

USC Roski

School of Art and Design

MA CURATORIAL PRACTICES and the PUBLIC SPHERE

STUDENT HANDBOOK

Updated September 17, 2018

University of Southern California
Roski School of Art and Design
**Master of Art, Curatorial Practices and
the Public Sphere Program**

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MA Program Contact Information

ADMINISTRATION

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MA Program Curriculum Guidelines

OVERVIEW

The MA Curatorial Practices and the Public Sphere is an intensive master's-level program in curatorial history, theory, and practice. Studied through the lens of critical theory and the history of art and museums, the program focuses on the research and exhibition of contemporary art, and broader conceptions of curating such as programming performance art and public events. Instructors lead students in asking critical questions about the exhibition of a broad range of art in relation to its publics. Over two years of full-time academic study, students explore modes of curatorial practice in a curriculum combining seminars and professional training. Courses are led by USC Roski's internationally acclaimed faculty, which includes renowned artists, scholars, critics, and curators.

The MA features courses on the history of art, exhibitions and aesthetics, with a focus on contemporary art and theory. Other courses such as the Curatorial Practicum seminars emphasize direct practical experience that results in an exhibition or another type of curatorial project and includes a public interface project such as a catalogue or website. The Roski Talks and a related seminar afford an opportunity to hear lectures and have intimate discussions with leading artists, critics, art historians, and curators.

There are many advantages of studying at a major university, particularly in terms of interdisciplinary approaches to art and curatorial practices, course offerings and cultural programming across the campus. Students may take electives outside of the Roski School starting in the first semester and are encouraged to take advantage of graduate-level courses in art, art history, cinema, performance studies, new media, comparative literature, philosophy, gender studies, communications, and the sciences, to name just a few. Additionally, USC sponsors readings, performances, and lectures, including the USC's Visions and Voices Arts and Humanities Initiative, a high-profile series hosted by various USC professional schools and affiliated organizations.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Requirements for admission: (1) a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, or equivalent, from an accredited school; (2) a minimum 3.0 overall GPA; (3) three letters of recommendation; (4) two writing samples (one academic paper and the admission essay). (5) a GRE General Test is required. International applicants are required to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

Details of application requirements are found at <https://roski.usc.edu/admissions/ma-admission> and <http://gradadm.usc.edu> *

*Students admitted on a conditional basis must fulfill certain requirements by the end of their first semester of enrollment before further enrollment is permitted.

MA CURRICULUM/ REQUIREMENTS

The MFA Art requires a minimum of 39 units to be distributed as follows:

ACADEMIC COURSES (27 units)

- a. CRIT 510 History and Theory of Art and Exhibitions (4)
- b. CRIT 512 Art and Curatorial Visits (2)
- c. CRIT 515 Visiting Artist/Scholar Seminar (2 + 2)
- d. CRIT 525 Making and Curating Art: Pedagogy and Praxis (4)
- e. CRIT 555 Methods of Curating: Introduction to Practicum (4)
- f. CRIT 556 Curatorial Practicum: Group Projects (4)
- g. CRIT 557 Curatorial Practicum: Group Project Summation (4)
- h. CRIT 591 Internship (1)

ELECTIVES (8 units)

- i. 4 units of 400-, 500-, or 600-level courses selected from the 18 professional schools at USC or the Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Science, and 4 units of 400- or 500-level courses offered by the Roski School.

MASTER'S THESIS (4 units)

- j. ART 594a, Master's Thesis (2 units)
- k. ART 594b, Master's Thesis (2 units)

SAMPLE PROGRAM GRID

FIRST YEAR FALL	CRIT-512 (2) Art and Curatorial Visits	CRIT-510 (4) History and Theory of Art and Exhibitions	ART-515 (2) Visiting Artist & Scholar Seminar	8 units
FIRST YEAR SPRING	CRIT-555 (4) Methods of Curating: Intro to Practicum	CRIT-525 (4) Making and Curating Art: Pedagogy and Praxis	ART-515 (2) Visiting Artist & Scholar Seminar	10 units
SUMMER	ART-530 (4) Global Art Seminar [possible elective]	CRIT-591 (1, max 2) Field Internship Experience		5 units
SECOND YEAR FALL	CRIT-556 (4) Curatorial Practicum: Group Project	CRIT-594a (2) Master's Thesis	Elective (4) Recommended here if Global Art seminar not chosen	10 units
SECOND YEAR SPRING	CRIT-557 (4) Curatorial Practicum: Group Project Summation	CRIT-594b (2) Master's Thesis	Elective (4) Recommended here if Global Art seminar not chosen	6 units

ACADEMIC COURSES, brief descriptions

Required Core Courses:

CRIT 510: History and Theory of Art and Exhibitions - 4 units

Gives broad and deep overview of history of art as a conceptual and practical category, emphasizing development of exhibition sites and engagement with public sphere.

CRIT 512: Art and Curatorial Visits - 2 units

Site visits and meetings with professional curators and other arts professionals in museums and non-profit organizations, artist-run galleries and studios, public art agencies and performance venues.

CRIT 515: Visiting Artist and Scholar Seminar - 2 units

Lecture and discussion course in the professional practice of art featuring formal presentations by visiting artists and scholars.

CRIT 525: Making and Curating Art: Pedagogy and Praxis - 4 units

Provides students with a foundation in the history and theory of studio art and curatorial education and develops their teaching skills in these areas.

Curatorial Practicum Series:

CRIT 555: Curatorial Practice: Introduction to Methods of Curating - 4 units

The first course in the Practicum series, this class includes the history/theory of modern and contemporary curatorial practices, and introduces methods for developing the MA Curatorial group project.

CRIT 556: Curatorial Practicum: Curating the Group Projects - 4 units

The second course in the Practicum series, this class provides a conceptual, practical, and logistical framework for the professional activity of curating the MA project.

CRIT 557: Curatorial Practicum: Group Project Summation - 4 units

The third course in the Practicum series, students organize a public interface/summation of their MA Curatorial group project, which may be a publication, website or program.

CRIT 591: Internship - 1 unit Supervised internship in an art institution, or an art agency.

Recommended preparation: Completion of first year of courses.

CRIT 594a-z: Master's Thesis - 2 units Credit on acceptance of Thesis. Graded CR/NC.

Possible Electives

The following courses are suggested as electives, taken either in the summer between the 1st and 2nd years or in the 2nd year.

ART 530: Global Art Seminar: The Globalization of Art and Culture

An examination of the emergence of the idea of “globalism” through the lens of art practice and theory.

CRIT 599: selected topics

This seminar will generally be taught by a Roski/Critical Studies faculty member on a general topic relating to contemporary art practice, theory, and history drawn from her/his research. Examples include: “Contemporary Art and Its Publics,” “Activism, Visual Culture, and Art in the Public Sphere,” and “Performing Identity in Art, Culture, Theory since 1950.”

Additionally, students may take elective courses in modern and contemporary art in Art History, studies of gender and sexuality in the Gender Studies and cultural/ethnic studies in American Studies and Ethnicity, all at the Dornsife College of Letters and Sciences; media theory at the Annenberg School of Communications; cinema and film theory in the Cinematic Arts.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The MA Curatorial Practices and the Public Sphere aims to bring students to a high level of understanding of the history and theory of curatorial practices, with attention paid to questions of how curating activates art in relation to a range of publics. The seminars and the Roski Talks/Graduate Lecture Series address theories and histories of art and performance, and focus on theories of social practice, the public sphere, what constitutes art's publics, and how curatorial practice can address and engage various different kinds of audience.

The curriculum of the MA is designed to give students extensive experience in devising a final curatorial project through the three-course long Practicum course sequence, and to achieve the noted intellectual and professional goals through seminars in theory and history of art. Some of the courses also focus on aiding students in developing a range of research and writing skills, culminating in a written thesis mentored by a faculty member and thesis committee.

A further aim of the program—through the Roski Talks/Graduate Lecture Series, the field trip course, and the internship requirement—is to introduce students to curators, artists, and scholars working across the range of art, performance, and curatorial venues in Los Angeles and beyond. The *Art and Curatorial Visits* 2-unit fieldwork course CRIT 512 gives students an opportunity to visit curatorial departments at museums and galleries, public art venues and institutions, artists' studios, and related art institutions across Los Angeles, meeting key players and observing professional curatorial and public arts programming contexts. In addition, students complete a field internship, receiving course credit for working directly in a curatorial environment such as a museum, another kind of non-profit organization, or a civic/public art department.

Throughout the program, MA students work closely with art, design, and other USC faculty in the Roski School and across the university, as well as fellow MFA students. To this end, the MA includes two core courses taken with the MFA cohort, including a seminar entitled *History and Theory of Art and Exhibitions* CRIT 510, a deep history of the role of the artist, views about the public sphere, and art institutions, including curatorial and museum practices; and *Making and Curating Art: Praxis and Pedagogy*, CRIT 525, a course on the history of the art schools and pedagogical practices and theories. *Praxis and Pedagogy* also leads students through practical issues such as the composition of an artist or curator's statement, composing a syllabus, and developing teaching strategies. Other courses (notably those of the Practicum series) emphasize direct practical experience leading towards the realization of art exhibitions but also performance art programming and other hybrid modes of arts curating.

Thesis and Curatorial Practicum

Students research and write a thesis and develop a curatorial project with a public interface component as capstones to their degree. The thesis is produced with the close guidance of faculty (a supervisor and two additional members). In the thesis, students develop individual, original research on topics relating or complementary to their curatorial projects. The curatorial project developed through the Curatorial Practicum course series, is a three-term laboratory of studying the history of curating, of exhibition making and arts programming, emphasizing the presentation of work in a final exhibition or program and the creation of a public interface such as a catalogue, website, or public program. In the Practicum series, students examine case studies of curatorial practices around the world and then work collaboratively to conceptualize, research, and organize a curatorial project either in the Roski MFA Gallery or in an alternative venue (actual or virtual). As a culmination of this project, they then produce a catalogue, website, or other cultural interface between the curatorial projects and the public.

MANDATORY ADVISEMENT

In addition to receiving support from his or her faculty mentor(s), all MA students are assigned an academic advisor—a dedicated staff person—and must meet with this advisor before registering for classes each term. Whenever meeting with an advisor, a student should always bring a laptop or tablet to schedule classes while in the advisor's office. The most productive meetings occur when students arrive prepared and have already reviewed course offerings via the [USC Schedule of Classes website](#). Mandatory Advisement occurs during specific weeks. Students should consult the Advisement section of <https://roski.usc.edu/resources/student> for appropriate times. Students should also read and follow directions that their advisor emails to them. Mandatory Advisement meetings are arranged via email with the academic advisor. MA students will not be able to register for classes until they meet with their advisor. Timely attendance of Mandatory Advisement meetings and timely registration are requisites for satisfactory progress.

ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY

At the end of the second semester of the first-year students may be advanced to candidacy for the MA degree by the Roski School of Art and Design faculty if:

- i. They remain in satisfactory standing following the spring semester.
- ii. They have successfully completed twenty (20) units according to the curriculum above. 20 units represent the normal minimum for two semesters of full-time course work.
- iii. They have maintained 3.0 GPA.

MA THESIS REQUIREMENTS [see also MA Thesis Timeline]

The thesis committee is established and contingent upon satisfactory completion of the second semester's course work. Advancement to candidacy is determined by the director of the program, in consultation with the Vice Dean of Research and other Critical Studies/MA faculty.

The written thesis is carried out under the guidance of the thesis committee and the USC Graduate School: ACCORDINGLY, STANDARDS MUST MEET THOSE SET BY THE LATTER.

The written thesis is submitted by the end of March of the second year.

For complete USC guidelines and standards see:

<http://graduateschool.usc.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation-submission/guidelines-for-submission/>

A. Thesis Committee

The thesis committee works closely with the individual candidate to complete the thesis requirements and acts as a formal review committee for the graduate student's written thesis. The thesis committee consists of three members of the USC faculty. Two members must be drawn from the Roski School's current full-time faculty and holding an MFA, PhD, or their equivalent (extensive professional experience may serve in lieu of a terminal degree, upon the recommendation of the Director, and approval by the Vice Dean of Research). The third member can be any full-time tenure track or non-tenure track USC faculty member, either within the Roski School or from outside Roski. Thesis committees are ultimately subject to approval by the Vice Dean of Research. One of the three thesis committee members is designated as the Chair by request of the candidate, in arrangement with the designated Chair.

The Chair or thesis supervisor provides leadership and guidance to the committee, usually reads drafts and advises the student up to the point where a full draft is available to be submitted to members two and three on the committee. The Chair/thesis supervisor helps to steer the process, but the student is responsible for meeting all deadlines, not the Chair. For full guidelines regarding faculty eligible to serve on thesis committees, see http://catalogue.usc.edu/content.php?catoid=7&navoid=1767#graduate_school_policies_and_requirements.

B. Formation of the Thesis Committee

The student forms their thesis committee upon advancement to candidacy at the end of the spring semester in the first year. The student contacts faculty individually and formalizes the committee by having each sign the Appointment of Committee Form: http://graduateschool.usc.edu/assets/doc/Appointment_Change_of_Committee_Form_D_octoral.pdf. This form is then submitted to the MA Advisor. All committee appointments are subject to approval by the Vice Dean of Research or the Dean.

The student meets with the faculty on their thesis committee as part of CRIT 594ab Master's Thesis, beginning in the second year of study, and will hold regular meetings to discuss the drafts of the thesis—normally this process begins with one-on-one work with the Chair of the committee (the thesis supervisor) followed by a submission of a full draft to members two and three.

C. The Written Thesis

The written thesis text is generally expected to be 40-50 pages total, with properly formatted bibliography and footnotes, following the *Chicago Manual of Style*. The first draft of the thesis (complete) is due to all committee members by February 1 of the student's second year. Committee members read and make comments, which they share among each other and with the student. The student then revises the thesis and **the final, revised draft of the thesis (complete) is due to all committee members by March 1: with no exceptions or extensions**. Any further minor suggested changes can then be made on the thesis before USC's final submission deadline (end of March; exact dates on USC website, see <http://graduateschool.usc.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation-submission/submission-deadlines/>).

D. Online Submission

After the student receives corrections and revises the thesis, the thesis is submitted and processed online for review by USC. For more information see: <http://graduateschool.usc.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation-submission/>

In addition to formal approval of the written thesis by the thesis committee, the student must format and submit his or her thesis according to the guidelines of the USC Graduate School thesis editors. The USC Graduate School website, in addition to the MFA Art academic advisor and the Graduate School software ("thesis editor"), can provide guidance in how to format properly and submit the written thesis: <http://graduateschool.usc.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation-submission/guidelines-for-format-and-presentation/>

Following approval, the student uploads the completed thesis to ProQuest.

THESIS MILESTONES

All students must adhere to milestones in the process of writing their MFA Art theses, an essential component for maintaining satisfactory progress. The required milestones are as follows:

1st Milestone, Preliminary Proposal and Formation of Thesis Committee

Requirements: The student writes a preliminary thesis proposal and forms a thesis committee.

Due date: Before the last day of classes of the spring semester, typically by April 30.

2nd Milestone, Submission of Final Thesis Proposal

Requirements: Final preliminary proposal should be 5 pages and include title, abstract, outline and preliminary bibliography.

Due date: At the end of the semester, typically the second week of May.

3rd Milestone, Written Thesis

Requirements: in consultation with the thesis chair (supervisor), the student expands the thesis proposal, indicating the scope of the research, and meets with all members of the committee.

Due date: revised/expanded proposal due September 3rd Presentation to full committee in early October followed by individual meetings during the fall semester.

4th Milestone, Turn in Appointment/Change of Committee form

Requirements: Download the Appointment/Change of Committee Form on Thesis website:

http://graduateschool.usc.edu/assets/doc/Appointment_Change_of_Masters_Committee.pdf

Due date: Get signatures from committee and turn into Jahtm Flores by November 15.

5th Milestone, Preliminary draft of Thesis

Requirements: Complete a preliminary draft of thesis and turn into Chair who will respond with feedback for you to work on during the Winter Break.

6th Milestone, First draft of Thesis

Requirements: Complete first draft of thesis is submitted to all committee members (Student will have made revisions based on the Chair's recommendations).

Due date: February 1, second academic year

7th Milestone, Final Thesis

Requirement: Final thesis is submitted to all committee members.

Due Date: March 1, second academic year; this is an absolute deadline.

8th Milestone, Final Thesis Review

Requirement: Final discussion and review of thesis with all committee members, via email or in person.

Prior to end of March, second academic year; this is an absolute deadline, based on USC regulations. See <http://graduateschool.usc.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation-submission/submission-deadlines/> for the exact deadline your year.

9th Milestone, Electronic Thesis Approval

Requirement: Committee to electronically approve the thesis via the USC Thesis Center

Due date: March 25th, second academic year; this is an absolute deadline.

10th Milestone

Requirement: Submission of thesis to USC Graduate School

Due date: April 1st, second academic year; this is an absolute deadline. See

<http://graduateschool.usc.edu/current-students/thesis-dissertation-submission/submission-deadlines/>

CONDUCT INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

As a graduate student, you have the responsibility of conducting yourself, in all education activities, in a befitting manner, showing respect to faculty, staff, your student colleagues, and the surrounding community. Engagements in debate should be respectful and productive. We are here to enrich you, stoke your intellectual curiosity, and push your artistic growth.

A fair amount of conflict and friction is normal in a high-level learning environment, up to a point. Ideally, you should be aware that disagreements occur and that you should find constructive ways to deal with your emotions about them. When necessary faculty can be enlisted to help deal with conflicts in the classroom or at the IFT or elsewhere at USC. We want to ensure everyone feels supported, and that the classroom is a space of openness and debate. While intellectual and creative disagreements occur, debate should remain respectful and productive, and feedback should come from a place of generosity.

In the classroom, learning to *negotiate rather than escalate* is a crucial part of learning to conduct yourself as a professional in your field. All comments and engagements in class and beyond must remain respectful and productive; if you need tips on how best to achieve this, talk to your faculty mentors for suggestions. Every effort should be made to resolve conflicts yourselves as individuals and should be addressed in-person, face-to-face. Texting, posting on social media, or emailing about a perceived slight is not only ineffective, but counterproductive. If you have taken steps in an attempt to resolve a conflict on your own and have been unsuccessful, take the time to meet with the instructor outside of class. Class time should be used for course material and not to discuss or vent about conflicts.

The syllabus for any given course is a guideline as to the expectations for the type of work being done in the course, including in-class participation and assignments as part of the course. If you are unable to engage in the course material as denoted by the syllabus and directed by the instructor, your grade will reflect this.

If you feel an instructor is hostile or abusive, talk to the MA Director; if the MA Director is not helpful, or is the instructor of the course, you can talk to the Vice Dean of Research or the Dean of Roski; OR you can always go directly to Student Affairs for support and bypass Roski faculty.

We understand that students have a life outside of Roski and that at times, life takes a course of its own. If you experience difficulties that you feel are impeding your academics, please speak with head of the program or the assistant dean of student services.

For more information on university resources to help off-set conflict, additional policies and procedures, please refer to the SC USC Student Handbook: <http://policy.usc.edu/student/scampus/>.

Lastly, students should make themselves aware of USC Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards (USC SJACS) and of Section 13 – Academic Integrity Review: <https://sjacs.usc.edu/students/academic-integrity/>. Sanctioning Guidelines are provided in Appendix A: https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/files/2015/09/appendix_a.pdf
Sanctions for second offenses will be more severe and generally will include suspension or expulsion.

ROSKI TALKS & MFA ART VISITING LECTURER HOST DUTIES

All Roski Talks lectures have been invited through the graduate program coordinator's office. MA and MFA students in ART 515 will be engaged in these visits and will generally be asked to introduce one visitor during the semester. Depending upon who has been assigned to a visitor, the Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC) may ask you to assist as a student host.

As the host, you are the on-site point person to liaise with the guest speaker. While the GPC will be the

contact for the individual prior to their on-site visit, coordinating the visit schedule, including audio-visual check, dinner, studio schedule, and seminar visit, you are expected to be the “face” of the Roski School on the day(s) of the guest’s visit.

You will also assist the GPC in coordinating studio visits for the visitor to whom you are assigned. The GPC will initially set the schedule for all studio visits. You will be responsible for reminding your student colleagues of their appointments and making sure the guest speakers makes each appointment, ensuring each student gets the allotted time for studio visits.

Typically, the lecture takes place on Tuesday and the seminar and studio visits take place Wednesday, but these arrangements can vary dependent on the visitors’ schedules. On the day of the studio visits and seminar, meet the visitor in the parking lot; greet them and give them a quick tour of the building and a copy of their studio visit schedule. Show them your studio. Open your studio so that they have a place to relax and put their things down. Offer them refreshments; you can see what is available in the IFT administrative suite. Ensure that they get to each studio visit in a timely manner (their schedule normally does allot the guest time to take breaks). You will also make sure they are able to find the seminar room for the class and have all the AV requirements assembled.

AUDIOVISUAL EQUIPMENT

There are a select few items of audio visual equipment such as speakers, DVD players, and other items that can be checked out for a period of one week with the GPC. Photography equipment can be checked out at the Advanced Photography Lab next door. The equipment is governed by the Advanced Photography Lab policies.

CHECKOUT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- 1) Equipment may be checked out for periods of one week, with the exception of holidays, when students may be able to check out equipment for extended periods. Checkouts are processed through the program coordinator or one of the program coordinator’s work study assistants.
- 2) To guarantee availability, it is recommended that students reserve equipment in advance, either by emailing astorm@usc.edu or by visiting the program coordinator’s office. Students who wish to reserve must specify a checkout period.
- 3) Students must return equipment by noon on the due date. Students who wish to extend a checkout period must stop by the program coordinator’s office or email the day before and request an extension. If no other student has reserved the item, an extension will be granted.
- 4) More than two incidences of returning equipment late may result in loss of AV equipment checkout privileges.

STAFF DIRECTORY

Staff	Position	Extension	Office	Email
Avetisyan, Hayk	IT Manager	11414	HAR 117	havetisy@usc.edu
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