The Program

During the 60-credit BFA in Fiber program, students learn about fiber in terms of its uses, characteristics, technical developments, and history as a fine and applied arts medium, as well as explore current issues surrounding the discipline.

The classes emphasize a sculptural approach, yet students explore both 2-D and 3-D techniques, and many fiber students create work that involves installation, performance, video, and other cross-disciplinary approaches. The program teaches both conventional and unconventional processes, including dyeing, sewing, screenprinting, weaving, the manipulation of 3-D forms, pliable constructions, collage, assemblage, and sculptural surfaces.

Students have the opportunity to create in-depth, long-term projects through a capstone experience and their two-semester Senior Independent, which includes a writing component for their senior thesis. Seniors’ large body of work can be featured in the campus-wide Commencement Exhibition.

The Collaborative Smart Textiles Research Lab investigates and creates interactive, wearable electronic fabrics, combining craftsmanship with cutting-edge technology. Practical applications for such textiles range from high fashion to medicine and the military.

This academic year, the department offers a new opportunity for community engagement with the Cooperative: The Sewing Circle class, which enables students to work with a group of low-income mothers to enhance and promote their business and signature product: the re-usable vegetable bag.

The concentration in experimental fashion, requiring 21 credits, includes coursework in such areas as draping, drafting, and sewing, and offers through other departments that allow students to gain a broad understanding of fashion and fiber in the context of culture and other disciplines. Hands-on opportunities include the Multi Media Event course, in which students spend a year preparing a fashion event in collaboration with musicians and other artists to showcase student designs.

The Program

Facilities in the Fiber Arts Center include studios, a large dyeing facility, and a seminar room. Some of the equipment available for students’ use include industrial and household sewing machines, sergers, computerized embroidery machines, looms (seven 8-harness floor looms, thirteen 4-harness floor looms, one AVI 16-harness production computer loom, and one tapestry loom), digital textile printers, knitting machines, pleating machines, a steam cabinet, a commercial open-burner stove with four units, stainless steel wash-out sinks, a darkroom with a 60-inch-wide light table for photoscreen work, washers and dryers, and carding machines for felting. Research is supported by a comprehensive departmental library, and fiber faculty members, who regularly take part in international exhibitions and art journal writings, provide great resources to the students.

Recent internships have put MICA students in New York at Michael Kors, high-end fabric atelier Le Studio Anthrost, Donna Karan, Liz Claiborne, Kate Spade, New York Classical Theater and New York City Ballet, and with independent costume maker Jessica Ford. Students have also worked for Booie Booie Poem Express in Rotterdam, Mahlia Kent in Paris, and Fabric Workshop and Museum in Philadelphia; and locally, in the Baltimore Museum of Art’s textile department, Under Armour, Lyric Opera House, and nonprofit Nana Projects.

Full-Time Faculty

Susie Brandt MFA, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, BFA, Philadelphia College of Art.

Annet Couwenberg MFA, Cranbrook Academy of Art, MFA, Syracuse University; BFA, De Windroos (Rotterdam, The Netherlands).

Olivia Robinson MFA, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, New York; BFA, Maryland Institute College of Art.

Piper Shepard MFA, Cranbrook Academy of Art; BFA, Philadelphia College of Art.

Kristine Woods MFA, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, BA, University of Wisconsin Madison.

Karin Wiegels Faculty Costumes for History of Sexuality an opera by Georg Burwitz and Paul Chan (originally a series of books by Michel Foucault) presented by Tanzquartier and Museum of Modern Art Ludwig Foundation, Vienna, Austria Costumes designs and fabrication, September 2010.

Photo: Tanzquartier.

RIGHT: Piper Shepard Faculty Assembly Wear Digitally printed cotton and lace, 2010. Photo: Dan Meyers.