

: PORTFOLIO TIPS & APPLICATION ADVICE :



Willem Henri Lucas
Professor

We are looking for story-tellers that are able to document their lives in a variety of media. The content is almost more important, we love work that is inspired by where you come from, what formed you as a human being. We look at what (subject matter / story) is being visualized. We look at what are this person's interests in life.

Make sure your portfolio is not all drawings made for school assignments. Drawings of landscapes, animals, fantasy figures, manga in most cases all look the same, as in they could have been created by anyone. **Ask yourself why you are making these things and question yourself how they could be unique to you.** In many ways work that someone makes outside of school shows more personal insight.

Ask yourself the following questions: Does the work inform us enough about who you are as a person? Are there social issues that inform the work? Is there enough variation in media? **In many cases we value expression more than perfect skills.** Go to the DMA website and research the undergrad students work thoroughly. You might get a better idea what is asked of you and what kind of work you be exploring when you get admitted to the program.

Regarding the Self Portrait: **A self portrait is not about how realistic it looks, but needs to inform us about specific things about that person.** A curiosity in trying different media like photography and video (all more accessible now with smart phones), sculpting or building 3-D things, to consider how does this person "look".



Lauren McCarthy
Assistant Professor

We're looking for students that express passion, curiosity, and a point of view with their work. **We get excited when it's clear the applicant has taken time to really learn about DMA via the website or other sources, and is able to make a clear case for why they want to study here and what they hope to get out of it.** We want students that are prepared to think critically, ask questions, share their unique perspectives, and make the most of the resources here to push their vision forward.

Be straightforward about your contribution in a work. If you are documenting someone else's piece, make it clear that the subject of the video or photograph is not your own.

We want to see the work that best represents you and where you hope to go in this program. For example, we don't need to see all your drawing exercises if you're not interested in pursuing drawing while you're here. It can be difficult to get to know an applicant when their portfolio includes only work that responds to [classroom] assignment prompts. If you can, it will help a lot to create some works on your own, based on the questions you want to pursue.

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Chandler McWilliams
Director, Conditional Studio

We're looking for students who are passionate and bring bold ideas to their work. **We are always drawn to applications that show someone who thinks deeply about how their work – be it design, video, drawing, games – works, how it makes meaning and how it impacts the people who experience it.** DMA is a the perfect environment for self-driven students so I'm always on the lookout for indications that a student is motivated and will thrive here.

Being able to see the work is key. Good documentation is very important. This doesn't mean you need a fancy camera, just try to get the best and clearest shot of the work you can. We also want to see a diversity of interests and approaches, don't just scan 10 pages of your sketch book, **show us that you are thinking about who is seeing your work, not just the fact that you made it.**

Every year we see applications that have extra text annotating the work, or multiple small images combined together; these should both be avoided. **If you are submitting school work, please show us how you took it in a unique direction from your classmates.**

The assignment projects [Creative Influences, Self Portrait, Word Project] are extremely important. Spend time on them and think about how you can really express who you are as a person, a learner, and an artist.



Isla Hansen
*Former
Assistant Professor*

We're looking for students whose interests in both the academics behind and the making of design- and art- objects extends beyond traditional mediums; a sign that they are pushing the boundaries of their high school painting and ceramics classes. They don't have to be the students with the strongest grades, but students whose works looks like they have a specific set of interests, or a specific message to convey.

Follow the instructions on the application, but don't follow instructions from your peers or fellow applicants (especially in online communities of others working on the app). When we see a large group of students respond to one of our specific departmental questions / assignments / challenges in the same exact way, it's obvious they have been discussing amongst themselves or taken advice from former applicants. In our eyes it doesn't make a great designer or artist to follow a herd mentality. **We are looking for unique visions.**

Regarding the Creative Influences and UC Personal Insight Questions (which we also consider!), just be yourself. Again, don't write what you believe we want to hear, write what you believe yourself. In applicants and in our own students once they have arrived, we find there is an overwhelming attempt to please. **We are more interested in risk-takers with a provocative perspective, than in students who can follow the rules so closely that they sound like everyone else.**

Have fun. You should enjoy for the first time putting your work together as a body of work that represents you and writing a statement that supports this. **If you're not having fun and don't feel empowered by this process, you're not doing it right.**