ARTIST you AUTHOR

Where Artist Meets Author

When words and images come together, they can create powerful visual narratives—stories that can touch hearts, ignite imaginations, change minds and even change the way we see our world—Story First.

The Visual Narrative MFA at SVA responds to the needs of today's evolving creative markets by merging the artist and author. It's an evolutionary process that puts story first and gives you the tools you need to craft your own stories and to help others craft theirs.

More than just a degree program, the MFA Visual Narrative program is a school of thought that immerses you in story. A select group of artist/authors, we are a diverse, tight-knit community where you learn and collaborate in small classes and are mentored by top professionals who know how to navigate today's competitive creative markets.

Part of the extraordinary appeal of the program is that it is low-residency. Three intensive eight-week summer semesters at SVA in New York City give you the chance to connect with your peers and professors, to create in-studio and to absorb the Visual Narrative process. Additionally, you are able to access the myriad of creative opportunities in the city and to build a community of colleagues and mentors that supports and inspires. Four semesters of online coursework, critiques, discussions and interactive projects give you the freedom to pursue your passion and live your life—without uprooting it.

In today's workplace, culture and creative landscape, fresh content, fearless voices and great stories are needed more than ever. At MFA Visual Narrative, you'll develop a fluency in "Visual Writing." We think of it as a whole new language and approach to visual storytelling that can take your narrative voice to the next level, giving you the competitive edge in today's creative economy. If you're ready to dig deep, uncover universal truths and live and breathe story, come join us.

The world needs compelling stories.

What's yours?

—Nathan Fox, chair

story: visualized
MFA Visual Narrative

About the Program

Whether you want to enhance your work through the power of story or take your professional skills to the next level, the MFA in Visual Narrative, one of SVA's newest graduate degrees, is designed to make you think Story First, and answer the increasing demand for great stories and storytellers.

A holistic approach, MFA Visual Narrative is a low-residency program that gives equal emphasis to creative writing and to visual art in all mediums. This merger of art and writing is a powerful tool that we think of as a whole new language. We call it Visual Writing. And our students are fluent. But fluent communication takes commitment and requires total immersion. It's intense, it's empowering and it gives new purpose to your creativity. You'll find that the MFAVN is more than a graduate program; it's a new way of seeing the world. Story First.

A diverse group of carefully curated students spends three intensive summer residencies at SVA's NYC campus. Then, two fall and two spring semesters engage students in rigorous online course work—from anywhere in the world.

Small classes, taught by top professionals who understand the range of the competitive markets, provide an incubator for ideas, experimentation and play. The diversity of the class and of the community lends itself to unexpected collaborations and off-the-charts creativity. One-on-one mentoring develops in-demand skills for producing films and animation, publishing original content, developing digital interactive media and winning loyal audiences in emerging industries where visual storytelling drives creative direction.

The MFA Visual Narrative program gives you the tools to craft your own stories and help others craft theirs.

WHO SHOULD APPLY

This program is designed for self-disciplined professionals, educators and students from all creative areas to explore what it means to put *Story First*. A bachelor's degree or equivalent is required in any subject. Applicants need to demonstrate proficiency in both creative writing and narrative art forms.

YOU WILL:

- Develop an understanding of what story is and how it functions most effectively when visual and written media merge, by sharpening your writing skills and integrating them into your creative process and professional practice
- Create original works as both author and artist within a supportive and transformative creative community, with visiting artists and mentoring by a top professional in your field
- Connect and collaborate with a professional network in NYC and beyond
- Prepare to compete in creative industries such as advertising, video, gaming, film, animation, sequential arts, illustration, design and more
- Benefit from scholarships, housing grants and our rolling admissions policy.

Jim Rugg, faculty, *What's Your Story* poster.

Looking to Tell Their Stories: Three Students on Why They Chose MFAVN

MFAVN students come from different backgrounds with diverse skill sets, but what usually unites them is a passion for storytelling and a talent for visual arts. The three students we spoke to all used their time at MFAVN to pursue a new medium for storytelling. Alison Paul, an illustrator, made a stop-motion video for her thesis. Thomas Slattery, a cartoonist, created a video game. And Jennifer Brent, a motion graphics designer, turned to live-action film.

ALISON PAUL, CLASS OF 2015

In addition to freelance work, artist Alison Paul teaches illustration at the University of Connecticut. When she discovered the MFAVN program, she says, "It was literally a dream come true." She had always been interested in writing, and minored in English as an undergrad. "I was looking for opportunities to merge the two things together," she explains. "So when I saw this program at SVA, it felt like it was made for me."

Alison explored a new medium for her thesis, creating a stop-motion animation called *Equinox*. "Stop-motion is more of a labor of love for me, a personal project, not work," she explains. "I really enjoyed having the time for myself, not for a client." Since graduation, she has continued her work on that project, re-recording sound and reediting for film festival submissions.

Alison also wrote and illustrated two children's books, *The Crow* and *Sunday Love*, for Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

alisonpaulart.com
alisonpaulart.blogspot.com

RIGHT AND DIRECTLY BELOW: Stills and material used in Alison's thesis project. BOTTOM: Alison holds two children's books she wrote and illustrated.

THOMAS SLATTERY, CLASS OF 2017

Thomas Slattery earned his undergraduate degree from SVA in cartooning. After college, he freelanced, doing storyboarding and set dressing. He wanted to return to school however. "I really wanted to tell my own stories," he says. "I came back wanting to focus on writing." For his thesis he created a video game called "Aura." What does writing have to do with creating a video game? "The game is narrative-based," he explains. "I figured out the story first and then worked backward to create the game." His experience with set dressing was good training. "Because it uses environmental storytelling," he says.

Since graduating from the MFAVN program, he has continued freelancing, working for television and film. "I have been shifting my focus to screenwriting, which was a surprise to me," he says. "MFAVN is an intimate and young program. The students are all really involved. I'm still in touch with everyone. It's a great support group. We all do different media, but it all comes from a narrative place."

tslattery.com
psychickids.tumblr.com
instagram.com/tetsuobulletman

OPPOSITE PAGE: Thomas Slattery in his studio.
ABOVE: His work includes album covers and comic art.

JENNIFER BRENT, CLASS OF 2018

Jennifer Brent—or Jenny Bee—has been freelancing for clients like MTV and Google, mainly doing motion graphics. "I always wanted to do cartooning and animation work. I'm very story-brained," she says. "So with my clients, I'm often thinking, How can I tell a story?" That passion for storytelling made her think about going back to school.

"I had initially been a double major in writing and art in college," she says. "So this program combined both of my favorite things." Jenny is in her second year of the program now. "The program starts in the summer and you meet your classmates. Classes are nine to five and it's intense, a big story pressure cooker," she says. "We keep in touch during the year. Those of us who are New York–based try to meet once a week for lunch and discuss our stories. I keep in touch with the international students via Skype." For her thesis, she is branching into live action, writing and directing a film called *Negative Space*. "It's a mockumentary," she says.

jennybee.design
vimeo.com/jennybeedesign

Jennifer Brent in spring 2018. Jenny's work includes motion graphics, live-action film and illustration.

A Hub for the Risograph Community at SVA

The RisoLAB is an educational print lab dedicated to empowering self-publishing and production of Risograph-based printed works, accessible to the entire SVA community. Nathan Fox, chair of the MFA Visual Narrative program, explains why he launched the Lab. "For a story-focused interdisciplinary visual storytelling program where the artist is author, understanding the printing process and project management is invaluable. Playing around with what print publishing and storytelling can do together is a crucial skill set and a critical thinking process to learn for any profession."

As Fox notes, the Riso printing phenomenon is yet another case of artists transforming a technology intended for mundane use into a powerful tool for self-expression. He continues, "Risographs were originally created as automated low-cost, high-yield image duplicators for churches and schools. Recently, Risographs have enjoyed a resurgence through the visual storytelling community, with zines, comics, book arts and experiments in printed matter. It was this perfect

opportunity to generate a new creative print community on campus, and a truly effective way to provide an accessible print-production education in a box."

While the RisoLAB is available to the entire SVA community, as well as outside creatives from fields as diverse as fine art, graphic design, illustration, and even the worlds of poetry and literature, it has become a crucial physical hub that underpins the on-campus summer semester of the MFA Visual Narrative program. All MFAVN students undergo rigorous training in Risograph printing in their first semester, after which they have unlimited access to the Risograph printing facilities, expanding their design and print skills.

Fox says, "As a low-residency program, many students are freelancers or working professionals. All MFAVN students are encouraged to experiment and access the Lab for personal work production, gallery shows, testing publishing concepts and pushing the capabilities of these amazing machines. Risographs provide an immediate way to prototype and explore alternative print methods and publishing, which was a big draw for our students and SVA at large."

Curriculum/ Sample Program

The MFA Visual Narrative is a flexible, low-residency program designed for working professionals and students of visual storytelling alike. Three on-site summer sessions are connected by two years of online study during the fall and spring semesters.

> " The most difficult thing as an artist-writer is to define a personal style and voice, something that someone else recognizes as 'yours.' MFA Visual Narrative encouraged me to explore and take chances in my work. Not to be the next Hemingway or Picasso, but the first Ryan Ansel."
>
> **—Ryan Ansel '15**

Anna Eveslage '15 was awarded a Minnesota State Arts Board Grant to create her thesis book project, *Eating Alone*, a collection of fictional vignettes and staged portraits.

Course Offerings

Candidates for the MFA Visual Narrative degree must complete at least 60 credits and all course requirements, as well as produce a successful thesis project to be eligible for degree conferral. This is a sample of our recent course listings. For our full curriculum, please visit: sva.edu/mfavn/curriculum.

"I think the biggest lesson is that it's okay to fail. In the end, all those extra drafts create a better story and more holistic piece of work."
—Liz Enright, '15

"I like to make images and tell stories, but I also was drawn to design. I realized when I found out about this program that it was really narrative story that was at the heart of all that."
—Michelle Nahmad, '17

BLACK AND WHITE AND ONE COLOR

Beyond the surface and medium, how does visual storytelling really work? As artists, how do we know what visual choices to make? Where do we place the camera and why? How can the audience, characters and story inform our choices? Are there rules and how do we break them? In this course, students will examine these questions and explore the fundamental building blocks of visual storytelling in their own work through a limited and focused palette. Through collaboration, play and rapid prototyping, students will be given a series of visual story explorations that are intended to disrupt and challenge their assumptions and current working methods by asking each student to dig deeper, put "story first" and discover how their decisions as informed image/story-designers can truly mold and shape their narrative approach as both author and artist.

HISTORY OF VISUAL STORYTELLING

This course will examine the evolution of children's books, comics, photography and film as the departure point for different approaches to telling a story with words and pictures. A thorough history of these art forms and their various points of intersection will be given, from children's adventure books to comic strips and photojournalism, to modernist approaches to storytelling, the underground revolution, contemporary photography and film.

STORY VISUALIZED

Visual storytelling is a language. Advertising, video, cartoons, symbols, icons and typography transfer information at rates that we previously could not have imagined possible. Today's content crosses borders and time at the speed of thought—its meaning often altered by everyone who receives its signal. In this course, students will investigate the role of distribution, technology and media in creative content, as well as the significance of editing, design, format and context in narrative. They will consider the impact of business on their practice. Assignments include methods of adapting and creating fictional and nonfictional visual narratives from original and found texts. Students will deconstruct, reconfigure and critically analyze existing visual narratives such as films, video games, book covers, movie posters and graphic novels.

VISUAL WRITING

This course focuses on the application of mapping and data visualization techniques for use in concept development and world-building. Students will identify locations connected to their existing story ideas and will investigate these locations using documentary media, data collection and other methods of site-specific research. Students will compile the materials they gather into visual archives and create analog and digital maps that describe their content. The work produced in this course will function both as a reference for the development of their thesis projects and as a means of communicating the spaces that their stories will inhabit, and the experiences their audiences will have navigating them.

SHAPING YOUR STORY

As readers, viewers and consumers of story, we are hard-wired to respond to every story we encounter. In this course, students will sharpen their creative writing and visual storytelling skills for their thesis projects by focusing on the "who, how, what, where" and, most importantly, "why." From a deep understanding of what story is, students will zero in on the specific story they're telling and write a complete rough draft. Through class discussions, students will develop the foundation, shape and scope of their narrative, establishing a clear yardstick by which to create, gauge and evaluate the relevance of every story element in their thesis as they continue to develop it throughout the coming school year. Throughout the course, we will focus on story development, pitching your story and outlining your plans for producing your thesis.

FORM, EMPATHY AND CHARACTER PLAY

Character and narrative are symbiotic; character + choice = story. Sometimes the only way to find a character's "voice" as a storyteller is to get into character—we must become the character in order to understand it. With lectures on character archetypes, character crisis, defining moments, unconscious desire and design, students will examine the elements necessary for creating their own characters. Through improv and role-playing techniques, students will understand how their characters will behave in fictional settings, better enabling them to write and visualize their character creations.

SELLING YOUR STORY

Selling your story means telling your story. The creative person's marketing plan can be simple, but it must weave a compelling tale that helps people understand what has been created. Through frank and personal process one-on-ones, students will find the best promotional tools and processes. Students will develop and document their own promotional campaign in a thorough marketing plan that is intended to expand their audience and professional networks for both their thesis show and professional practice. Once completed, each student's marketing plan will be executed in the third summer semester—connecting their story to audience.

CONNECTING STORY TO AUDIENCE

Promotion is a key part of marketing, but it is only one part. To market our work effectively we need to weave promotions, sales and tales into a captivating whole. Do that, and your marketing leads to sales. But what are you selling? Yourself? Your story? An idea? This course will be a forum in which to discuss the elements of the thesis project that drive each student. By developing a marketing plan through discussions, we'll spot opportunities to highlight each student's passions, process and professional practice—connecting each student's story to his or her respective audience.

> "Great visual storytellers challenge our notions of self and truth, engaging an audience to its core."
>
> —Nathan Fox, chair

"When you get
people together with
this kind of talent in
the world of story
and the world of
visual art, all kinds
of magic can happen.
And it does."
—Craig Coss '15
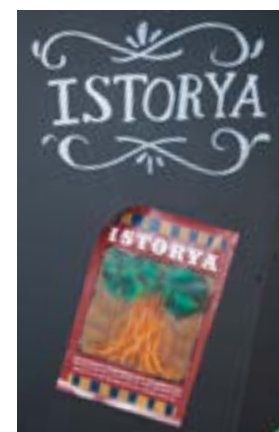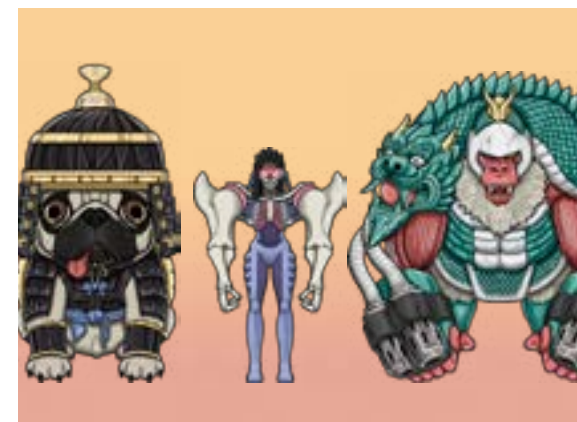
Notable Alumni

Ann Coddou, '15
designer, Fisher Price Toy Box
Clients include: Nickelodeon, Disney, Target, Walmart, Toys R Us
anncoddou.com
anndorphin.tumblr.com

Craig Coss, '15
Painter; educator; illustrator, *Game of Thrones Tarot, The Goddess Coloring Book*
Clients include: Chronicle Books, HBO, Williams-Sonoma
craigcoss.com

Jenny Goldstick, '15
IndieCade 2016 Official Nominee
Selected exhibitions: Wordplay Festival, ComicsxGames at TCAF, Babycastles
design.jennygoldstick.com

Melissa Malzkuhn, '15
founder and creative director, Motion Light Lab; digital innovation and media strategies manager, Science of Learning Center on Visual Language and Visual Learning, Gallaudet University; cofounder, producer, Ink & Salt
Awards: 2018 Fellow, Obama Foundation
mezmalz.com
motionlightlab.com

Alison Paul, '15
author, *The Crow, Sunday Love*; illustrator; animator; assistant professor, Illustration and Animation, University of Connecticut
alisonpaulart.com

Feifei Ruan, '15
illustrator, comic book artist
Awards: Hiii Illustration International Competition, Grand Prix Award, SOI: MoCCA Arts Festival Awards of Excellence, Gold Medal
Clients include: JimHenson Co, PenguinClassics, HarperCollins, Boom!Studios, BuzzFeed, Mercedes-Benz
feifeiruan.com

Alexandra Beguez, '16
illustrator, comic book artist
Awards: Latin American Ilustración 6, Chosen Winner; 3x3 Professional Show No. 14, Honorable Mention; General Scholarship, Fine Arts Work Center
alexandrabeguez.com

Jon Bero, '16
creative, Apple; live demos, community outreach, mentoring, internal digital content creation, Today at Apple
jonbero.com
Twitter: @dizzymingo

Andrea Schmitz, '16
animator, motion graphics designer, *New York* magazine
Clients include: Ellevest, Vulture, The Cut, Daily Intelligencer Exhibitions: "Ladies in Mograph Girl Gang Gif Challenge," "School of Motion Holiday Card," "Things Took a Turn Animation Anthology"
andreaschmitzzz.com

Thomas Slattery, '17
freelance writer/artist
Clients include: Public Art Fund, Mary Kay and Benefit Cosmetics for Sarah Keho
tslattery.com

Jenny Bee, '18
freelance animator, motion graphic designer
Clients include: Google, Zagat, MTV2's Joking Off, Raphael Mostel, Frederator, Purchase College Design/ Technology Showcase
jennybee.design

Notable Thesis Mentors

Details on all our mentors can be found online at: mfavn.sva.edu/mentors

Paul Briggs
head of story, Disney
pbcbstudios.tumblr.com

Elinor Carucci
photographer
elinorcarucci.com

Samantha Gorman
writer, artist
samanthagorman.net

Joe Kelly
writer, filmmaker
manofaction.tv/profiles/ joe-kelley

Ross MacDonald
illustrator, prop designer
ross-macdonald.com

David Mazzucchelli
penciller, artist, inker

Richard McGuire
illustrator, graphic designer, comic book artist, animator, children's book author, musician, toy designer
richard-mcguire.com

Julia Pott
animator
juliapott.com

Justin Thompson
production designer
shinypinkbottle.tumblr.com

Robbie Tilton
interactive virtual reality design
robbietilton.com

Thu Tran
visual artist, writer, producer
thutran.com

Alexandra Zsigmond
art director, artist
zsigmonda.tumblr.com

Faculty

Our faculty represents a breadth of expertise, including children's literature, data visualization, theatre direction, graphic novels, printing, publishing and writing. Full biographies of our chair and faculty can be read online at: sva.edu/mfavn/faculty.

Nathan Fox
chair, illustrator and comic book guy

Lisa Cron
author, story coach

Anelisa Garfunkel
writer, director, producer

Bill Kartalopoulos
series editor, *The Best American Comics*; publisher, Rebus Books

Leonard S. Marcus
critic, writer, editor

Stacy Renee Morrison
photographer

Jonathon Rosen
painter, illustrator, animator

Lee Aaron Rosen
actor, researcher

Matt Rota
illustrator

Christina Roussos
director, producer

Jim Rugg
comic book artist, illustrator, graphic designer

Mark Sable
writer for comics, film, live-action television, animation and theater

Tim Szetela
designer, animator, technologist, mapmaker

Robert Thill
artist, author, independent scholar

Diego Vainesman
design director, 40N47 Design, Inc.

Ben Zackheim
writer, producer

> " If you come in with 100 percent energy, the faculty are going to come back with 200 percent, so there's this never-ending ping-pong game of idea and idea and idea and idea."
>
> —Mary Georgescu, '17

Application Process

Contact Us

We encourage potential students to visit our department and welcome exploratory conversation at any time. If you are a visual artist with the spirit of a storyteller, sign up for our newsletter, *The Storyteller's Bulletin* at mfavn.sva.edu. For questions about the application, contact Graduate Admissions at 212.592.2107 or email gradadmissions@sva.edu.

Nathan Fox, chair
Joan McCabe, director of operations
Lucea Spinelli, project manager

Tel: 212.592.2388
Email: mfavn@sva.edu
Site: sva.edu/mfavn
Department site: mfavn.sva.edu

facebook.com/MFAVisualNarrative
instagram.com/mfavn
pinterest.com/mfavn
twitter.com/mfavn

RISOLAB
Facebook: RisoLAB
Twitter: @RisoLAB
Instagram: @RisoLAB

CONTINUING ED CLASSES
MFAVN offers a range of classes, currently including Risograph printing and graphics, and workshops in world-building and children's book publishing. Learn more:
sva.edu/continuing-education/visual-narrative.

> " I felt like I found a home and people who thought about things in a similar way to me, but translated them so differently."
>
> —Ella Romero, '17

ACCREDITATION
The School of Visual Arts has been authorized by the New York State Board of Regents (www.highered.nysed.gov) to confer the degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts on graduates of programs in Advertising; Animation; Cartooning; Computer Art, Computer Animation and Visual Effects; Design; Film; Fine Arts; Illustration; Interior Design; Photography and Video; Visual and Critical Studies; and to confer the degree of Master of Arts on graduates of the programs in Critical Theory and the Arts; Curatorial Practice; Design Research, Writing and Criticism; and to confer the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching on graduates of the program in Art Education; and to confer the degree of Master of Fine Arts on graduates of programs in Art Practice; Art Writing; Computer Arts; Design; Design for Social Innovation; Fine Arts; Illustration as Visual Essay; Interaction Design; Photography, Video and Related Media; Products of Design; Social Documentary Film; Visual Narrative; and to confer the degree of Master of Professional Studies on graduates of the programs in Art Therapy; Branding; Digital Photography; Directing; Fashion Photography. Data required by the U.S. Department of Education on "Gainful Employment" for each of the above programs may be found on each individual program page at sva.edu/ge.

The School of Visual Arts is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (msche.org), 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, 267.284.5000. The Commission on Higher Education is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council on Higher Education Accreditation.

The School of Visual Arts is an accredited institutional member of the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (nasad.arts-accredit.org).

The Interior Design program leading to the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Interior Design is accredited by the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (accredit-id.org), 206 Grandville Avenue, Suite 305, Grand Rapids, MI, 49503-4014.

The Master of Arts in Teaching in Art Education program is accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).

The Master of Professional Studies in Art Therapy degree program is approved by the American Art Therapy Association, Inc., and as such meets the Education Standards of the art therapy profession.

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