



The Florence Academy of Art

MA STUDIO ART
ACADEMIC CURRICULUM

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The MA in Studio Art Curriculum is focused on a comprehensive method of teaching and developing skills, in order to engage in a pedagogical approach in the classroom setting.

The coursework is structured to engage with formal, technical, and conceptual dimensions of artistic practice. Formal studies emphasize proportion, composition, color theory, and paint handling; technical studies examine material preparation and historically established techniques; and conceptual studies consider the historical context, processes, and contemporary applications of these methods in art-making. Students learn to apply these concepts to a variety of exercises: figure, still life, and portrait.

The first year focuses on foundational skills in observation and drawing, including sight-size measurement, block-in procedures, value organization, and the study of light on simple forms. Exercises include Bargue drawings, geometric studies, cast drawings, and still life work, all intended to establish accuracy and visual sensitivity.

In the second year, students apply these principles to more complex subjects, particularly the human figure and portrait. Instruction expands to include anatomy, color theory, painting techniques, and compositional considerations. Students continue to refine their observational skills while developing control across a range of media and materials.

The third year takes place in Florence and serves as the culmination of the program. Students complete a thesis still life painting, produce figure work from the live model, and formally present and defend their thesis. The program concludes with a group exhibition in the Academy's gallery, allowing students to present their work within the context of the broader FAA community.

CREDIT SUMMARY

The Florence Academy of Art operates on a quarter system and units are calculated based on current accreditation standards in the U.S. and correspond to quarter hours. One quarter hour of credit represents 22 hours of class instruction each week. Students are awarded credit when they successfully complete a course, that is, only when curricular, competency, and all other requirements are met, and the Final Term Critique is passed.

MA Curriculum						
Year	ID	Title		Units/ Class	Units/ Quarter	Total Units
I	AT500	Academic Drawing Studio I	Summer Session I	4.0		
	AT501	Academic Painting Studio I	Summer Session I	4.0		
	IS500	Independent Study	Summer Session I	2.0	10.0	
II	AT600	Academic Figurative Drawing I	Summer Session II	4.0		
	AT601	Academic Figurative Painting I	Summer Session II	4.0		
	IS600	Independent Study	Summer Session II	2.0	10.0	
III	AT602	Thesis I	Summer Session III	4.0		
	AT608	Academic Figurative Drawing & Painting II	Summer Session III	4.0		
	IS700	Independent Study	Summer Session III	2.0	10.0	30.0

COURSES

Year I - Academic Drawing Studio I

AT500 4.0 credits (Monday-Friday, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm)

In-person / Remote

This immersive course, which blends drawing theory, art history, and drawing projects, explores nuanced drawing concepts, their historical context, and how to apply them in independent studio practice. Each student will complete a series of drawing projects tailored to individual learning needs, using a variety of media, and completed under the guidance of the academically trained instructor. Drawing projects will scaffold to imbed drawing theory buttressed by sound art historical references throughout the course.

Syllabus:

Students will discover methods for checking proportions, creating nuanced values, identifying complex shapes, and handling edges in drawings. This course emphasizes theoretical study through the use of art historical texts such as Harold Speed's *The Practice and Science of Drawing* and contemporary volumes, such as Juliette Aristides' *Classical Drawing Atelier*. Direct application of drawing theory will be explored in a series of drawing projects. The historical development of drawing concepts will be covered in-depth through lectures and application in drawings.

Outcomes:

- Students utilize a variety of methods for controlling proportion in drawings, including notional space box, height vs. width measuring, and follow-through lines.
- Students demonstrate understanding of the 9-step value scale theory through implementing a full range of values in rendered drawings.
- Students implement shape-finding concepts in drawings by naming shapes, flipping drawings upside down, and identifying the gesture and orientation of shapes.
- Students reference edge value scales in order to create a variety of edges in final drawings.
- Students understand the development of drawing concepts throughout history and make informed choices about which ones to implement in their drawings based on individual intents and purposes.

Projects:

- Barge Plate Block-in
- Value Scale
- Barge Plate Rendering
- Rendered Sphere
- Still Life Composition Project
- Rendered Still Life

Textbooks:

- *Charles Bargue Drawing Course* by Jean-Léon Gérôme
- *Classical Drawing Atelier* by Juliette Aristides
- *The Practice and Science of Drawing* by Harold Speed

Year I - Academic Painting Studio I

AT501 4.0 credits (Monday-Friday, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm)

In-person / Remote

This painting intensive course delves deeply into color temperature theory, composition, advanced materials handling, and art history. Course projects explore a variety of painting theories and their practical applications, as well as their historical contexts. Painting projects are tailored to each student's learning goals and are completed under the guidance of an academically trained instructor.

Syllabus:

Students will discover historical and contemporary methods for paint handling. Additionally the concept of value will be covered in depth. Students will learn how to maintain accurate shapes and proportions in paint while tackling personal painting challenges unique to their goals as artists. Composition will be covered in depth. This course emphasizes theoretical study through the use of art historical texts such as Harold Speed's *Oil Painting Techniques and Materials* and contemporary volumes, such as Ralph Mayer's *Artists Handbook of Materials and Techniques*. The historical development of painting concepts and the artists who discovered them will be covered through lectures and demonstrations.

Outcomes:

- Students utilize a variety of methods for controlling paint on surfaces.
- Students will be able to identify the value and temperature of colors when working with a grisaille palette.
- Students will successfully integrate painting knowledge with their drawing knowledge
- Students will be able to identify and apply a variety of painting techniques.
- Students will be able to place various painting techniques in their historical context and be able to efficiently research and study artists whose stylistic skills they admire.
- Students demonstrate understanding of the 9-step value scale theory through implementing a full range of values in rendered paintings
- Students implement shape-finding concepts in paintings by naming shapes, flipping paintings upside down, and identifying the gesture and orientation of shapes.
- Students understand how to apply a variety of edges and effects to create realistic effects in final paintings.

- Students will be able to make informed choices about which painting techniques to implement in their own work based on individual intents and purposes.
- Students will identify compositional mechanisms and how to implement them in their own works.

Projects:

- Grisaille Temperature Charts
- Mastercopy
- Grisaille Sphere
- Drawing with Canvas Transfer
- Wipe Out/Grisaille Project
- Rendered Grisaille Project
- Composition Studies with Poster Studies
- Grisaille Still Life Painting

Textbooks:

- *Oil Painting Techniques and Materials* by Harold Speed
- *Artists Handbook of Materials and Techniques* by Ralph Mayer

Year II - Academic Figurative Drawing I

AT600 4.0 credits (Monday-Friday, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm)

In-person / Remote

This figurative-intensive course envelopes anatomical study, and technical figure drawing concepts into a focused, studio-based course. Each student will complete a series of figurative drawing projects tailored to individual student interests using a variety of media under the guidance of an academically trained instructor. Projects will increase in intensity throughout the course to establish a firm technical foundation of figure drawing and its historical context.

Syllabus:

Students will discover methods for controlling proportions of figures, creating nuanced values to reveal body mass forms, identifying complex shapes common to the human figure, and implementing knowledge of gesture and anatomy into their drawings. This course emphasizes theoretical study through the use of art historical texts as well as contemporary volumes. Direct application of figurative drawing theory will be explored in a series of drawing projects. Figurative drawing theory will be applied throughout a series of increasingly difficult drawings.

Outcomes

- Students will draw proportionate figures
- Students will implement anatomical knowledge to accurately render human forms

- Students will discover the basis of figurative gestures and how to capture them in drawings.

Projects:

- Block-ins
- Anatomical Studies
- Gesture Drawing
- Mastercopy
- Rendered Head and Shoulders Drawing

Textbooks:

- *Drawing Lessons from the Great Masters* by Robert Beverly Hale
 - *Figure Drawing for All It's Worth* by Andrew Loomis
- Optional: *Complete Guide to Drawing from Life* by George Bridgman

Year II - Academic Figurative Painting I

AT601 4.0 credits (Monday-Friday, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm)

In-person / Remote

This figurative-intensive course envelopes anatomical study, history of the portrayal of the human figure in paint, and technical figure painting concepts into a focused, studio-based course. Each student will complete a series of figurative painting projects under the guidance of an academically trained instructor. Projects will increase in intensity throughout the course to establish a firm technical foundation of figure painting.

Syllabus:

Students will discover methods for evaluating skin tones, finding surface anatomy landmarks, and controlling the fall of light on a figure through a series of painting projects that scaffold skills. Direct application of figurative painting theory will be explored in a series of painting projects. Including poster studies, wipe-outs, grisaille, and full color painting. The historical development of figure painting will be covered in-depth through lectures.

Outcomes

- Students will paint accurate skin tones
- Students will be able to identify major surface anatomy landmarks on human forms
- Students will identify the fall of light and how to control values to maintain order
- Students will understand the varying theories of painting the human figure and their historical context and be able to efficiently research methods in the future.

Projects:

- Poster Studies
- Drawing transfer/wipe-out
- Mastercopy
- Rendered Figure Painting

Textbooks:

- *Drawing the Living Figure: A Complete Guide to Surface Anatomy* by Joseph Sheppard
- *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form* by Kenneth Clark

Year III - Thesis I

AT602 4.0 credits (Monday-Friday, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm; or 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm)

In-person

This is the capstone course for the MA Program. Under the guidance of an academically trained instructor, students will continue to develop drawing and painting projects, and exhibit them in a final Thesis Exhibition. Development of Thesis support documentation is an integral part of this course.

Syllabus:

Students will work under the guidance of a Thesis Committee to develop final works and Thesis support documentation. Students will exhibit work in a Thesis Exhibit where all work will be mounted and framed to professional standards. Additionally, participants will design and implement a gallery layout that meets professional requirements and showcases their works to greatest advantage.

Outcomes:

- Students will learn how to create artwork that supports their Thesis
- Students will be able to document and defend their artwork to professionals in the field
- Students will know how to professionally curate, mount, and frame their own work

Projects:

- Written documentation to support Thesis
- Gallery Layout Design
- Rendered drawing/painting to include in Thesis Exhibit
- Professional framing of all artwork
- Mounting of artwork in the Thesis Exhibit
- Thesis Defense to Thesis Committee

Textbooks:

A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, Ninth Edition:
Chicago Students and Researchers, by Kate Turablan

Year III - Academic Figurative Drawing & Painting II

AT608 4.0 Credits (Monday-Friday, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm; or 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm)

In-person

This advanced figurative-intensive course envelopes anatomical study, history of the portrayal of the human figure in paint, and technical figure painting concepts into a focused, studio-based course. Each student will complete a series of studies and at least one advanced figurative painting project under the guidance of an academically trained instructor. Projects will increase in intensity throughout the course to expand a firm technical foundation of figure painting.

Syllabus:

Students will discover advanced methods for evaluating skin tones, finding surface anatomy landmarks, and controlling the fall of light on a figure through a series of painting projects that scaffold skills. This course emphasizes theoretical study through the use of art historical texts as well as contemporary writings by living artists. Advanced application of figurative painting theory will be explored in a series of painting projects, including poster studies, wipe-outs, grisaille, and full color painting. The historical development of figure painting will be covered in-depth through lectures.

Outcomes

- Students will paint accurate skin tones with advanced techniques
- Students will be able to identify major and minor surface anatomy landmarks on human forms
- Students will identify the fall of light and how to control values, chromas, and hues to maintain order
- Students will understand the varying theories of painting the human figure and their historical context and be able to efficiently research methods in the future.

Projects:

- Studies - pencil drawings and value studies
- Drawing transfer/wipe-out
- Rendered Figure Painting

Textbooks:

- *How to Paint Like the Old Masters* by Joseph Sheppard
- *Oil Painting Secrets from a Master* by Linda Cateura

Year I, II and III - Independent Study (Fall–Spring)

IS500 - IS600 – IS700 2.0 credits per section (40 hours per term)

Remote

The Independent Study component spans the fall, winter, and spring trimesters and is delivered remotely between the summer residency periods. It is designed to sustain continuity of practice, support the development of the Thesis Project, and reinforce the methods, concepts, and skills introduced during the in-person sessions.

Students engage in structured independent work on projects defined in consultation with faculty and aligned with their individual artistic trajectory and thesis development. This work is supported by a programme of scheduled online activities, including tutorials, group critiques, and lectures, which provide ongoing guidance, critical feedback, and conceptual integration with the summer curriculum.

Students are expected to apply the methodologies presented during residency, maintain regular studio practice, and engage in reflective self-assessment. Independent Study also serves as a space for the continued development of technical and conceptual competencies introduced during the summer terms.

Assessment occurs at the end of each trimester through formal Advancement Reviews conducted by faculty. These reviews evaluate progress, the quality and coherence of the work produced, and its contribution to the evolving Thesis Project.

MA Independent Study includes an expanded lecture series, incorporating longer-form presentations in art history, figurative realism, and professional practice. It also provides a structured forum for peer exchange, where students contribute perspectives from their own experiences as artists and educators, fostering a collaborative and critically engaged learning environment.