paper due October 23 & 24.

November

Develop Stage I Creative Thesis Work and present work in progress. Refine Research Paper. Use Journal to enhance creative work and research paper. Stage II Deadline: Final Research Paper due November 20 & 21.

December

Develop list of competitions, conferences, exhibitions, events, etc. Stage II Deadline: Creative Thesis Work: Thesis Presentations - December 11 & December 18:

January

Work hard on Creative Thesis Work. Creative Thesis Work should be at least 50% complete. Continue to develop Journal. Stage II Deadline: Artist statement First Draft due Jan 30.

February

Continue work on paper and creative work. Stage II Deadline: Artist statement First Draft due Feb 1.

March

Work hard on Creative Thesis Work. Creative work should be at least 90% complete. Review Journal and Research Paper and use it to develop Artist's Statement/Bio. Spring Break. Stage II Deadline: Artist statement Final due March 13 & 15

April

Creative work should be 100% complete. Use first two weeks of April to create Thesis Documentation tape, create resume, business cards and portfolio. Assemble Completed Thesis Documentation. Stage III Deadline: Thesis Documentation due April 16. Tentative dates for Public Thesis Presentations are April 23-27.

May

Graduation Commencement. Date TBA. Submit work to competitions, conferences, exhibitions, events, grants, etc.

June

Thesis Exhibition. Date TBA. Optional for all graduates.