The Department of Photography & Film MFA program seeks dynamic degree seeking emerging artists whose work challenges the common definitions of photography, film, and video while maintaining the disciplinary integrity of traditional practice. The department works to advance the highest standards of photography and film practices by cultivating an artistic community for the development and exchange of progressive visual ideas.
Students participate in critical dialogue with a diverse and distinguished faculty of artists, critics, and scholars who stress the importance of experimentation and conceptualization. Students work in expanding traditional and contemporary genres and processes, including performance imaging, docu-dramatic filmmaking, and multi-media installation. Students employ still photography, video, film, and are encouraged to investigate other fine arts disciplines as well. The focus of the program is to encourage student artists to increase the scope of their photography and film practice while at the same time appreciating and reflecting upon the critical histories and technical evolution of the medium.

**Curriculum**

The Master of Fine Arts in Photography and Film is a two-year terminal degree, requiring 60 credit hours of course work, which consists of 24 credits in studio, 12 credits in seminar, 9 credits in research, 3 credits in thesis exhibition, and 12 credits in graduate-level elective courses. The Department of Photography and Film curriculum is adaptable to each individual artist’s interests and needs. Students are encouraged to actively explore both traditional and modern lens-based technology and processes while immersed in a broad spectrum of contemporary art discourses. Committed to graduating visually literate artists, the department liberally supports a personal path towards a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical foundations and sociopolitical complexities of photography and film. Students are encouraged to take graduate courses in other departments within the School of the Arts, as well as graduate courses of interest offered throughout the University. The program culminates in a public exhibition or screening of a unified body of artwork, supported by a thoroughly researched written thesis that coherently reflects two years of intelligent investigation into individual artistic practice.

**Faculty**

- Sonali Gulati, Associate Professor  
  MFA in Film & Media Arts, Temple University
- John Freyer, Assistant Professor  
  MFA in Photography, minor Digital Media, University of Iowa
- Sasha Waters Freyer, Department Chair and Associate Professor  
  MFA in Film & Media Arts, Temple University
- Brian Ulrich, Assistant Professor  
  MFA in Photography, Columbia College Chicago
- Mary Beth Reed, Assistant Professor  
  MFA in Film, Bard College
- MFA in Experimental Animation, California Institute of the Arts
- Justin James Reed, Assistant Professor  
  MFA in Photography, Tyler School of Art, Temple University

A cornerstone of the Department of Photography and Film MFA experience is the superb quality of student interaction with distinguished and dedicated graduate faculty. Department faculty have achieved national and international recognition through their creative and artistic achievements, research awards, and publications. They take an active and in-depth participatory role in each student’s artistic and academic pursuits. The graduate faculty take pride in their ability to meet research goals while honoring a commitment to provide an enriching and substantial teaching relationship with emerging artists.

In addition, the Photography and Film MFA program collaborates extensively with the highly accomplished faculty and students of several other VCU Arts MFA programs, resulting in an expansive interdisciplinary approach to our respected media. Weekly group and individual studio critiques encourage intense studio production, experimentation, and an active scholarly engagement within a community of artist and critics. Thesis committees often consist of faculty from several different programs ensuring that a student is provided a rich and varied discursive experience. Upon completion of the program, each student will have acquired an in-depth understanding of the critical dialogue that connects photography and film with other disciplines.

In addition, the Department of Photography and Film’s widely respected visiting artist/scholar program is a major support component of our graduate curriculum and is truly representative of the uniquely dynamic creative encounters provided to the students. The department is dedicated to providing a diverse and engaged studio environment that builds relationships with successful and thought provoking international artists and critics. The goal is to support one on one interaction with exhibiting artists who are having a profound effect on the contemporary art landscape. In addition to our program’s visiting artist offerings, the graduate students benefit from a multitude of weekly public art lectures and events hosted by VCU Arts.
FaCilities
Graduate students have 24/7 access to personal studios located within a larger communal critique space. The space promotes a collegial atmosphere encouraging invaluable daily conversational interaction between fellow artists and the faculty. In addition, artists have access to black and white darkrooms and film processing facilities, lighting studios, Epson large format digital printers, and an Ilmation film scanner, as well as additional Nikon and Epson scanners, and a dedicated computer lab. The department provides an extensive amount of equipment available for checkout including, but not limited to, medium format and large format 4x5 view cameras, Canon Mark II Digital SLRs, HD video cameras, 16mm motion picture cameras, professional sound gear, and studio and location lighting equipment. In an effort to fully support the highest level of artistic production, substantial consideration and resources are dedicated to providing our students with cutting-edge, professional grade photography and film equipment.

ADMISSION
Each Spring, the Department of Photography and Film invites top candidates to submit an application to the MFA program for full-time Fall entry only. Admission into the program is highly competitive and applications are evaluated based on the artistic merit of the portfolio as well as evidence of exceptional performance in previous scholarly and creative pursuits. Submitted portfolios should present an intelligent and original artistic vision, a strong point of view and mastery of technique. The department welcomes applications for admission from individuals from art and non-art backgrounds, as long as all application requirements can be met. Prospective students are encouraged to visit the campus to meet faculty and current graduate students in the program.

Complete information for individuals interested in applying to the program can be found on the VCUarts website. arts.vcu.edu/apply