What Can I Do With MY BFA?

A&D’s unique curriculum recognizes that in the rapidly changing world of the 21st century you have multiple interests and will want to develop multiple talents. We also recognize that there are some basic things every creative person should know and therefore require certain core studios like drawing, digital, TMP courses in 2-D, 3-D and 4-D media and of course CFC to studios help you conceive and develop your creative ideas.

After that, A&D offers a variety of studios at more advanced levels. You will choose among them for studio courses that help you explore and develop your skills and talents. While all of this sounds good, the question remains, what can I do with MY BFA? And it is YOUR BFA because you are designing it.

The short answer is that you can do almost anything you want…. but not because you have a BFA. A BFA is a piece of paper attesting to the fact that you completed 72 studio credits and 56 non-studio credits for a total of 128 credits. This piece of paper from A&D makes you no more eligible for any career field than a piece of paper from any other school. No, what you do with YOUR BFA is up to you, and what you do with your creativity while at A&D.

Your studio courses will help you develop your skills, interests and creativity. Part time jobs, internships, freelance work and other experiential learning like studying abroad will help you develop your resume, portfolio and career network. No one school or major can teach you everything you need to know to prepare for your first job out of college, let alone what you do for the rest of your life. But the A&D approach reinforces your ability to make choices and learn from those choices as well as encouraging you to figure out how to get what you want, and that is a skill you will use forever.

Getting Started

Go slowly. Allow your first semesters at A&D for exploration. You may think you want to go into advertising, only to find that you love fibers. Or, you may think you cannot make a living as a painter and focus on something about which you have no passion. So, don’t get too focused too soon and don’t hang up that paint brush before you have even started.

Once you have identified career fields in which you have an interest, do some research. Read about the field and do informational interviewing. An informational interview is just what it sounds like: interviewing someone for information. Ask what ever you like!
Sample questions might be:

How long have you been doing this?
What made you interested in doing this?
What is your background?
What do you know now that you wish you had known before you started?
What do you look for when you hire someone?
What is the best advice you can give someone like me?
Do you take on interns?

Next, get an internship. An internship not only gives you real world experience in your fields of interest, but also allows you to try something on for size. Before interning, you may wish to shadow someone for a day and get a feel for the work, the environment, the people, etc.

A&D has a handout out on internships and internship opportunities are posted to the A&D web site and the Career Center Connector.

Some people don’t know what some of their choices may be. Luckily, the writer and artist Andrea Mulder-Slater has compiled a pretty extensive list:

- Accessory Designer
- Advertising Director
- Aerial Photographer
- Airbrush Artist
- Antique Specialist
- Appliqué Artist
- Archaeologist
- Architect
- Architectural Graphic Artist
- Architectural Writer/Critic
- Architecture Teacher
- Art Activity Writer
- Art Appraiser
- Art Book Editor
- Art Consultant
- Art Coordinator
- Art Critic
- Art Dealer
- Art Director
- Art Distributor
- Art Historian
- Art Insurance Agent
- Art Librarian
- Art Magazine Editor
- Art Researcher
- Art Restorer
- Art Specialist
- Art Supervisor
- Art Teacher
- Art Teacher Assistant
- Art Therapist
- Artist in Residence
- Artists' Agent
- Audio/Visual Designer
- Automobile Designer
- Background Artist (TV)
- Bank Note Designer
- Basket Maker
- Block Engraver
- Book Jacket Designer
- Bookbinder
- Botanical Designer
- Calendar Editor
- Calligrapher
- Camera Operator
- Candle Maker
- Caricaturist
- Cartographer (mapmaker)
• Cartoonist
• Ceramicist
• Children's Book Illustrator
• Cinematographer
• Comic Strip Artist
• Commercial Photographer
• Computer Graphic Artist
• Conceptual Artist
• Copywriter
• Corporate Art Collector
• Corporation Photographer
• Costume Designer
• Court Artist
• Craftsperson
• Curator
• Curriculum Writer (Art)
• Design Consultant
• Designer
• Drafter
• Editorial Art Director
• Editorial Illustrator
• Enamellist
• Environmental Artist
• Environmental Designer
• Environmental Planner
• Equipment Designer
• Exhibition Coordinator
• Fabric Designer
• Fashion Art Director
• Fashion Consultant
• Fashion Display Director
• Fashion Editor/Writer
• Fashion Illustrator
• Fashion Merchandiser
• Fashion Photographer
• Faux Finish Specialist
• Film Animator
• Film Developer
• Film Editor
• Filmmaker
• Fine Art Photographer
• Fine Artist
• Floor Covering Designer
• Floral Designer
• Forensic Artist
• Foundry Worker
• Furniture Designer
• Gallery Assistant
• Gallery Director
• Gallery Owner
• Gallery Photographer
• Gem Cutter
• Glass Blower
• Goldsmith
• Graphic Arts Technician
• Greeting Card Designer
• Hair Stylist Designer
• Heavy Equipment Designer
• Illustrator
• Industrial Designer
• Interior Decorator
• Interior Designer
• Jewelry Maker/Designer
• Lace Maker
• Landscape Designer
• Law Enforcement Photographer
• Lawyer with Art Specialty
• Leatherworker
• Legal Photographer
• Lighting Designer
• Lithographer
• Lithographic Photographer
• Magazine Art Director
• Magazine Photographer
• Makeup Artist
• Manufacturer of Art Materials
• Manuscript Illuminator
• Marine Architect
• Master Printer
• Medical Illustrator
• Metalsmith
• Model Builder
• Mold Maker
• Movie Art Director
• Movie Scene Painter
• Mural Artist
• Museum Curator
• Museum Director
• Museum Photographer
• Museum Photographer
• Musical Instrument Maker
• Ornamental Metalwork Designer
Now, some of these things you may be able to do just with a BFA, while some of them will require special training that you may need to seek outside of A&D and the University, or get a higher degree. Not sure how you can do some of these? Make an appointment with the Career Development Coordinator to find out where you can find more information, and whether A&D has alums who do these things.

**The Role of Academic Courses**

Learning can be a means and an end. A&D requires certain academic credits that on the surface may not seem related to your career choice. A liberal arts education helps you
learn to learn and again, this will come in handy for the rest of your life. On the other hand, some academic courses may be very related to your career path.

At a recent presentation by five top advertising companies the question was asked, “What do you look for when hiring?” The answer was, not surprisingly, a strong portfolio, internship and other experiential learning, and a course in marketing. U of M offers a course called Designing Persuasive Communications (COMM 468) and this course would fit nicely for anyone interested in advertising.

Such a course will also be helpful for anyone who wishes to be a freelance artist or designer since you will need to be able to market yourself, your talent, and your work. Other useful courses along these lines include Social Psychology (PSYCH 280) or Visual and Material Culture (AMCULT 231).

Remember, such courses as listed above usually have pre-requisites so meet with your academic advisor to plan accordingly.

Interested in art therapy? Plan to take as many psychology courses as you can since most masters programs require upwards of 15 credits in psychology.

How about work in film, video, animation? In addition to your studio courses, take a look at what Screen Arts and Culture (SAC) is offering.

Work in museums? Check out History of Art, these courses will come in handy.

In short, work with your Academic Advisor when it comes time to register to make sure that not only are you taking courses you need, but courses that interest you and augment your creative development.

Student Organizations

A&D has three main student organizations as well as smaller (and usually less formalized) groups.

Society for Art Students (SAS) is the umbrella organization for students at A&D. Want to help shape the future of the school? Join SAS! Get to know your fellow students. Plan events. SAS is the voice of the students at A&D. Find out more by emailing sasad@umich.edu

American Institute of Graphic Artists (AIGA) has a student chapter at A&D. If you are interested in graphic, media, web design, etc. then this is the organization for you. Find out more about AIGA on line at www.aiga.org

Industrial Designers Society of America (IDSA) has a student chapter at A&D. If you are interested in product, manufacturing, shoe design, etc. then this is the organization for you. Find out more about IDSA on line at www.idsa.org
American Advertising Federation (AAF) has a student chapter at U of M. The organization is made up of students from across campus including A&D, LSA and the Business School. In 2007 the U of M team came in second in the national competition for Coca Cola and we have NO ADVERTISING MAJOR.

By being part of a student group you can further your career development as well as your resume, your portfolio and your career network.

**Studio Courses Outside of A&D**

Interested in theater? The School of Music, Theater, and Dance offers courses in scenic design, lighting design, costume design, etc. With permission, these courses can count as advanced studios in the A&D curriculum. Meet with your Academic Advisor to find out more.

Interested in film and video? The Screen Arts and Culture Department of LSA offers many courses that may count as advanced studios. Again, meet with your advisor to find out more.

You are allowed to transfer two advanced studio courses from another school in the United States. Many students augment their A&D studio work over the summer by taking advanced studios in NYC, Chicago, etc. Check with John Luther for transferability of such studios.

When you take studios as part of an International Study program, these advanced studios will most likely transfer to A&D. All A&D students are encouraged to study abroad and employers report that they look very favorably on candidates with such experience. Again, meet with John Luther to check on transferability.

**But what can I do with MY BFA?**

Students who graduated in 2006 and 2007 have gone on to do a lot of things including:

- ACLU, NYC
- Adams Golf (Plano, TX)
- Admissions (UM)
- Allessee Fellowship
- The Amazing Race (ABC TV)
- American Greetings in China
- American Greetings in the US
- Artrain Fellowship
- Arts at Michigan
- C Lighting (Atlanta)
- Calty Design
- Charles Chang-Lima (NYC)
• Department of Justice (Washington, DC)
• DraftFCB, Chicago and New York
• Elizabeth Dow
• Elevate Design (Chicago)
• Environment Michigan
• Freelance artist in clothing design, jewelry design, painting, illustration, web design
• Frog Design (CA)
• Grad School at Harvard, UM Architecture, Cranbrook, Wayne State (art therapy), UM School of Social Work
• Haystack Fellowship
• Heinz Internship (PA)
• Hollywood Sierra Kitchens (CA)
• Ikea (in store design)
• Independent Film Production
• Laran Bronze Casting
• Ledco
• LSA Marketing and Design
• Luminaire Lighting (FL)
• Marketing for McKinley real estate
• MRM Worldwide (NYC)
• Notions Marketing
• Radical Media (Santa Monica)
• Selo/Shevel Gallery
• Teaching English in Korea
• Teaching Fellowship (NYC)
• The North Face (CA)
• UM School of Education (animation design)
• VML (NYC)
• Xoran Technologies
• Zoe Publishing

So, as you can see, A&D’s curriculum allows for a lot of different opportunities in conjunction with what you gain from experiential learning and networking. Your BFA is designed by YOU for YOUR future so take advantage of the resources available not just in A&D but across the University and the world!

For more information about issues related to career development, contact John Luther, Career Development Coordinator, by stopping at the front desk of the Student Academic Services Office or calling to make an appointment (734) 764-0397