
THEATRE DESIGN AND PRODUCTION, MFA

The Master of Fine Arts degree in Design at Tulane University offers an in-depth study of theatrical design areas with an emphasis on preparing the student for a career in the professional theatre or as a teacher of a specialized field at the university level. Applicants to the program must have completed an undergraduate degree in theatre or have had equivalent training and experience.

The Master of Fine Arts degree in Design places concentration and emphasis on design as a collaborative process with equal emphasis on technical and creative skills as learned both through classwork and practical production.

The program is a three-year program. Two and a half years are spent in residence and one semester of the third year in an internship with a professional theatre. Students with an MA in design or production may, at the discretion of the faculty, complete their degree sooner. Normally, 48 hours of course work are required for completion of the degree. In addition, twelve hours are earned with the internship assignment and a thesis production.

It is the philosophy of the design faculty that the design process is best taught through the realization of designs in actual production situations. Each year, the Department of Theatre and Dance provides a number of opportunities for such realized design projects. The department produces three to four mainstage productions and one dance concert each year directed by faculty or guest directors. Students in design and technical direction are assigned to these projects as their skills develop. The Third Year Thesis Project becomes the culmination of a number of realized projects. The selection of this production is intended to provide a showcase of each student's talents and skill. Each student's work is reviewed by the faculty on a semester-to-semester basis.

Admission

Admission to the MFA Design program is highly selective and only a small number of candidates are selected every other year. This ensures each student considerable production experience as well as continual one-on-one contact with Theatre Design faculty. Prospective applicants are referred to the Graduate Program in the School of Liberal Arts for application materials and a catalog outlining further requirements and deadlines.

Please note that while the university states a February 1 application deadline, the department extends its deadline past that date as we traditionally recruit at USITT in March. Admission to the program is based primarily on consideration of the candidate's academic ability as evidenced by his/her undergraduate GPA, previous theatre experience, and portfolio. The GRE is no longer required.

Ideally, the design faculty would like the opportunity to look at the applicant's portfolio during an interview. However, if an interview is not possible, the department will request that the applicant send a portfolio of representative work for review. Please do not send your portfolio with your application; wait until it is requested by the department.

Areas of Specialization

Tulane University Theatre Department offers Scene Design, Costume Design, Lighting Design, and Technical Direction as areas of specialization within the framework of the Master of Fine Arts Degree.

An MFA in Design candidate must select one of these areas of concentration and is urged to select a secondary area of specialization as well.

An MFA student is required to take all courses stipulated as core courses for a major in design. In addition, a sequence in the area of specialization (listed below under electives) is required. If a secondary area of specialization is also elected, six units in that area, from the elective list, are required.

Whenever possible, the design faculty utilizes class time as an opportunity to supervise closely the work of a student who is holding a design assignment in a given semester. For instance, if a student is enrolled in Costume Design and is also designing costumes for a production in the same semester, the design assignment will be substituted for one or more design projects.

Reviews

At the end of each semester, design students are required to attend the design gallery and an individual MFA review with the faculty. In the gallery, the student presents a record of his or her most representative work in the program and should be prepared to answer questions regarding that work. These reviews provide the all of faculty with the chance to see the work of individual students and exchange ideas and commentary on the student's progress. During their reviews, in addition to reviewing their work, students have an opportunity to voice their needs for further development within the program.

The end of the semester review is intended as a positive meeting for evaluation and discussion of a student's work. If, however, a student's work (or attitude) is evaluated as undesirable or sub-standard, the student may be placed on probationary status the following semester. If the quality of the student's work has not improved by the end of the probationary semester, the student will be asked to leave the program. In some cases where either a student's work, attitude, or grades are deemed so unsatisfactory that their continuation in the program would be of no benefit to either them or the department, dismissal may be considered, in consultation with the Dean of the School of Liberal Arts. The student will be notified of his or her status in written form following their review each semester.

Production Assistantships/Stipends

Tulane University requires that each graduate student commit 15-20 hours a week of service to the department in which the student is involved. This is required of a student regardless of acceptance or non-acceptance of a stipend. Any student offered an assistantship will be granted a full tuition waiver. Currently, all of our graduate students receive a stipend and a full tuition waiver.

Professional Internships

The program recommends that all MFA candidates in Design or Technical Production spend one semester of their third year as an intern in a professional theatre. This gives the student an opportunity to apply, in a purely production environment, the educational experiences of the first two years of graduate training. Further, it provides employment contacts which should be invaluable upon completion of the MFA.

During the internship, the University continues to provide the graduate stipend. While the choice of theatre and arrangements for the position are primarily the responsibility of the student, the student's faculty advisor makes every effort to aid in finding a satisfactory position.

Design Options

In addition to the departmental productions, there are a number of other opportunities for design open to graduate students that the design faculty encourages its students to explore.

Operated in conjunction with the Department of Theatre and Dance at Tulane University, The New Orleans Shakespeare Festival at Tulane is a professional resident theater company with a summer repertory. Students in the graduate programs of Design and Technical Production are encouraged to spend at least one summer on staff, and are given some consideration in the technical and design positions available. There are other opportunities both on and off campus.

Requirements

The required credits for a Design Major is 60 hours.

Course ID	Title	Credits
Core Courses		
THEA 6350	Thea Drafting & Model-Making	3
THEA 6410	Design Fundamentals I	3
THEA 6900	Portfolio Techniques	3
THEA 7010	Graduate Text Analysis	3
THEA 7210	Advanced Directing I	3
THEA 7890	Internship	9
THEA 7990	Thesis Production	3
Select one of the following tracks:		21-24
Scene Design		
Costume Design		
Lighting Design		
Technical Direction		

Total Credit Hours

48-51

Tracks

Scene Design

Course ID	Title	Credits
THEA 6440	Rendering For Designers	3
THEA 6820	Scene Design Cad	3
THEA 6310	Adv Technical Problems	3
THEA 7410	Scene Design I	3
THEA 7420	Scene Design II	3
THEA 6830	Scene Painting	3
THEA 6470	Design for Television	3
THEA 6480	Design for Puppetry	3
Total Credit Hours		24

Costume Design

Course ID	Title	Credits
THEA 6440	Rendering For Designers	3
THEA 6760	Costume Technology	3
THEA 7510	Costume Design I	3
THEA 7520	Costume Design II	3
THEA 6460	Adv Costume Rendering	3
THEA 6840	Intermed Costume Construction	3
Select an Elective		3
Total Credit Hours		21

Lighting Design

Course ID	Title	Credits
THEA 6330	Fundamentals of Lighting	3
THEA 6820	Scene Design Cad	3
THEA 7610	Lighting Design I	3
THEA 7620	Lighting Design II	3
Select an Elective		3
Total Credit Hours		15

Technical Direction

Course ID	Title	Credits
THEA 6820	Scene Design Cad	3
THEA 6310	Adv Technical Problems	3
THEA 7710	Technical Directing I	3
THEA 7720	Technical Directing II	3
THEA 6840	Intermed Costume Construction	3
Select 3 Electives		9
Total Credit Hours		24