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Graduate studies

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California College
of the Arts

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Previous

Ebtihal Shedid
 MFA Fine Arts 2021
Involuntary vertigo, 2021

Above

Jillian Luo
 MFA Design 2020
3 Minutes as a Baygull, 2019

Graduate Degree Programs

13 ARCHITECTURE DIVISION

14	MAAD Advanced Architectural Design	1 year
16	MArch Master of Architecture	2-3 years

21 DESIGN DIVISION

22	MFA Design	2-3 years
24	MBA Design Strategy (low-residency)	2 years
26	MDes Interaction Design	1 year

31 FINE ARTS DIVISION

32	MFA Fine Arts	2 years
34	MFA Film	2 years


39 HUMANITIES AND SCIENCES DIVISION

40	MA Curatorial Practice	2 years
42	MFA Writing	2 years
44	MA Visual and Critical Studies	2 years
46	MFA Comics (low-residency)	2+ years

52 DUAL-DEGREE OPTIONS

MA Visual and Critical Studies & MA Curatorial Practice	3 years
MA Visual and Critical Studies & MFA Fine Arts	3 years
MA Visual and Critical Studies & MFA Writing	3 years
MBA Design Strategy & MFA Design	3 years



A hand is shown holding a vibrant red fabric that partially obscures a view of a city skyline. The background features various buildings, including a prominent white tower, under a clear blue sky. A thin teal vertical line is positioned to the left of the main text.

Make work that's well considered, well done, and never been done before

In other words, make work that makes a difference. Our expansive critique culture and generative curriculum are grounded in more than 100 years of theory and practice. Steeped in the creative energy of the San Francisco Bay Area, CCA is distinctly suited for graduate students who will be future-focused cultural producers, capable of leading conversations across disciplines and in communities around the world.



Rigorous theory /



At CCA, intellectual curiosity meets academic rigor meets creative ambition. Our graduate students are supported and pushed to think outside traditional ways of conceiving and creating new work.

/ Radical practice





Small cohorts /

As a private nonprofit college enrolling around 400 graduate students, CCA is a tight-knit community located in the heart of a global hub. We emphasize individualized instruction (the average

/ Maximum mentorship

number of graduate students per class is 10), and everything from our maker spaces to our lecture series is designed for interdisciplinary cross-pollination.

Internationally recognized /

There's a willingness to engage new ideas that's special to the Bay Area—and that's a real strategic advantage of studying here, in an environment where leaders from every field naturally cross paths. Attending CCA is a direct connection to the region's creative networks and thriving industries.



/ West Coast inspired

Find future collaborators at CCA

Alumni to Alumni

CCA Architecture

Alumni to Community

**Members of MBA in Design
Strategy's Class of 2015**

(Tony Jimenez, Isabelle Shu,
David Korstad, Mike O'Hagan)

Division to Industry

MFA Film alumni

(Kat Cole, Shane T. Watson,
Zach Gallagher, Bianca
Alexandria Bell)

Students to Superstar

**Humanities & Sciences
and MFA Fine Arts alumni**

(Michele Carlson, Weston
Teruya, Nathan Watson)

Our position as one of the best art and design schools in the U.S. is bolstered by innovative facilities, top-ranked programs, and an inclusive community. We have one of the most diverse faculties of our peer schools, and

students from more than 50 countries come here to collaborate. On campus and off, students are empowered to find similarly driven creators who enrich and invigorate their practices.

Community members and institutions

(e.g., SFMOMA, Berkeley Art Center, Wexner Center for the Arts, Chinese Cultural Center)

Form a collective and launch the Black X Film Festival, an online showcase and speaker series that centers Black creators and their experiences, resilience, and commitment to anti-racism

MFA Fine Arts alum
(Mallory Kimmel)

Start JOI, a company creating sustainable almond milk products that innovated a way to reduce waste by using 100% of the nut

Autodesk Technology Centers

Found the collaborative Related Tactics, whose projects explore the connections among art, movements for social justice, and the public through transdisciplinary exchanges, collective making, and dialogue

Co-investor Armando Perez
(Better known as Pitbull)

Build prototypes for resilient coastal infrastructure and research wave-tunable building materials that dissipate energy from high-velocity winds









Architecture

is a critical cultural practice

“In the future, if we hope not only to survive but to thrive, we’ll need to change our minds and our architecture.”

— Dean Keith Krumwiede

We envision a better world through architecture, combining disciplinary innovation with social and environmental impact. Our work addresses important challenges of global magnitude, including climate change, resource scarcity, housing inequity, and other issues that are becoming more relevant by the day.



Recent graduate Architecture partnerships

- + San Francisco Planning Department
- + Autodesk Technology Centers
- + Malcolm X Academy
- + Asian Art Museum

MASTER OF ADVANCED ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

Master of Advanced Architectural Design (MAAD) is a one-year, STEM-designated post-professional degree program. Designed for advanced students and mid-career architects, the MAAD curriculum allows you to pursue an independent research or design project in one of three areas of concentration linked to our renowned research labs. The curriculum is tailor-fit to your individual research focus—culminating in a final project, such as a book, exhibition, or speculative design project—and connecting you with faculty mentors along the way.

+ Digital Craft

Experiment with contemporary design and craft. You'll explore digital fabrication and robotic technologies, interactive technologies and responsive environments, and advanced simulation and visualization.

Q: How will your research at CCA inform your future work?

A: “I pursued two of the three MAAD concentrations offered. The History Theory Experiments concentration provided a space for me to intensively conduct and develop research into postcolonial architecture, while the Digital Craft concentration equipped me with contemporary skills and immersed me in the current dialogue of architecture and rapid prototyping.

At CCA, I developed an intensive knowledge in research of architecture technology and theory, which enabled me to think critically about the past and current practice of architecture. I started to define my understanding of architecture. My goal is to secure African design thinking as part of the global dialogue, and my research made me aware of the present political, economical, and ethical challenges it entails.”

— **Sitou Akolly**
(MAAD 2016)



Sitou Akolly
MAAD 2016
*Creative Architecture
Machines, 2016*



Donna Mena
MAAD 2020
California City, 2020

+ Urban Works

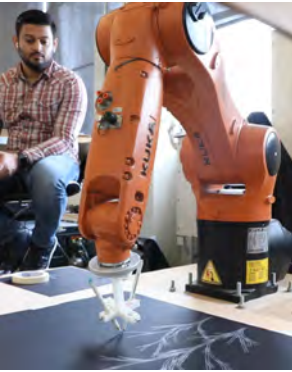
Learn to shape the space and protocols of a city’s built environment. You’ll train in urban research, design, and scholarship to join and form experimental practices that bridge client-driven work with the ecological, economic, and social justice imperatives of municipal agencies, nonprofit advocacy, and entrepreneurial ventures.

+ History Theory Experiments

Conduct alternative historical practice and spatial activism. Investigate architectural and urban history, theory, and criticism and prepare for a career in architectural teaching, curation, digital humanities, criticism, journalism, or for doctoral study.

Recent lecture series topics

- + Visions for environmental justice
- + The future of learning and work
- + Designing the post-retail city
- + Race and modern architecture



MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

Q: Why did you pursue a professional architecture degree, and how has it informed your practice?

A: “Much of what I learned as an undergraduate was a basis for more questions of what architecture is really about, and I wanted to keep learning.

I believe that architecture is a universal language. I am a big fan of removing myself from my work and reimagining how a space could be gradually re-formed by its users and how it could be representative of its

users’ culture, history, and context. That’s the only way we can stop homogeneity and repetition in our cities and bring back authenticity.

My partner and I recently founded a new company called MatLab, a platform where we explore and research alternative materials made of recycled and recyclable substances for everything building- and construction-related.”

— **Nastaran Mousavi**
(MArch 2013)
Founding Partner &
Principal Architect,
Studio BANAA



Master of Architecture (MArch)

is a three-year, STEM-designated, NAAB-accredited professional degree program that champions innovation and experimentation in architectural design. It's an ideal fit for students who have earned a bachelor's degree in another field, as well as those who began their architectural studies as an undergraduate. (Advanced standing may be granted to students with previous education in the field.) Uniquely focused on digital craft, urban research and activism, ecological engagement, full-scale fabrication, and experimental history, the MArch program prepares you to connect advanced architectural design with professional practice.

We use design as a form of research to make positive change today even as we imagine better possible tomorrows. At the heart of our curriculum is the studio, where you'll leverage design methodologies that synthesize diverse issues, integrate emerging technology, and respond to contemporary culture. Our high-profile, dedicated faculty provide close guidance throughout your studies—from your first studio to your final thesis investigation—preparing you to practice architecture at many scales, in any location.

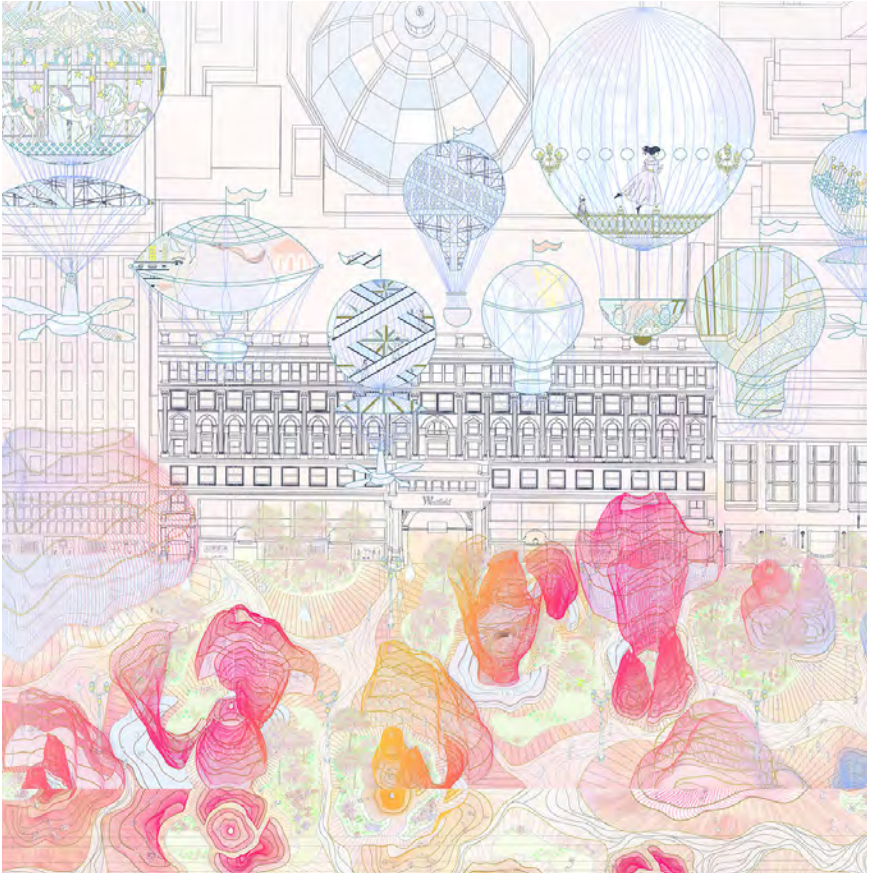
With opportunities to work across disciplines—such as interaction design, interior design, and ceramics—you'll lead conversations and develop solutions around today's most pressing issues.

Building on the Bay Area's legacy of social and environmental justice, we investigate collective living, ecological resilience, contemporary aesthetics, and the politics that shape our spaces and cities. Innovative architecture and design firms, set in a rapidly transforming urban setting, will motivate you to challenge conventions and push disciplinary boundaries in your own work. Our position within a top art and design college gives you direct access to intellectuals, researchers, and diverse practitioners who continually expand the way we build and experience the world.

The MArch program has an impressive roster of alumni who launch award-winning design practices, work with international architecture offices, and lead the design of iconic civic buildings. Many stay in the Bay Area, working for technology companies like Google and Airbnb, while others take their knowledge back home as leaders in the profession.



Karen He
MArch 2022
*Co-od Hub, Exterior
View, 2020*



Roxana Breceda
MArch 2021
Living Capriccio, 2021







Design

is an inherently
optimistic pursuit

“Designers have the craft skills, creative intelligence, and foresight to be dynamic agents of cultural, social, and environmental change.”

– Dean Helen Maria Nugent

We are comfortable with complexity and use a rigorous design process to frame open-ended problems. As designers, makers, and strategists, we have the wherewithal to envision inclusive futures and the creative capacity to craft inspired solutions.



Our alumni work with innovative organizations

- + Adobe
- + Amazon
- + Apple
- + Dwell
- + EON Group
- + Fitbit
- + Google
- + IDEO
- + Logitech
- + New York Times
- + Nike Innovation
- + Salesforce
- + San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
- + Tesla

MFA DESIGN

MFA Design is a cross-disciplinary program that empowers students to be leaders in this expansive field while matriculating at a level that supports their degree of expertise. The two-year cadence is appropriate for students who have experience in one or multiple design fields, while the three-year option is ideal for those with an undergraduate degree in a different discipline.

The curriculum encourages new forms of practice and innovation across design fields, and all MFA Design students, whether on the two-year or three-year track, select one specialized concentration area: graphic design, industrial design, or interaction

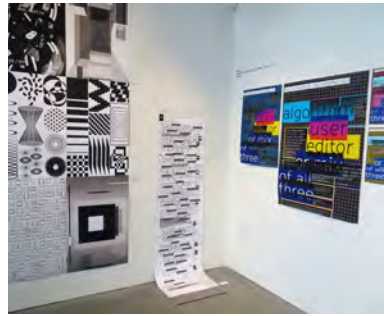
Q: What's different about studying Design at CCA?

A: “The culture of collaboration. CCA has a wide range of specialized programs and every program is well connected. You're able to choose the classes you're interested in, from any other major, or easily connect with students to work together on a project.

The design critique is the key to push your works and thoughts forward. Gathering feedback from professors, guest critics, and classmates can empower you to find better solutions to the problems and your own voices in the work.

The program is also well connected with the local community. The studio classes are always paired up with leading design organizations. You'll be able to visit companies and museums on field trips, work with new technologies, and showcase your work to leaders in the Bay Area.”

— **Shihan Zhang**
(MFA Design 2017)

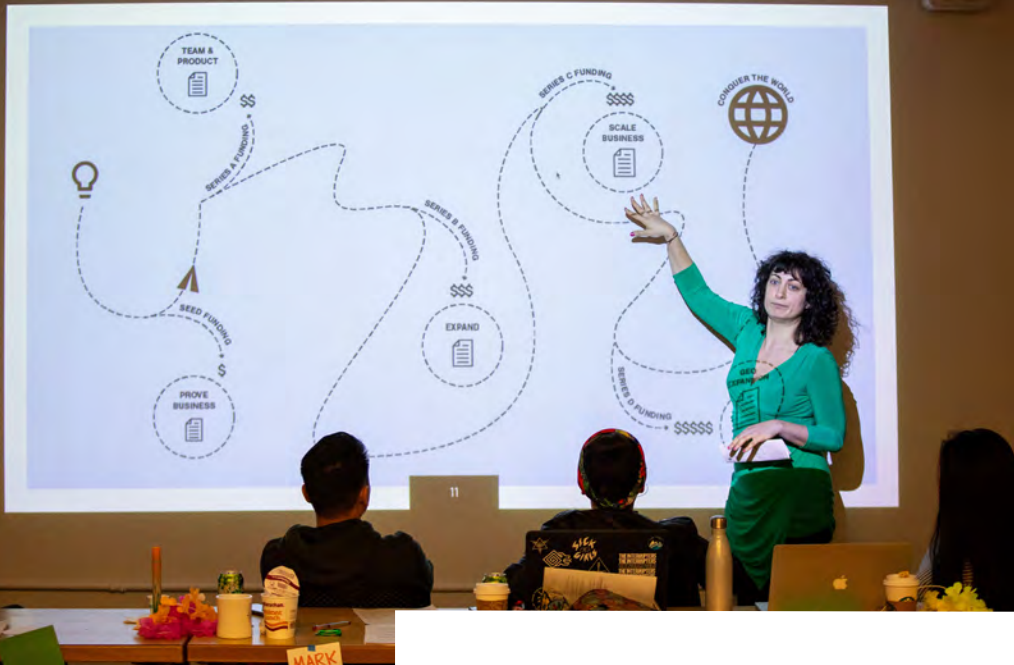


design. Core courses and cross-disciplinary studios provide a unique vantage point on collaborative development and hybrid design structures.

At the heart of the program experience is a rigorous design investigation that culminates in a year-long thesis and final body of work. As a top art and design school, CCA has the resources to engage new technologies, global challenges, and forms of production to prepare for emerging design markets. Renowned faculty help students learn to use cutting-edge tools and explore traditional craft-based techniques in a range of facilities, including the Rapid

Prototyping Studio and the Hybrid Lab for advanced digital fabrication.

Whether creating user flows and interactive wireframes or designing wearable technology, you'll have the intellectual and physical resources you need to bring your individual investigations to life. Beyond the coursework, opportunities to connect with other designers abound on campus—from studios with dedicated desk space to a gallery shared with students from across the Design division—as well as in the Bay Area, which is home to leading tech and design companies.



MBA DESIGN STRATEGY

MBA Design Strategy (DMBA) is a two-year, low-residency graduate business program, with five four-day residencies held on campus each semester (one per month). The DMBA trains future leaders to question, to listen, and to put human needs at the center of decision-making.

“Immersed in the space and language of creative making, business education feels different inside an art school,” says Chair Sara Fenske Bahat. “We see systems as made, not given, and we

operate with the optimism that they can be made better. We do much more than analyze balance sheets and come up with marketing plans. We have the vision to imagine and assess alternate futures, and the tools to build them.”

The first semester of the DMBA program teaches you a new language for business interactions that builds trust and effective teams, and explores the creation, analysis, and presentation of information. The second



Fostering a new type of business leader

+ One of the top 10 best design programs in the world

(Ranker.com, 2019)



Q: Why did you select the DMBA program at CCA?

A: “I was attracted to the DMBA program at CCA because of its focus on using design at the systems level, taking the mindsets and approaches of design—human-centered thinking, creative problem-solving—and applying them to business, organizational, and ecosystem challenges.

The DMBA helped me bring design to the table in a leadership capacity, not just by managing design teams, but by enabling me with the tools and skill set to influence the strategy and vision of an organization. It also gave me frameworks that I use every day in my work (as well as tons of practice making pitch-decks and doing public speaking). CCA also provided a wonderful network of designers, which helped me build a strong community in the social impact design space.”

— Megan Moyer
(MBA Design Strategy 2015)

semester focuses on building business fundamentals and bringing new ideas to market in the modern world. In the second year, you’ll ideate and prepare to launch a company, participate in a collaborative service project, work to elevate your business’s public profile, build a council of advisors, and more.

“At its core, our curriculum is about innovation and reinvention—our pedagogy lends itself to opening the conversation to more voices, rather

than maintaining the status quo,” says Fenske Bahat. “The Bay Area has been recognized for decades as a place where new ideas emerge as radical but come to steer the mainstream. We build new worlds in garages, in fields as varied as technology, social justice, and sustainability. We offer proximity to and participation in a community that welcomes newness, questioning, and the scrappiness that comes with having to prove yourself.”



Social Lab projects by MDes students + community partners

- + Community design and communications for unhoused women's shelter
- + Art therapy co-creation experience for children with cancer
- + User interface for semi-autonomous vehicles
- + Re-envisioning volunteer experience with Oakland community garden



Mufan Lu
MDes 2021
Japanese Tea Garden, 2020



MDES INTERACTION DESIGN

MDes Interaction Design (IxD) is a one-year intensive program built to provide students with the tools to create better relationships among people, products, and environments worldwide. Interaction designers flourish in this complex intersection, using craft-based design skills, systems thinking, and human-centered technology—applied to holistic, real-world projects. CCA is a recognized global leader in IxD theory and practice, and this intensive, STEM-designated program provides students with a design toolkit coveted by organizations of all sizes.



Q: What's one thing you learned at CCA that helps you now in your practice?

A: “CCA encouraged me to iterate the design process over and over again so that it became second nature. I was also exposed to different people with various backgrounds, which taught me how to appreciate and communicate with diverse communities. Those are skills that I use all the time in my day-to-day work.

Also, I am really proud of the emphasis on social impact in our design work at CCA. Working with underprivileged communities and nonprofits taught me a lot about designing products that benefit all people in society. As designers, we have a huge responsibility to create diverse, inclusive, accessible, and trustworthy products in the tech industry. It's important to design with humanity and ethics in mind.”

— Kristine Yuen
(MDes Interaction Design 2016)

“Classroom collaborations influence real-world projects, and the experience gained in practice helps augment what's taught in theory,” says Chair Josh Silverman. “We know that design turns constraints into catalysts, and, as conditions evolve by the minute, designers are called to bring a fully human perspective to digital interactions and work through challenges with creativity. We are designing and educating for an emerging world.”

MDes coursework emphasizes craft, social impact, and leadership. The Bay Area is both an inspiration and a laboratory to learn to use the power of design to humanize systems and address challenges in new, socially conscious ways. Through projects and partnerships,

including hands-on experiences in the CCA IxD Social Lab, you will design for the environment, public health, transportation, education, and other major industries with wide-ranging impact.

“Our MDes program is at the epicenter of design, technology, and society,” Silverman says. “Our faculty are pioneers in interaction design and bring diverse perspectives and experiences from business, entrepreneurship, psychology, sociology, product and brand design, climate design, design operations, AI, and so much more. We are poised to investigate the future of interacting, and our collective moment in history demands this evolution.”





Xinheng Jiang, Anqi Li,
Linya Huang
MFA Design 2020
PaperLAB, 2018





Fine Arts

**are the outward
expression of radical
imagination**

**“Art can be profoundly
transformative on
an individual level,
while also serving as
a catalyst for cultural
reckoning and deep
systemic change.”**

— Dean Allison Smith

We are truth-seekers, culture workers, storytellers, and activists. With honesty and self-reflection, we boldly confront reality, using our creativity to craft a repository of collective memory and to ignite public audiences to envision the future differently.



One of the nation's top graduate art schools

- + Top 10 graduate fine arts program in the country
- + #6 best ceramics program in the country
(U.S. News & World Report, 2020)
- + Low student-to-faculty ratio



MFA FINE ARTS

MFA Fine Arts is characterized by a culture of critique, studio making, and social engagement. The two-year program supports a wide range of interdisciplinary practices and encourages experimentation and individualized, in-depth research. “Our goal is to help our MFA candidates hone critical ways of thinking and creative means of approaching the problems they set for themselves in their practice,” says Chair Jordan Kantor.

Every MFA Fine Arts student works from a large, private studio in the Dogpatch neighborhood, and we’re part of an extraordinary ecosystem of Bay Area art institutions, including the internationally regarded CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts. Close



Q: Did anything about graduate school at CCA surprise you?

A: “Being in San Francisco itself was surprising—moving around from neighborhood to neighborhood, the sites, the people, and all the things sort of right on top of each other. ... There was so much to take in, and that was inspiring in and of itself. The Bay Area is so unique—to be immersed in the natural environment and the urban environment, to be able to toggle between the two so easily.

So many of my first opportunities came from the Bay Area and from CCA. People were so open to show the work or have conversations or invite you to speak or do a workshop or anything. In those two years, I was always a part of someone’s show or doing something in an art context.”

— **Diedrick Brackens**
(MFA Fine Arts 2014)

collaboration with visiting artists complements curricular experiences with program faculty.

“We have a robust art-world infrastructure here, but it’s on a small enough scale that you can know everybody,” Kantor says. “One thing that’s distinctive about our faculty is that everyone’s a practicing artist with a very high level of professional achievement. We regard students as practicing artists, so there’s an artist-to-artist relationship that’s non-hierarchical.”

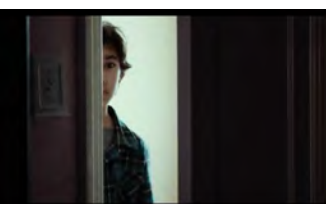
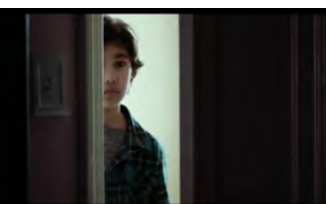
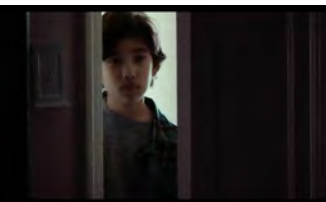
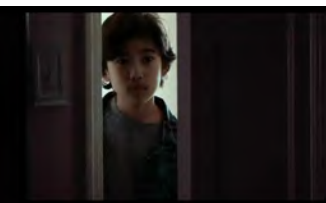
CCA supports social engagement throughout the MFA curriculum, including a specialized workshop focused on urban environments,

regional communities, research-based practice, or institutional structures.

“There’s a long tradition of progressive thinking and political protest that defines the Bay Area, and it’s something that is very much part of our MFA,” Kantor says. “The program is geared toward critique—on the individual level in terms of one-on-one faculty engagement with students in critiquing their artmaking practices, and also in terms of the larger mission of art as a way to speak back to power and to propose new, different, and better ways of being in the world.”

Top
Diedrick Brackens
MFA Fine Arts 2014
blessed are the mosquitos, 2020

Bottom
Diedrick Brackens
MFA Fine Arts 2014
survival is a shrine



Cyrus Yoshi Tabar
MFA Film 2017
Sanzu No Kawa

MFA FILM



Shane T. Watson
MFA Film 2017
I Live Here, 2017

MFA Film is a two-year program intended for those with a bachelor's degree in film, visual studies, or a related fine arts field. It's ideal for self-driven filmmakers who want to prepare for a lifelong career as an artist/filmmaker and to expand their conceptual and aesthetic approach to film.

CCA supports a wide range of filmmaking practices, including narrative fiction and nonfiction, poetic cinema, video installation, and experimental and hybrid forms.

As a graduate student in film, you'll have 24-hour access to film studios, editing

suites, and a sound mixing room, which you can use to develop your thesis project. Coursework in cinema history and theory enhance your conceptual toolkit, and multidisciplinary electives provide opportunities to try painting, photography, writing, and other forms that can elevate your filmmaking practice.

In support of this rich curriculum, you will work individually with expert artists from Film's acclaimed faculty—such as Academy Award-winner Rob Epstein (*Linda Ronstadt: The Sound of My Voice*, *The Times of Harvey Milk*), Louis Comfort

A West Coast network of collaborations and destinations

- + American Conservatory Theater

- + SF Film Festival

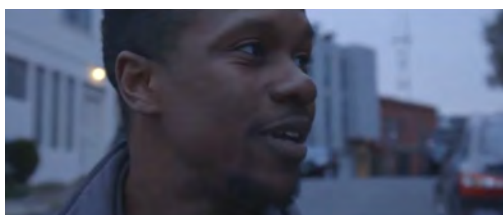
- + San Francisco Conservatory of Music

- + Meisner Technique Studio

- + Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences

- + Skywalker Ranch

- + Flaherty Film Seminar



Q: How did grad school change your approach to filmmaking?

A: “I came in like, ‘I’m making documentaries,’ but CCA opened my mind to working in fiction. As a filmmaker, you have to think you have a message others need to hear. I feel like fiction has a better chance of reaching more people.

Being exposed to different types of films I had never watched before, getting opinions from different people who know different types of films, come from different walks of life, professors who come from different countries, different backgrounds, different preferences in film—all of that helped me be a better filmmaker and transform my process of filmmaking.”

— **Shane T. Watson**
(MFA Film 2017)
Cofounder, Black X
Film Festival

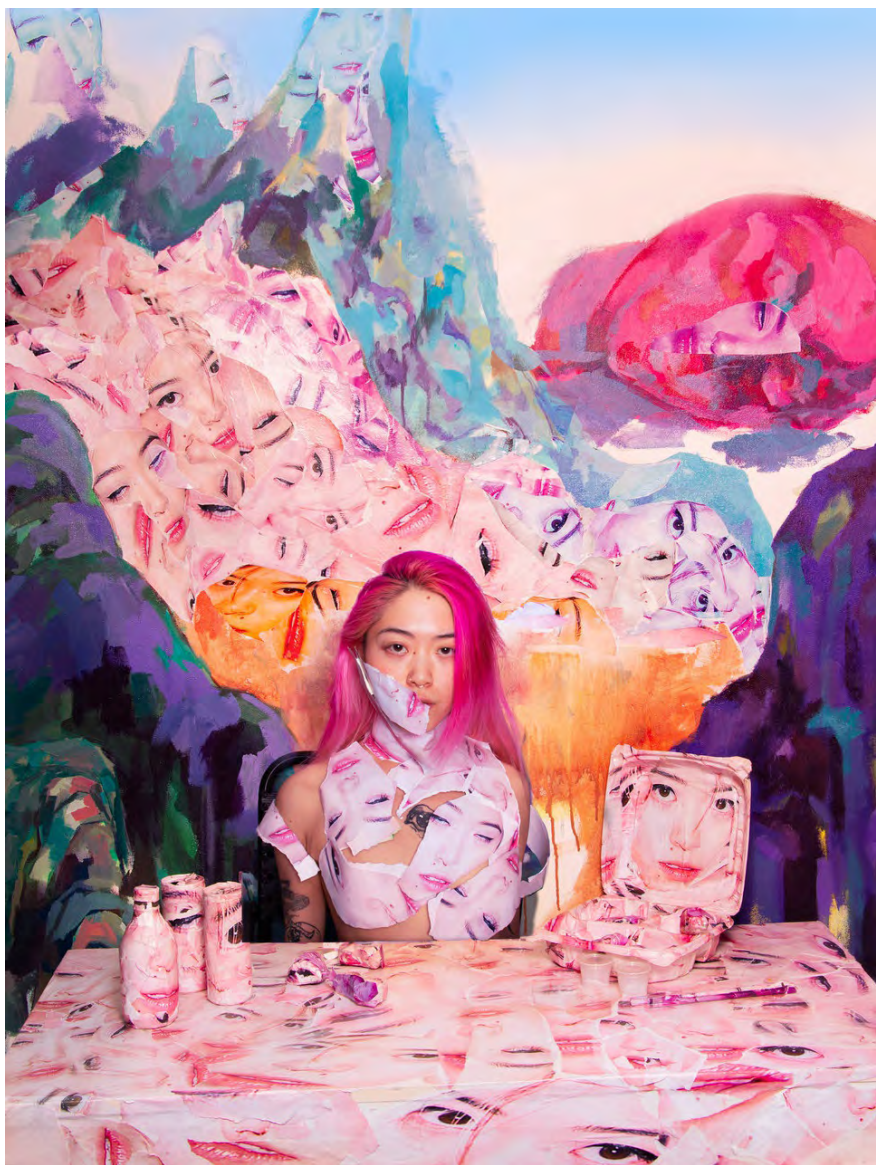
Watson’s thesis film *I Live Here* was nominated for an Oscar at the Student Academy Awards and premiered at Indie Memphis Film Festival.

Tiffany Award–winner Alison O’Daniel (*The Tuba Thieves*, *Night Sky*), and Whitney Biennial artist Kota Ezawa (*National Anthem*). These are filmmakers and visual artists whose work is grounded in various practices, including directing, cinematography, sound design, animation, performance, and installation. They work across narrative, documentary, and experimental practices.

Through Cinema Visionaries—our ongoing film lecture series—and CCA’s annual Film Week, we host a wide range of visiting practitioners, giving students access to a diverse group of socially conscious artists, interdisciplinary makers,

and maverick directors who highlight the power of the moving image.

You may also work as a teaching assistant for the college’s undergraduate film courses, and you can start building a professional network in the Bay Area through an internship. Recent graduate students have interned with Frameline, producers of the San Francisco International LGBTQ Film Festival; San Francisco Film Society, which organizes the San Francisco International Film Festival; and SOMArts, a cultural center for multidisciplinary events and exhibitions.



Ann Li
MFA Fine Arts 2021
The Object Is Present, 2021



Siana Jin Smith
MFA Fine Arts 2021
crmp1, 2020





Humanities & Sciences

**turn curiosity into
meaning**

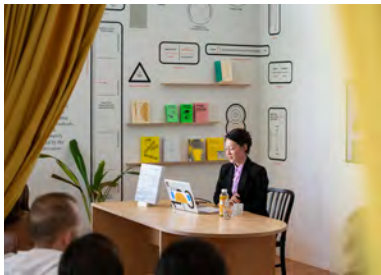
“Our visual, literary, and cultural environments are rapidly changing. How will we capture the impressions of our time that will shape and impact the future?”

— Dean TT Takemoto

We draw upon innovative and diverse modes of storytelling to examine and expand creative impact. From literature to comics to critical compositions in various forms, our work strives to observe and participate in social transformation.



MA CURATORIAL PRACTICE



MA Curatorial Practice is a two-year program that offers distinctive pedagogical experiences, a broad perspective of curators as cultural mediators, and an expanded idea of curatorial practice—an approach fortified by CCA’s interdisciplinary ethos and the program’s connection to CCA’s Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts.

As a Curatorial Practice student, you are given the tools to participate in and contribute to the discourse of contemporary art. You’ll learn how to propose, plan, execute, and manage curatorial tasks, exhibitions, publications, and events. The first year includes professional development through requisite internships, and the second year culminates in an



Q: What surprised you the most about graduate school?

A: “I started grad school when I was already working as a curatorial assistant, so I thought I knew what it was about. I learned you can know the ins and outs of the logistics, but there’s a way to define your own practice. Our professors pushed us to find our position, find our voices.

Grad school also created a sense of criticality that I didn’t have before, and a sense of collaboration and community. I was looking for a grad school where the curatorial practice program was really close to the actual working studios of artists, and CCA was a great place to have informal exhibitions and studio visits. It taught me—from working with visual artists at CCA, curatorial students, vis crit students—that more minds are better than one.”

— **Lauren O’Connell**
(MA Curatorial Practice 2014)



Professional practice is woven into the experience

- + CCA Wattis Institute Curatorial Fellowship

- + Di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art Richard A. Ward Education Fellowship

- + Teaching Assistantships and Publishing Assistantships

- + Alumni Research Fellowship at KADIST

individually authored thesis project, supported by faculty collaboration and mentorship, and a collectively curated exhibition at the Wattis.

The Curatorial Practice program provides you with further professional training through paid fellowships and teaching assistantships. You will receive an annual teaching assistantship to work with faculty in the MA Visual and Critical Studies, MFA Fine Arts, or MA Curatorial Practice programs. KADIST San Francisco awards a research fellowship each year to a recent alum of CCA’s graduate program in Curatorial Practice.

The rich, cross-disciplinary contexts at CCA combine with the vibrant arts scene

in the Bay Area, where the program is in dialogue with the de Young Museum, SFMOMA, The Lab, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, and others. A core group of faculty as well as visiting and guest lecturers (recently, curators Ute Meta Bauer, Elena Filipovic, and Sarah Rifky) offer a range of specialized expertise, from directing nonprofit organizations to editing online publishing platforms.

These are potent ingredients for curatorial research and education, giving you the tools to further the field as a discursive practice by pursuing the links between curating and knowledge production.

One of California's best MFA writing programs

(Study.com, 2021)

Recent alumni publications:

- + *The Henna Artist* by Alka Joshi

- + *We Can Save Us All* by Adam Nemett

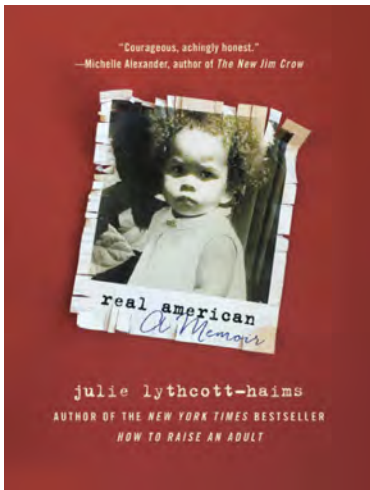
- + *Southern Migrant Mixtape* by Vernon Keeve III

- + *PolySHAMory* by Kate Robards

- + *The Body Myth* by Rheea Mukherjee

- + *TwERK* by Natasha N. Nevada Diggs

- + *The Way You Burn* by Christine Meade



MFA WRITING

Q: How did CCA faculty push you to become a better writer?

A: “The second draft of my thesis was what became *Real American*, which is my memoir on being Black and biracial, dealing with microaggressions and blunt force racism from childhood into adulthood, and having children of my own who would have to contend with these things.

I’m so grateful for my thesis committee, and I’m proud of that book. I would not be an author without CCA. It was an unfathomable pivot, and CCA people have been essential in my identity formation as an author.”

— Julie Lythcott-Haims
(MFA Writing 2016)



MFA Writing is a two-year program that expands students' understanding of theory and craft, and encourages experimentation with multimedia and cross-genre work. Emphasizing individualized instruction, the program helps students learn to establish and maintain a serious writing practice.

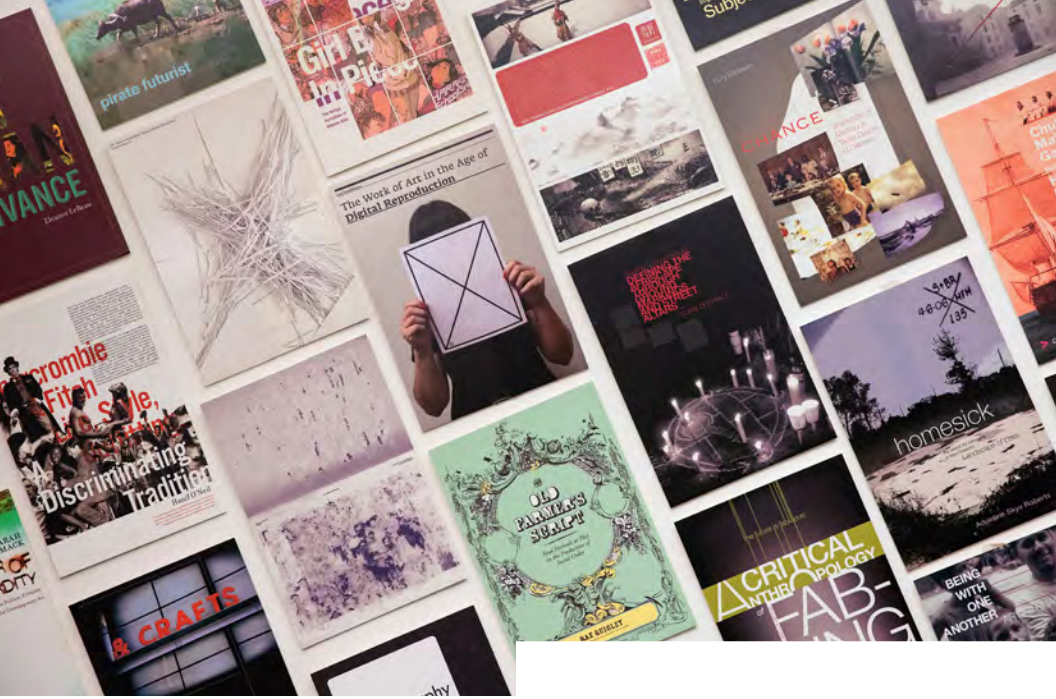
"The foundation of our program is built on the tradition of workshops, craft seminars, and mentoring," says Chair Leslie Carol Roberts. "With a robust full-time faculty, our students are encouraged to find their own voice—to engage in work that resonates deeply for them. We are particularly known for the careful one-on-one work we do with students as they prepare their thesis manuscripts."

Students complete a thesis manuscript of poetry, fiction, or creative nonfiction with support from a two-person committee of faculty, whose achievements include *New York Times* bestsellers and award-winning collections in fiction, hybrid essay/

memoir, poetry, literary criticism, creative nonfiction, and memoir. They offer close readings, editorial guidance, and individualized book lists to further push students toward success.

The on-campus Writers' Studio and our adjacent garden are idyllic places to write and meet for workshops and craft talks, including the Tuesday Talks series with today's most dynamic writers. Electives outside of the program allow students to try their voice in different storytelling styles—making broadsides on Risograph printers, podcasts in audio suites, literary art objects in the letterpress studio, and more.

"The current literary and comics scene is vibrant and thriving in the Bay Area, and the histories of the area's writing communities and strong ecological legacy is fascinating study," Roberts says. "Every single human on this campus is a 'maker,' so you are immersed in a generative creative community at every turn."



MA VISUAL AND CRITICAL STUDIES

MA Visual and Critical Studies (VCS) is a two-year program that teaches students scholarly methodologies and critical theories, while nurturing their research and writing skills and offering electives tailored to their area of interest. VCS is especially well-suited for students interested in exploring innovative forms and arenas of critical expression.

“The skills needed to interpret art, artifacts, and everyday images are invaluable in our visual world,” says Chair Jacqueline Francis. “VCS

students research, write about, and explain the histories and theories of cultural production and its impact. These abilities to analyze and produce information can be deployed across many fields during our era of critical transformation and radical disruption.”

VCS core courses, electives, and workshops offer a rigorous yet supportive context in which to build critical skills in four interrelated areas: close visual analysis, critical thinking, eloquent persuasive writing, and visually enhanced public

Q: What was a specific CCA experience that informed your future work?

A: “I created my first choose-your-own-adventure at CCA when I was taking an elective course, Phenomenology to Digital Perception. Using Gaston Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space*, I described things I wish I could have done growing up in San Francisco’s Mission District.

Choose-your-own-adventure fits well with the research I’m doing now as a PhD candidate in Film and Digital Media at UC Santa Cruz. I’m building out an interactive digital experience based on biotechnology as a point of departure to think about how the healthcare system is currently working. The players and listeners are asked to envision a system they want to see in the world.

Because of CCA, I see myself as someone with the capacity and the agency to make things.”

— **Dorothy Santos**
(MA Visual & Critical Studies 2014)

speaking. Campus events further foster scholarly inquiry and professional development, including the VCS Forum, Queer Conversations in Culture and the Arts, and Social Impact Fair (a collegewide professional event to connect with nonprofit and community organizations).

Students research a topic of their choosing for a final capstone project that includes a written thesis, a presentation at the program’s annual Spring Symposium, and a short essay that can serve as a suitable writing sample

Our alumni work with impactful arts organizations:

- + Asian Art Museum
- + The New School/Parsons
- + Museum of the African Diaspora
- + Smithsonian Institution
- + Art in America
- + Whitney Museum of American Art



when applying for artist residencies, PhD programs, and other professional opportunities.

“Although one of the largest U.S. urban areas, the Bay Area is of a scale that fosters experimentation, innovation, and collaboration,” Francis says. “To no small degree, the region’s change agents—the Diggers, the Black Panthers, and the BIPOC activists in women’s, gay, and Indigenous rights movements—inform today’s creative, intellectual, and social justice spheres.”

Q: What is the biggest benefit of the low-residency structure?

A: “The low-residency structure is helping me reach my goals by allowing me to stay in my beloved town and work part-time throughout. Making comics is a hustle! I want to make them forever, but I realize it is a difficult task to monetize comics production.

The MFA Comics structure allows me to save money and work part-time as a graphic designer. If I had to pick up and move across the country, focusing on the making of comics would be much more difficult. Here, I am established, close to my family, and making a side income.”

— Charly Shooster
(MFA Comics)



MFA COMICS



MFA Comics is a low-residency program distinguished by year-round professional mentorship. Students come together in residency in San Francisco for one month over three consecutive summers, and they complete the fall and spring semesters from anywhere.

The program focuses on three aspects of the creative process: history and culture of the medium, the craft of making comics, and critical analysis. The curriculum encourages you to develop your individual style—while learning from peers and faculty who approach comics from different perspectives—and build toward a long-form comics thesis project, such as a literary graphic novel or web-based comic.

Carly Shooster
MFA Comics 2022
RICK, 2020



Recent faculty and alumni publications

- + *The Best We Could Do* by Thi Bui

- + *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe

- + *Fetch: How a Bad Dog Brought Me Home* by Nicole J Georges



“From comics memoir and journalism to sci-fi and fantasy, CCA embraces cartooning of every genre,” says Chair Matt Silady. “Working with an international cohort cultivates a vital exchange of ideas centered around each cartoonist’s particular strengths, personal voice, and cultural influences.”

During summer residencies, students attend daily literary comics seminars, tools and techniques studios, and intensive comics workshops focusing on the creative process. Between summer sessions, they meet one-on-one with professional mentors for biweekly meetings and attend online workshops with graduate Comics faculty.

“Students in the program can expect to shape the future of comics across the globe,” Silady says. “CCA grad

cartoonists, faculty, and alumni have seen their voices amplified thanks to the surge of interest in comics memoir and journalism, which captures the most vital stories of our time.”

During the final summer session in San Francisco, you’ll explore digital distribution channels, connect with agents and editors, study comics pedagogy, and look at various crowdsourcing and self-publishing platforms. You’ll be immersed in the thriving Bay Area comics culture, including influential comics festivals, retailers, and museums.

Kit Fraser
MFA Comics 2021
The Dreamkeeper’s Dream

The *Imperfect* Normal Body

Looking at the Self-Portraiture of Artists with Disabilities



Rebecca Chacon

Rebecca Chacon
MFA Visual and Critical Studies 2021
*The Imperfect Normal Body: Looking at
Self-Portraiture of Artists with Disabilities*, 2021



Aster Ricks
MFA Comics 2021
Eat Your Heart Out, 2021





Dual-degree students complete the full coursework of two graduate programs concurrently over three years.



Sam Soon
MA Visual and Critical Studies &
MFA Fine Arts 2021
The Waiting Room, 2019



Sam Soon
MA Visual and Critical Studies &
MFA Fine Arts 2021
Tender Bodies (II), 2019

Deepen your practice and potential with a dual degree

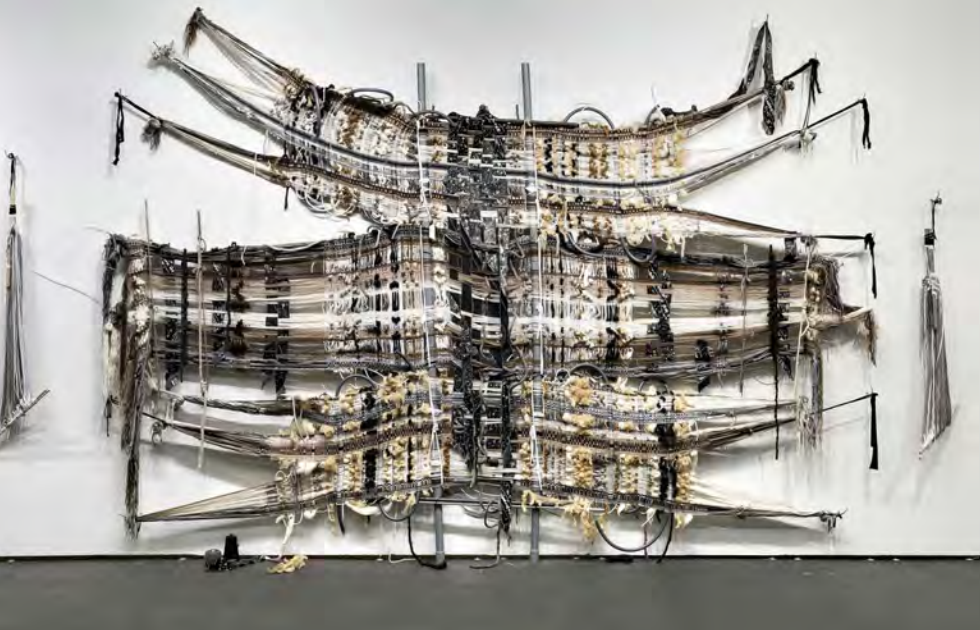
MA VISUAL AND CRITICAL STUDIES

- + MA Curatorial Practice
- + MFA Fine Arts
- + MFA Writing

Integrate research, writing, studio, and curatorial practices with a VCS MA degree. The thesis process of collaborative exchange through group critiques, a symposium presentation, and professional publication prepares you for competitive postgraduate arenas.

MBA DESIGN STRATEGY and MFA DESIGN

Translate a design vision and a market opportunity into a compelling product or service. This dual degree's thorough exploration of business models and design practices is ideal for students who want to run their own business, work on the business side of design, or find a hybrid space between the two.



Kira Dominguez Hultgren
MA Visual and Critical Studies &
MFA Fine Arts 2019
Cosmic Fluff, 2020

Q: How did your work evolve in a dual-degree program?

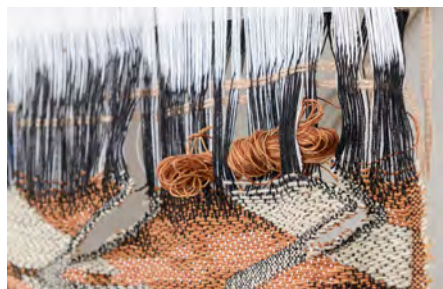
A: “Being part of the Visual & Critical Studies program at the same time as the MFA Fine Arts program was crucial for me. I wanted to take critical studies and apply it to not just the written, or the visual, but the material. Suddenly, everything I was reading—from Michel Foucault’s writings about archives to Sara Ahmed’s queer phenomenology—felt like it could be said about weaving. This kind of critical framework combined with historical research combined with weaving, would take, as one professor told me,

no less than a full decade of studio practice to even know what it was I was just beginning to figure out.

The VCS thesis project my third year—“Here, and No Further: Material Rhetoric in Loom with Textile,” an essay analyzing two textiles through photographic documentation—equipped me for a lifetime of studio practice, of weaving as critical material research.”

— Kira Dominguez Hultgren
(MA Visual and Critical Studies & MFA Fine Arts 2019)

Kira Dominguez Hultgren
MA Visual and Critical Studies &
MFA Fine Arts 2019
In the Negative, 2020 (detail)









Be the changemaker

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