

# **GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING THE MFA DOCUMENT**

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI  
DEPARTMENT OF ART AND ART HISTORY  
1540 LEVANTE AVENUE  
REVISED 2012

## **The MFA Document**

The thesis requirement for a Master of Fine Arts candidate is a solo exhibition of artwork and a written support document that should include high-quality visual samples of your work. Beginning in Fall 2005, ART 599 “Exhibition Preparation” became a required course for all MFA students. In order to pass the course, a first draft of your written document must be completed. Thesis exhibitions can only occur after the successful completion of this course (although the tentative schedule will be established earlier).

Start discussing the possible direction of your written document with your committee during your meetings and get their approval before you invest much time on the first draft in the ART 599 class.

The final text of the document needs to be approved by your committee before the exhibition can be installed; the visual samples may be added to the document after the exhibition if necessary. During your exhibition, you will meet with your full committee and must pass a defense of the show. There is an approval form to be signed at your defense; this form and a copy of the signed approval page of the document are submitted to the Graduate School for their records. The Graduate School also sends the department a clearance form that finalizes your graduation. MA students in Art History submit their entire written thesis to be read and approved by the Dissertation Coordinator in the Graduate School; in the Fine Arts program we handle this requirement in-house by having your document read and approved by the Graduate Program Director.

You should discuss the content of your document with your committee, but in general it should cover the evolution of the work you will be showing in your thesis exhibition. It should include sections concerning: 1) a physical description of the work, 2) your imagery and content, 3) your aesthetic philosophy and 4) your influences and historical niche. The document is not just another other research paper for a class: it needs to be flawlessly written, as if being prepared for publication, and it may have to go through a few drafts before its approved.

The following guidelines have been modified for our department’s use from the MA Thesis Guidelines originally prepared by the Dissertation Coordinator of the Graduate School.

### **Outline of Thesis Format Requirements**

These Guidelines provide the general format requirements of the Graduate School, along with detailed editorial advice that may be useful in your preparation of the final draft of the document. In addition to these guidelines, you should follow the requirements of your advisor and committee in the preparation of your final draft.

#### **1. Stylistic consistency and precision of presentation:**

Precision and consistency are essential features of the presentation of a scholarly work; if the confidence of the reader is lost due to inaccuracies in the author’s presentation, the entirety of the author’s work is devalued.

The document is required to conform to the practices of standard written English without exception, and both the student and the thesis committee must make every effort to prevent inaccuracy and error in the final version. The University also has a Writing Center that you can go to for assistance.

#### **2. Margins, spacing and font size for the text:**

Set your margins as follows: 1.5 inches on the left side, 1 inch at the top, bottom, and right side. The reason for this is that thesis documents and dissertations traditionally have been bound and kept in the University’s library, and the bookbinder has to trim the edges of the paper in the binding process. These

settings also make for an attractive document, which is why our department follows these guidelines even though our written work does not go to the library.

**Justification:** You may fully justify or use ragged right, whichever looks more pleasing to the eye.

**Font size:** We are also going to conform to the Graduate School's recommended font size because it is easy to read -- theses and dissertations were once microfilmed and since the microfilming process reproduced the manuscript in minimized form, the microfilmer advised authors to use 12-point font exclusively, for all textual materials, including appendices. The Graduate School is now asking departments to submit theses and dissertations electronically in PDF format, which is also a new requirement in our department; after all revisions have been made you can use the "print" menu to save your document as a pdf file.

**Spacing:** Single-spacing of the text is not allowed, except for footnotes, indented quotations, figure legends and reference list. These are the only features of your paper that may be single-spaced. Spacing between sections, above and below block quotations, etc. should be maintained consistently throughout the text. Any new section that begins at the bottom of a page should be accompanied by at least two complete lines of text. If it is not, be sure to move the new section to the top of the next page. Along the same lines, avoid pages that contain one straggling line from a previous paragraph.

Remember that when you have long quotations (typically of three lines or more) the text is indented on both sides and single-spaced. Do not use quotation marks on indented quotes; do not double-space them.

Figure legends should be placed on the same page as the figure whenever space allows. A smaller font works for captions. Only if the figure is too large to allow its page to accommodate any added legend should you place the legend on the prior page.

**Images:** you should include pictures of your own work and examples of the artists' work you cite as influences. We highly suggest using a page layout program such as In Design so you can control the spaces between text and images and establish text boxes for your captions. (Write the text in word to take advantage of the editing software, then import it into In Design.)

### **3. Page numbering and order of the front matter:**

Begin your document with the following unnumbered pages:

Title page

Copyright page (if copyrighting)

Signature Page

Abstract

If you want you can then include these optional pages, which should be numbered with lower case roman numerals beginning with 'iii,' whether that be the Table of Contents or one of the optional pages; the numerals are always centered at the bottom and this system should be continued until you reach the first page of the text.

Dedication page (optional)

Acknowledgment page (optional)

Preface (optional)

Table of Contents

The actual text of your thesis must be numbered in the following manner:

The first page of the document should be numbered Arabic '1,' centered at the bottom of the page. The

second page of text should be numbered Arabic ‘2,’ upper right, roughly around the intersection of 0.5” from the top and 1” from the right. Subsequent pages are numbered in the same location, consecutively, up to the end of the text, including reference sections and bibliography. The total page count, equal to the last numbered page of your text, is then noted in your abstract.

If you are using a word processing or page layout program that has auto-pagination built in to the program, you might want to make the text a separate document from the title page, etc., so the numbering will be accurate. (Different documents can be combined later into one pdf file.)

At the end of your paper a vita page is recommended but not required. This does not call for your c.v. / resume. See attached vita page for example. In addition to biographical information you can list some career highlights keeping in mind that this is kept to one page. This page does not get numbered. You may also include the copyright information on this page rather than on a separate page at the beginning.

#### **4. Table of contents and divisions of the manuscript:**

The Table of Contents typically includes, besides chapters and subheadings, Tables of Figures, Tables, Maps, or Illustrations.

As a rule of thumb for your Table of Contents, consider everything that precedes it to be superfluous to the Table; in other words, don’t include listings for ‘Acknowledgments,’ ‘Dedication,’ ‘Abstract,’ or ‘Table of Contents’ in your Table of Contents.

#### **5. Printing, paper and other media:**

Use 8.5 x 11 inch, white paper only. Prepare six copies: one for the department, one for each member of your committee, and one for your own records. Using a color laser printer is recommended over an ink jet printer.

#### **6. Abstract, title and signature pages:**

See the attached samples for these pages and copy their format. (MS Word is notorious for ‘helpfully’ capitalizing sentence fragments; if you use this word processor, examine your title and signature pages for inadvertent capitalization of words such as “the,” “of,” “partial,” “requirements,” etc. in the headings).

The abstract must show the following information:

- Author name,
- Chairman of the committee,
- Degree and department,
- Title of the thesis exhibition and/or of the written document

And last but not least,

- The date of graduation (which also appears on your title page):
  - If you are graduating in the Fall, the date is “December 2011”
  - for the Spring, it should be “May 2012”
  - Summer I’s date should be “June 2012”
  - Summer II’s date should be “August 2012”.

Please note that there is no comma in these dates.

This is the date on which the degree is to be awarded — DO NOT LIST THE DATE OF YOUR EXHIBITION OR YOUR DEFENSE.

The approval page for your document asks for the name and academic rank of your committee members: you should double check this information before giving the signature page to your committee.

### **7. Approval of defense:**

Your chair and committee members should sign two certificates at the time of your successful defense. Attach a copy of your abstract to each original certificate, and submit these originals to the Graduate Program Director. One stays in the department, the other copy goes to the Graduate School. A blank copy of this certificate is attached.

- Be sure the committee members print their names next to their signatures
- It is also essential that the thesis title listed on this document be the accurate title, as your graduation record is generated from this certificate.

### **8. References and notes:**

Our department suggests you use Kate Turabian's [A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, And Dissertations.](#)

### **9. Submission of the completed thesis:**

The final copy of your MFA document is to be submitted to the Graduate Program Director no more than one semester before the deadline date specified in the university calendar (which is typically about two weeks before the end of classes). If your MFA show is in May, then your graduation date can be no earlier than June (Summer 1).

### **10. Deadlines and diplomas:**

There are several deadlines to which you are subject, all of which appear each semester in the University calendar:

- Admission to Candidacy: You must be admitted to candidacy at least one semester prior to the date that you plan to receive your degree.
- Application for Diploma: the deadline is early in the semester in which you plan to receive your degree. Applications are not held over from Fall to Spring, but your Spring application can be held over for the Summer terms.

The Department and the Graduate School do not issue your diploma. For information regarding the mailing of your diploma you must contact the office of Enrollment Services, at 121 University Center, 284-2294.

Attached are some sample pages and forms.

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

TITLE IS CENTERED HERE - ALL CAPS

By

Your Name, Upper and Lower Case

MFA DOCUMENT

Submitted to the Faculty  
of the University of Miami  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Fine Arts

Coral Gables, Florida  
June 2012

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI  
MFA document submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts

TITLE IS CENTERED HERE--ALL CAPS  
Your Name, Upper and Lower case

Approved:

---

Committee Chairperson's Name  
Rank (example: Professor of Art)

---

Committee Member's Name  
Rank

---

Committee Member's Name  
Rank

---

Committee Member's Name  
Rank

(SAMPLE ABSTRACT)

SCALISE, CLAUDIA M. (M.F.A., Painting)

Disfigure December, 1997

Abstract of the MFA document completed at the University of Miami  
Thesis Exhibition supervised by Professor Darby Bannard

No. of pages in text: 12

The following document is a summary of the development of my work during the past two years at the University of Miami. I have traced the aesthetic choices and theoretical issues that permeated the content and formal style of my images from the time I entered the M.F.A. through the present and have analyzed this development in terms of historical and contemporary influences.



## VITA

Claudia Scalise was born in Los Angeles, California on April 7, 1968 to parents Gloria Lucia Cueto and Robert Scalise. Her parents traveled and relocated frequently and because of it she attended many elementary schools. When she was twelve the family moved to Buenos Aires, Argentina where she completed high school. At age eighteen she moved with her mother to Los Angeles where they lived for a year before becoming permanent residents in Miami, Florida. In 1988 she began taking art courses at Miami Dade Community College and graduated with an Associate in Arts degree. In 1991 she entered Florida International University where she obtained her Bachelor in Fine Arts degree.

©1997

Claudia Scalise

All Rights Reserved

(The “©” symbol is brought up by  
typing “control+alt+c” on a PC or  
“option-g” on a Mac)

# UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI GRADUATE SCHOOL

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL FOR  
MASTER OF FINE ARTS THESIS PROJECT  
TO BE SIGNED AFTER SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE OF THE EXHIBITION

2 ORIGINALS REQUIRED

TO BE FILLED IN BY STUDENT; (PRINT OR TYPE):

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

I.D. # \_\_\_\_\_

TITLE OF PROJECT: \_\_\_\_\_

TO BE FILLED IN BY COMMITTEE MEMBERS (BLUE INK PREFERRED):

Certify 1) that this is the final corrected version of the MFA Document 2) that the exhibition and document have been approved by the committee and 3) that credit should be given as follows, with a grade of "S" for 6 credits  
**ART 710 THESIS**

\_\_\_\_\_  
CHAIRMAN PRINT YOUR NAME AND SIGN NEXT TO IT DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
COMMITTEE MEMBER PRINT YOUR NAME AND SIGN NEXT TO IT DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
COMMITTEE MEMBER PRINT YOUR NAME AND SIGN NEXT TO IT DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
COMMITTEE MEMBER PRINT YOUR NAME AND SIGN NEXT TO IT DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
Department Graduate Program Director Date