Statement on Terminal Degree Programs in the Visual Arts and Design

The College Art Association (CAA) affirms that the Master of Fine Arts (MFA) is the terminal degree in studio art practice. The Master of Fine Arts (MFA), the Master of Design (MDes), the Master of Art and Design (MAD), and the Master of Graphic Design (MGraph) are among the terminal masters degrees in design practice.

These are the terminal degrees for practitioners and educators in studio art and design and share a requirement of a minimum of two academic years of full-time graduate study, with a minimum of sixty semester hours or ninety quarter hours. While emphasizing substantial creative work preparing individuals for professional practice as studio artists and designers, these programs also typically incorporate theory, art history, criticism, and/or other fields of study that may inform that practice.

At the same time the association recognizes the existence of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Doctor of Fine Arts (DFA), Doctor of Visual Arts (DVA), Doctor of Studio Art (DA), and other doctoral degrees that incorporate art and/or design practice; in the United States these programs emphasize formal research and are often offered in combination with other disciplines. Doctoral programs in the visual arts may take varied forms dependent on each institution's requirements, reflecting specific academic opportunities and research instruction.

CAA recognizes the unique prospects such programs offer for research-intensive study in the visual arts and design and affirms that offering such opportunities is not only within the purview of individual institutions but has the potential to add to the diversity of research in higher education.

Recommendations for Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree programs are detailed in the following document:

MFA Standards
(CAA, revised 2008)

Other useful and relevant resources on this subject include but are not limited to:

National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) *HANDBOOK 2013-14*
(NASAD, October 2013)

Studio Art and Design Research: Multiple Relationships and Possibilities
(NASAD, October 2005)

Thinking About Terminal Professional Degrees in Art and Design
(NASAD, October 2004)

Respectfully submitted by the Ad Hoc Committee on Terminal Degree Programs in the Visual Arts and Design: Tom Berding, Michigan State University (co-chair); John Kissick, University of Guelph (co-chair); Leslie Bellavance, Alfred University; Carmon Colangelo, Washington University; Jim Hopfensperger, Western Michigan University; Bruce Mackh, University of Michigan; Steven Henry Madoff, School of Visual Arts (SVA); Morgan Paine, Florida Gulf Coast University; Virginia Maksymowicz, Franklin & Marshall College; Denise Mullen, Oregon College of Art and Craft; John Richardson, Wayne State University; and Charles Wright, Western Illinois University.