WHY AN MFA?
The reasons for pursuing a Masters of Fine Arts Degree can vary as widely as the types of MFA programs available to you. The one thing they all have in common that an MFA is a terminal degree, which will qualify you to teach at the collegiate level. Other benefits of a graduate degree are to deepen your technical skill, networking base, theoretical knowledge and artistic practice.

Other Questions to Ask:
• What are the offerings of each school’s MFA?
• What kinds of making does the school support?
• What kind of funding does the school offer?
• Consider additional funding through the department’s scholarship and summer or intersession teaching opportunities, too.
• How intimate do you want your experience to be? Do you want large class sizes or to graduate with ten or less students?
• How many classes do you want to take, or how much time do you want to write?
• What are your chances of getting in?
• How much does school prestige matter to you?
• Where are you willing to live?

How will your portfolio be viewed Admissions Committee?
This depends on the school but typically they either:
• Hold day-long viewings of applicant portfolios using a screen and projector. Admissions committee members are present and each is given a vote.
• Look at your work individually on their computers or via Slideroom and will individually make their recommendations to the rest of the admissions committee.

Admission committees are often made up of the graduate program’s professors, administrators, and admissions department representatives. For MFA applications, your portfolio is the most important part and the first thing many admissions committees look at.

How long will they look at each image in my portfolio?
Not long! This varies, it could run from couple of seconds to a minute or two.

Will admissions understand my work?
“The admissions committee will only have a few minutes with your work and they may need a little help understanding your work. It’s a good idea to explain the issues you’re exploring so that the committee isn’t left wondering what’s the intention. You can include it in the essay/statement or possibly include a little blurb for each entry on the slide list.” Ethan Ham


Give us your best now, don’t worry about your best in the future.
Every artist at every stage has doubts before they share their work.
“Just begin. Just take the first step in the direction of what calls to you. Everything flows from the action we take. One step today, another tomorrow.” Cat Bennett

Bennett, Cat. (2013) Making art a practice: 30 ways to paint a pipe [how to be the artist you are]. Scotland, UK. Findhorn Press.

Is my work good enough?
“TIP: If our work doesn’t quicken our pulse, it won’t quicken anyone else’s.
REFLECTION: What work do you want to grow? Reflect on this in your art journal, if you’re inclined toward writing. Or make a miniature visual diary of how you will develop a body of work in your sketchbook. Where can you take this? Allow your imagination a wide bandwidth in which to roam.” Cat Bennett

Bennett, Cat. (2013) Making art a practice: 30 ways to paint a pipe [how to be the artist you are]. Scotland, UK. Findhorn Press.

What if I’m planning on switching media?
Apply with the best work you have now and if you have work in your new media then include it. Many programs will allow you to some flexibility in switching concentrations after acceptance. This is a great question to ask during the application process.

What if I’m rejected?
It isn’t personal. You are in good company. Every artist worries about this because you care. It is hard to put yourself out there and this is a normal reaction.
• The person who would be most receptive to your work might have
taken a break and missed your work.

- Programs could be looking to create a wide range of styles in their program and already has accepted someone similar to you.
- It is absolutely fine to follow up with a program and ask how you might improve your work. They are teachers also and will likely give you some good advice. Express your interest for the program and that you’d like to apply again.

How do I build my portfolio?

“Don’t feel pressured to create portfolio-worthy artwork, as this might stunt your creative flow. Just enjoy creating and trying new things. When it comes time to apply, spread out all your art pieces and choose the best of what you’ve made. We encourage you to edit; more is not necessarily better.”  

http://welcome.risd.edu

SAMPLE APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS:
Application requirements can vary widely, but the lists below can give you a general idea of what to expect.

1. Online application
2. Application fee of $55
3. Statement of purpose
4. Unofficial transcripts
5. Résumé. A curriculum vitae (CV) is also accepted.
6. Portfolio to 20 images and submitted to Slideroom.
   Two letters of recommendation

   1. Online Application
   2. Application fee ($90 domestic and $110 international)
   3. Statement of Purpose
   4. Three (3) letters of recommendation
   5. Academic records from each college-level institution you have attended
   6. TOEFL score, if you are International status. Minimum score of 90 required.
   7. Portfolio of up to 20 of either Images offering a view of your best and most current work, in reverse chronological order, and in JPEG file format (3 MB maximum per image or audio and video clips may be directly linked from SoundCloud, YouTube, Vimeo, Dropbox or Box.com. If your URL is password-protected, password must be clearly provided. Applicants have the option of providing up to 5 URLs with excerpted or complete pieces.

1. Online application
2. Application fee of $100
3. A one-page statement that addresses your influences, interests, brief life history, current work direction, and reasons for applying to a graduate program at this time. Statements should be no more than 500 words.
4. References from three persons practicing or teaching in the field in which application is made, attesting to the applicant’s ability and competence in that field.
5. Transcripts of the academic record for the bachelor’s degree and/or transcripts from professional art schools attended.
6. Portfolio of work. The portfolio should represent images of your best work, indicate your current direction, and demonstrate your ability.

In the end…

- Be aware of due dates and plan plenty of time for postage and for technical uploading glitches.
- Look in to the formatting of your application.
- Edit, edit and re-read again. Ask for help and a second set of eyes!
- Don’t be discouraged if you don’t get in the first go around!
- Every artist at every stage has doubts before they share their work. “Just begin. Just take the first step in the direction of what calls to you. Everything flows from the action we take. One step today, another tomorrow.” Cat Bennett

For more information or to discuss graduate school options other than an MFA, contact Lindsay Coats at lindsaycoats@nhia.edu to make an appointment.