

# MFA-LR | THESIS: Components, Guidelines And Expectations

## Part I: What the Student Will Create

### **I. Thesis Body of Work**

- A. During their time in the program, each student will work towards their culminating project, in whatever form that might take, that they will then present to the community and to the public in the manner most consistent with their core practice. What is presented should demonstrate a depth and mastery of materials, concepts and context as related to their core practice.

### **II. Public Artist Talk**

- A. 15 minute public talk, with visuals, that provides contextualization and a point of entry into the thesis body of work
- B. Talk should focus primarily on culminating work, but may also include:
  1. Growth and development in the program
  2. 1-3 other artists or thinkers that have served as influences or references

### **III. Written Support Document (Thesis Essay)**

- A. The written document is a demonstration of the artist's thinking and should provide a framing that contextualizes the thesis body of work within a contemporary practice. A research-based, theoretical and/or creative approach to offering this framework is acceptable. The form of the writing may also take whatever shape is best suited to the work itself and to the artist's unique voice.

#### *Document Components:*

1. Must show a contextualization of their work within a contemporary discourse or how it sits outside of said discourse, as defined by the student.
2. Must demonstrate graduate level research skills, though the form of this research does not necessarily need to be academic citations/footnotes
3. Annotated bibliography of five key texts and full bibliography are required.
  - a) Annotated texts should be those most relevant to a student's research and development, both in the thesis document and in the thesis studio work.
  - b) The full bibliography should be a comprehensive list of those texts used throughout the student's time in the program.
4. Other topics that may be included:

- a) Evolution of the work during MFA program
  - b) Artistic peers or influences
  - c) Transdisciplinary influences
  - d) Formal description of the work itself
  - e) How the student envisions their work functioning within the contemporary art landscape, or how they would like to function outside of it
- B. The main body of the essay, excluding the bibliography, should be between 3000 and 4000 words, which is roughly 12-16 pages of text, double spaced.
- C. Citation formatting will follow the MLA standards
- D. In an appendix to the essay, students will include the following documents:
- 1. Thumbnails of 10-20 of their own artworks and itemized list for those works
  - 2. Artist resume or CV
  - 3. Artist bio
  - 4. Artist statement of 250-500 words
- E. Students will submit the final document to the Program Coordinators and their work will become a part of the library collection
- 1. The format for final submission must be a PDF that is submitted electronically (thumb drive or via email or a file sharing site)
  - 2. If a student wishes to go above and beyond these requirements, for example, to create a hypertext based interactive website for their essay or to submit a handmade artist book, **please submit proposals of this by March in your second year** to your Studio VI and Thesis Composition professors as well as the Program Coordinators for consideration.

## **Part II: Discussion and Presentation of the Work to the Community**

### **I. Public Exhibition**

Exhibition can be defined expansively, and may include ephemeral, virtual and/or site specific works in addition to more traditional works.

- A. Students will present a selection of their work to the community and to the public in a curated group exhibition.
- B. Students will install their pieces selected by and in consultation with the curator at the MassArt x SoWa gallery as well as other sites, depending on the curation.

### **II. Public Artist Talk**

*(see details above)*

### III. Final Critique During August Reviews

- A. Core faculty and visiting critics will critique the work in the final reviews of the summer.
  1. Visiting critics are invited to provide feedback and insights into the work as it exists outside of the program and to begin to build relationships with the larger art community.
  2. Final assessment is done only by the thesis faculty and program coordinators.

### IV. Thesis Defense

- A. This is a discussion between the student and the three-member thesis committee regarding their artist talk and their written essay as they relate to and support their body of work.

### Assessment Leading to the Thesis:

- The **January Reviews** (a component of the Winter Colloquium) is a place of evaluation and assessment for the students regarding their progress towards the completion of their degree.
  - If the work at this point does not demonstrate that a student is prepared for their thesis work, either studio or written, they may be asked to meet with Program Coordinators and Graduate Programs staff to develop a plan for extending the program by a semester or taking a leave of absence.