

An MFA?

- An MFA in Studio Art is:
 - time to make your art work 2 – 3 years when you are the most important artist in the world, ends in large exhibition that's widely seen
 - a space to take your art practice seriously
 - a space to meet colleagues and collaborators, curators, and critics.
 - Some people's first experience in their own studio, managing their practice like a business, giving it the time it deserves (searching for funding opportunities/grants/residencies, studio visits, etc.)

An MFA?

- An MFA in Studio Art is:
 - Often considered a terminal degree, the last academic stop prior to university/college teaching appointments, and other opportunities in the academic world. Visual Arts/Studio PHD programs exist and will become more common.
 - Often an opportunity to access larger university's immense resources (think Yale's Beinecke Library) (this isn't to say it's less rigorous or a back door in)



Scary? Fun? Both?

An MFA?

- An MFA in Studio Art is:
 - Expensive, or can be. Some masters degree programs feel like money making opportunities for schools. Which is okay, if you think about it as an investment, or you understand how to take advantage fully (speak up for your needs), or if money is no question for you.
 - Affordable at times. There's a massive list of fully funded or partially funded programs: Remember, even if a program is tuition waived, you'll still need funds to cover materials, other fees, and life itself.
<https://themfayears.com/fully-funded-programs/>
 - <https://themfayears.com/resources/partially-funded-programs/>

An MFA?

- The Application Process:
 - Can be daunting and expensive. When am I ready?! Will I ever be ready? Think about an MFA when your practice needs support, when you need to take the next step. You can be a successful artist or human without an MFA (college/university teaching can be difficult due to school by-laws but not impossible), with this being said the MFA should be a choice that is made with enthusiasm and joy.
 - Understand where you are applying to: understand the type of school, the faculty, their work, the facilities, do lots of research. Visit schools. Sit in on critique. Are they warm/welcoming? Snobby/snooty? If snobby, are they hiding something? Do they have reason to be that confident? Where do their students go after an MFA, how does the school support them in their careers?
 - Think geographically. Where do you want to live, what are your needs? Think about community, the art world, which is often NY or LA and is mostly based of those specific communities, artists that live work and contribute to those particular places.

2nd to last:

Creativity, Craft and Contemporary Art as a Job

- Every single human is creative. Every professional field involves creativity. Creativity involves asking questions, observing, being curious, making and destroying. Creativity has value.
- Not everyone is a craftsperson. Craft involves skill and training. Craft involves a historical awareness and dedication. Anyone can become a craftsperson. Talent can be innate, talent can be increased by tuning out your inner nagging anxiety. Talent is a tool as a craftsperson. Craft has value.
- Not everyone works as an artist. A contemporary art practice contains creativity and craft. Craft may be outsourced. Craft may be irrelevant. Craft may get in the way. A contemporary art practice involves historical awareness and dedication. An art practice has value.

Lastly:

- A job as an artist is a real job. You'll work more than 40 hours a week, stressing and toiling, but also loving your work, and often being in control of it, when you make it, how much you make of it, where it ends up, and sometimes what's said about it. The path isn't as defined as other careers, but it's fairly well defined by many.
- Often times artists must subsidize their practice with other work (assisting other artists, teaching, tech, fabrication, preparation/handling/installation, design, odd jobs)
- You can define artist for yourself. What percentage of craftsperson/technician/curator/cultural critic are you? Being in the drivers seat is equally fun and scary.
- The art critic Jerry Saltz tells students to "**Make an enemy of envy**" and I agree. Most likely your dream life isn't the same exact dream life as your neighbor's. Pay attention to your needs and wants, and learn the difference between the two.
- John Baldessari's advice: "**1. Talent is cheap.**" Talent is identified by skill, skill is learned. Skill/craft in art is a personal choice. "**2. You have to be possessed, which you can't will.**" Love what you do. I believe you can, in fact, will being possessed through practice. "**3. You have to be at the right place at the right time.**" You can make the right time and right place. Stay open. Say yes. Make and keep friends, humans are social animals and we gain pleasure from shared experiences. Don't hold grudges, don't project personal anxiety on others, don't have expectations and always say thank you.

Lastly, for real.

Resources

- [A brief history of John Baldessari](#)
- [PBS The Art Assignment: I could do that](#)
- [The MFA Years](#)
- [Alliance of Artist Communities](#)
- [Caroline Woolard, What is a successful project?](#)