LOCAL & EU FEES: €1400 per semester  (€4200 for 3 semesters)

APPLICATION DEADLINE: 24 July, 2012  (late applications carry a fee)

Apply online at: www.um.edu.mt/apply

Further information and application procedures can be obtained from the Department of Digital Arts, da.maks@um.edu.mt

Students enrolled on the MFA Digital Arts Programme are eligible for the ‘GET QUALIFIED’ tax incentive scheme by Malta Enterprise:
http://support.maltaenterprise.net/index_files/GQ_Main.htm

MFA DIGITAL ARTS

The influence of technology and scientific innovation is profoundly changing the way we create and interact with images and our artistic expression in general. The cross-disciplinary employment of the digital medium as tool for creative expression and communication is a relatively new and exciting field of research that covers the convergence of technology with established and new practices in the fine art, video, film, performance, games, design and online art fields of discipline.

The MFA Digital Arts programme is a practice-oriented, postgraduate award in digital art practice and theory. It is an umbrella programme that seeks to develop a learning environment in which historical traditions and new practices confront and influence each other within a contextual, cultural and theoretical framework. The programme seeks to offer a comprehensive approach to image-making that not only encourages innovation by students through a practice-based research methodology, but also endeavours to provide the same students with the creative, artistic, intellectual and theoretical foundation upon which they can build their contributions to this dynamic field.

Through a combination of practical and theoretical modules, the course encourages the development of critical and original approaches to contemporary creative production and enables students to actively investigate the influence of new digital technologies in relation to creativity and communication. The programme provides a framework within which students are prepared for further academic research as well as integration into the various industries requiring digital creativity.

The programme recognises the importance of theoretical foundations for the formation of responsible digital media creatives in today’s information age. It acknowledges the fundamentals of design, film, media, and the visual arts through providing extensive contextual, historical and critical modules while encouraging experimentation and innovation. The theoretical input fosters an analytical and creative exploration of established and emerging forms of visual art, moving image and visual communication practices and their relevant areas of specialisation, while
the practical modules include the application of essential techniques for contemporary creative practice within a variety of digital media.

‘Making’ is central to the research process encouraged throughout the MFA programme. The development of skills is coupled with a solid foundation in traditional and new media theory, and a historical understanding of the discipline’s ongoing development. The course explores the interdependence of culture, creative practice and technology, and the ethics and representation of digital culture and new media.

Students of the MFA Digital Arts programme realise a final project and a contextual dissertation which, apart from having a specific research focus, also explores the relationships between the project itself and the roles of the artist/designer within the contemporary digital art and moving image world. Location, site-specificity, audience reception and interaction with the project realised are also considered of paramount importance as the project is ultimately presented in the public domain or other appropriate context.

Final projects are created through an ongoing reflective process of experimentation connecting evolving artistic concepts and techniques. The interdisciplinary nature and the level and depth of the course prepares students to fuse theoretical knowledge with the use of contemporary technologies to conceive, develop, produce, and present innovative artworks and provides them with the opportunity to conceptually and technically refine their work in preparation for professional artistic practice. Skills attained will allow graduates to significantly contribute to the development of content in a variety of fields and to become eligible for gainful employment in areas with a focus on creative digital media production, such as in the video and contemporary arts fields, the graphic design industry as well as in more generalised fields which increasingly draw upon the creation of new media talent such as those of the audio-visual, serious gaming, mobile services, social software, and IT.

**PROGRAMME OF STUDIES**

Students of the MFA Digital Arts Programme will realise a project that is presented in the public domain or other appropriate context, together with a contextual thesis which together explore the evolving roles of the visual creative within contemporary cultural production, focusing on his/her relationship to digital art and the moving image as well as giving value to issues of location, site-specificity and audience reception and interaction.

The programme aims to give students the opportunities to demonstrate a significant creative and contextual practice related to appropriate debates in the contemporary, the social and the historical. It helps them demonstrate creative ambition through the production of an advanced project and contextual thesis.

The programme is intended to develop strategies, skills and creative networks to facilitate professional practice and employability.

**TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS:**

The programme is taught through a mixture of lectures, studio workshops, tutorials, student led seminars and group presentations.
MFA DIGITAL ARTS STRUCTURE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Req</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Type</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DGA 5010</td>
<td>Research Methods in Art and Design</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Taught / Seminar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DGA 5011</td>
<td>Initiating a Digital Art Project</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Taught / Studio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DGA 5012</td>
<td>20th Century Art and Design</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Taught</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DGA 5013</td>
<td>Art and Critical Theory</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Taught</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DGA 5017</td>
<td>Reflective Writing</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Taught</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DGA 5301</td>
<td>Drawing &amp; Colour Workshops</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Taught / Studio</td>
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Semester 2 (Feb 2013 – June 2013)

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<th>Title</th>
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<td>Perception and Consumption of Art</td>
<td>R</td>
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<tr>
<td>DGA 5015</td>
<td>Professional Practice</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>DGA 5016</td>
<td>Art Practice and the Production of Culture</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Taught / Studio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DGA 5302</td>
<td>Digital Imaging, Photography and Illustration</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Taught / Studio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DGA 5304</td>
<td>Digital Animation and Graphics</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Taught / Studio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DGA 5305</td>
<td>Graphic Narrative and Storytelling</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Taught / Studio</td>
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Semester 3 (Oct 2013 – Jan 2014)

<table>
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<td>DGA 5906</td>
<td>MFA Digital Art Degree Project/Dissertation and Exhibition</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Self-directed study</td>
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</table>

- All modules are compulsory
- July – September and Semester 3 will be dedicated to the Final Project/Dissertation
- A Degree Show (Final Exhibition/Presentation) will be held in January 2014
- All modules are taught by local academics, practitioners and invited academics/practitioners from foreign universities

THE MODULES:

DGA5010 – Research Methods in Art and Design

*Mode: Lectures, Presentations and Independent Study*

*Assessment: Assignments and Presentations*

The module focuses on the exploration, application, testing and evaluation of practice-led research methodologies and theoretical approaches in art & design. Embedded in existing subject award routes, students will be required to establish an appropriate research question in the chosen subject.

This course is designed to support postgraduate students in developing their research project and to assist them in defining their mode of enquiry. The course guides students through a range of issues and considerations which should inform their general approach to research in
the visual and design arts. It will give students a general introduction to postgraduate research, its methodologies, its challenges and its organisation, including in creative practice. Students will be introduced to a range of research tools and will be equipped to plan and organise their research, as well as to communicate their findings.

**DGA5011 – Initiating a Digital Art Project**  
*Mode: Lectures, Group Tutorials, Seminars and Independent Study*  
*Assessment: Presentations and Report*

The module motivates students to identify resources and critical practices related to an appropriate context for the production of contemporary art and design that involves Electronic & Digital Media.

It covers the methodology of initiating a project that explores the relationship between theory and practice within contemporary debates in fine art and design within a digital and electronic media environment.

**DGA5012 – 20th Century Art and Design**  
*Mode: Lectures, Presentations and Independent Study*  
*Assessment: Essay, Presentations and Project*

Key to a holistic practice in contemporary visual arts and design is the student's ability to situate practice within a historical, cultural and socio-political framework.

The course examines a range of cultural products mainly from Art, Design and Architecture, but also considering Literature, Theatre, Music, Film and Television (as well as online forms that converge these) and connects this study to a range of academic approaches to text and culture. The analytical focus of the module is the representation of modern and contemporary culture and students will consider the possible role played by popular culture and the Arts in constructing ideas that enable social change.

**DGA5013 – Art and Critical Theory**  
*Mode: Lectures, Presentations and Independent Study*  
*Assessment: Assignment and Presentations*

This module offers students the opportunity to research aspects the literary and visual dimensions of contemporary culture.

It is intended to deepen the link between art/design practice and an academic understanding of the context of practice through referencing a visual and literary theoretical framework. The module acts focuses on the interrelationship between practice and theory in contemporary Art and Design within a cultural, social and political framework.

**DGA5014 – Perception and Consumption of Art**  
*Mode: Lectures and Independent Study*  
*Assessment: Assignment*

Though mindful of Pablo Picasso’s statement ‘Everyone wants to understand art. Why not try to understand the song of a bird?’ this study unit provides students with an overview of topics from the areas of Cognitive Neuroscience, Visual Perception, and the Psychology of Art that provide a framework for the examination of the correlation between neurological processes and art appreciation (or “consumption” of art).
DGA5015 – Professional Practice

*Mode: Presentations*

*Assessment: Presentation and Report*

The module aims to give a broad overview of the digital arts fields and will consist of lectures, demonstrations, discussions and presentations by artists, designers, theorists and industry practitioners. The focus of the module is personal and professional development, with the exploration ranging from the philosophical nature of self, the concept of development, the nature of knowledge and the value of experience, leading on to self-assessment, reflexivity and deep learning.

DGA5016 – Art Practice and the Production of Culture

*Mode: Lectures, Workshops, Presentations and Independent Study*

*Assessment: Assignments and Seminars*

To develop students sophistication in thinking about, analysing, and articulating ideas about the experience of art and other creative work in relation to the production of culture as relevant to students own needs, requirements, professional, as well as personal objectives.

By the completion of this course, students will be able to utilise sophisticated analytical tools in both the production of their artistic work as well as to critically analyse, appraise, and articulate how both their own creative artistic work as well as the work of others function in the production of culture.

DGA5017 – Reflective Writing

*Mode: Seminars and Independent Study*

*Assessment: Presentations, Project, Workbook and Class Participation*

Some students may prefer to write instinctively, especially in a creativity-led programme, but following a structured process of planning, researching and writing can enhance the quality and effectiveness of one's written work. Accordingly, the Module focuses on the ways in which being able to think critically about one's own practice and learning is an essential aspect of ongoing professional development. It will initially expose students to various skills in academic writing, including essay writing and the composition of reports, but will then move on to study aspects of form and pitch in reviews and will explore the purposes and styles of reflective writing. In the process, the Module provides students with both broad preparation in relevant academic and professional writing skills and the capacity for articulate auto-critique in the practice of the digital arts.

DGA5301 – Drawing and Colour Workshops

*Mode: Studio Practice and Independent Study*

*Assessment: Portfolio of Work*

Today's Designer/Media Artist is often called upon to develop concepts, map projects, diagram technological installations, and present their ideas in a cogent manner. Along with this, drawing can also be used as a tool to work through concepts, to document brainstorming sessions and sketch through ideas in a fast, palpable manner. The studio module comprises hands-on practice in drawing and techniques and uses of colour to enhance students' artistic as well as communicative skills. The workshops provide the students with the required technical foundation as preparation for their final projects focusing specifically on developing their drawing, colour and compositional skills through the use of a variety of artists' media.
DGA5302 – Digital Imaging, Photography and Illustration
Mode: Lectures, Studio Practice and Independent Study
Assessment: Portfolio of Work

The various skills needed to be mastered in contemporary digital image-making within the various art and design disciplines are numerous but in many cases are transferable as they share common tools and technologies.

This course uses creative methodologies by professional practitioners and offers hands-on experience to the student in order to investigate proficiency in the field of specialisation chosen by the student. It aims to develop the student's understanding of the skills needed in the specialism and direct the student's practice to a level which lives up to the industry's expectations and demands.

DGA5304 – Digital Animation and Graphics
Mode: Lectures, Studio Practice and Independent Study
Assessment: Group Project and Individual Project

The Module provides students with hands on experience up to HD quality in the creation of audio visual/graphical productions. The course will incorporate the various skills expected by an editor to visually enhance the content, and if necessary graphically using supporting material such as still graphics and animations. The course will cover the principles of filming, editing, compositing in 2D and 3D, and animation, with a special emphasis towards creating movement via inanimate objects both in the traditional and digital environments. The Module also reinforces the link between the still and the moving image through the cross-platform use of various industry standard digital software packages. The Module will conclude with distribution platforms and their associated compression technology as students finalise their projects.

DGA5305 – Graphic Narrative and Storytelling
Mode: Lectures, Presentations and Independent Study
Assessment: Essay and Individual Project

This course focuses on the graphic novel as a cultural product and practice, also exploring the multifaceted languages of comics that fuel its base. It explores the ways in which meanings emerge through analysis of its three main pillars: comics language, history and technique, in so doing investigating the stylistic permutations that infuse the medium. Through in-depth study of major ‘texts’ extracted from the varied history of comics and graphic novels, the course overviews the way graphic storytellers convey messages that vary from simple, superhero-based entertainment, to the use and manipulation of historical and contemporary social issues as the building blocks for their art. It also looks at comics as communicators through exploring the medium and the message, the various styles and schools and the genre's various techniques and intentions.

The credit puts theory to practice through hands-on traditional and digital examples and applications.

DGA5905 – MFA Degree Project, Dissertation and Exhibition
Mode: Independent Study
Assessment: Project/Dissertation (20 credits); Exhibition/Presentation (10 credits)

The Final Project/Dissertation is a student's completion of an extensive curricular and independent experience in a specific area in digital art practice and theory. It embraces a programme of study that includes consideration of traditional and contemporary art and design history, critical analysis, aesthetics, methodology and related humanities.
The award is pitched at the advanced development of professional studio competence as exemplified by ongoing evolution of a significant body of work, and the production of a culminating project exhibition of work.

The dissertation testifies to the student's ability to articulate effectively his/her artwork that successfully functions in relationship to his/her project in relation to the collective exhibition.

The Project/Dissertation combination also stands as potential to solve contemporary problems in digital art and design and to explore and address new questions and issues which include the advanced development of professional competence in the dissemination of knowledge.

Apart from Project's value in creative expression, the combination with the written component should serve as an advanced development of scholarly competence in the organization, evaluation, and interpretation of knowledge.

The Thesis Exhibition places the student's practical output within a public dimension. Students will put up a collective exhibition in a museum, gallery or any other public space including the Internet and need to address issues of physical and virtual space, aesthetic display, information and communication as well as marketing and advertising. The students will assume curatorial responsibility and therefore need to negotiate cohesion although also respecting their individual creativity. Students are required to write, design and print/produce an exhibition leaflet or website, promote the exhibition and source sponsorship.