Instructions for the Portfolio Review BFA in Illustration

Application Deadline: Monday, October 6, 2025 @ 5:00 PM

Link to Application:
Illustration JotForm link: https://form.jotform.com/242595777300159

2024 Faculty Information Session:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C85pPWO5V7w

Acceptance to the Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in Illustration is by portfolio review only. Its purpose is to evaluate applicants' proficiency in technical and creative abilities, originality, and academics.

WHO CAN APPLY?

- Eligible applicants include all B.A. in Art majors who are currently enrolled and who enrolled in CSUF in Fall 2017 forward. This includes transfer students who entered CSUF after Fall 2017 and every first-year student who entered CSUF in Fall 2017 and after.

- Applicants must also have completed a minimum of 30 units and no more than 96 units towards their degree (exceptions may be made for the upper-unit cap; please talk to an Illustration faculty). Among their degree units, students must have passed the four classes listed below, earned a "C" grade or better for each of these four classes, and have a combined 3.0 GPA or better for these four classes:

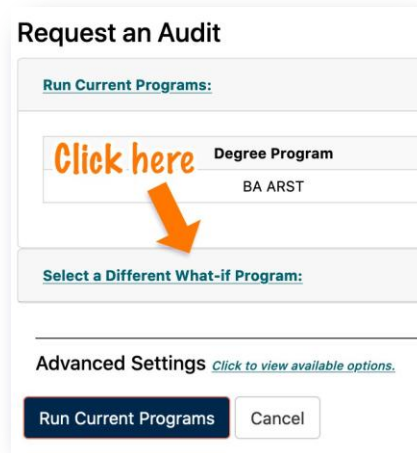|	
ART 103 - 2D Design	***ART 107A - Beginning Drawing***
ART 104 - 3D Design	***ART 107B - Beginning Painting***

- Additionally, applicants must have completed ***ART 117 - Life Drawing*** with a "C" (2.0) or better grade.

- Students can only apply two (2) times to be admitted to the BFA in Illustration, provided they meet the criteria above (and have not exceeded 96 units toward the degree). If a student submits a portfolio for a second review, it should be within two semesters of the first portfolio review. Applicants who are not accepted after the second attempt will not be admitted into the program.
    - Note: applicants are encouraged to get advisement from an Illustration faculty to verify their eligibility and unit counts, and to discuss their goals prior to applying to the program.

WHAT GOES INTO THE APPLICATION?

1. TDA

Log in to your CSUF portal. Go to TitanNet to request an audit (TDA). Click the "What-if program" link.
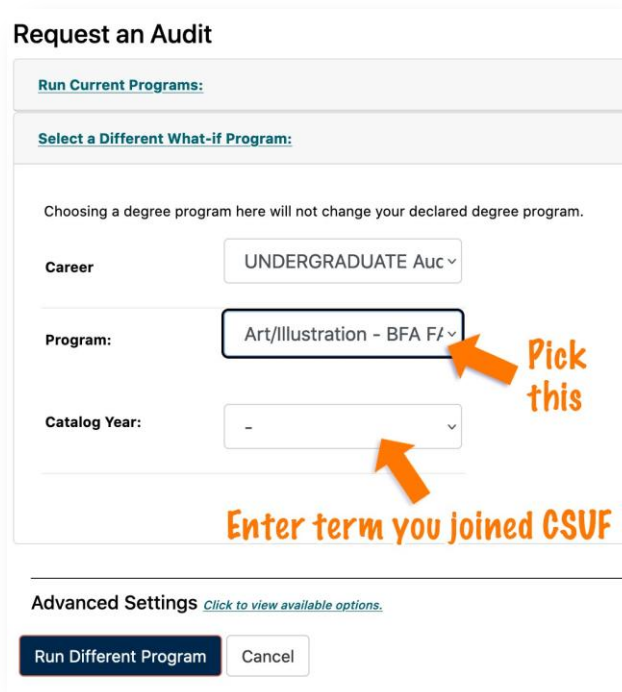

Next to "Program," select "Art/Illustration - BFA FAIS", and next to "Catalog Year" choose the semester you joined CSUF.

Once the browser finishes generating your TDA, save it as a .pdf. On most computers, you can choose FILE > PRINT and find the option to save as a PDF. Title the file using this file-naming convention: LastnameFirstname-Portfolio.pdf (example: RockwellNorman-portfolio.pdf).

2. Portfolio Pieces

Select your best 25 artworks (5 prerequisite classwork, 10 finished personal artworks, and 10 sketchbook pages) and create a Cover Page. Assemble them in a .pdf file titled <u>LastnameFirstname-Portfolio.pdf</u> (example: RockwellNorman-Portfolio.pdf). That file must be less than 10MB. Students may not use AI generated artwork in their portfolio submission. All portfolio pieces must be original to the applicant. For more information, see "How to prepare your portfolio?"

3. Online Application Form

Click on the appropriate link to start the application process. Complete all required fields in the online application form. Follow the on-screen instructions to complete this online application form. You will answer the interest survey and upload the PDFs of your TDA and Portfolio there.

HOW TO PREPARE THE PORTFOLIO?

The portfolio will include 1 Cover Page and 25 examples of your artwork: 5 prerequisite classwork, 10 finished personal artworks, and 10 sketchbook pages. Digitally format the 26 pages and assemble them in one .pdf document (under 10 MB) to upload to the online application.

The portfolio is representative of your original work and should include the following:

1. Cover Page (page 1)

Before showing any of your artworks, leave the first page blank except for your first and last name. Please use an easy-to-read font (like Calibri) and make your name large enough to read.

2. Prerequisite Classwork (5 examples, pages 2-6)

First and foremost, select examples of your best works from prerequisite art classes. <u>Pick one best work from each of your five prerequisite classes</u>:

- ***ART 103 – Two-Dimensional Design*** (page 2)
- ***ART 104 – Three-Dimensional Design*** (page 3)
- ***ART 107A – Beginning Drawing*** (page 4)
- ***ART 107B – Beginning Painting*** (page 5)
- ***ART 117 – Life Drawing*** (page 6)

The preferred previous class works to pick are ones that can demonstrate your understanding of:

- **Composition:**
  - Focus, hierarchy, grouping, placement, visual weight
- **Structure:**
  - Volume, proportions, perspective, anatomy
- **Light:**
  - Value, color, light/shadow logic, bounce light, atmosphere, color language

Also, try to pick works that can demonstrate your technical skills in:

- **Drawing**
- **Painting**

3. Finished Artwork (10 examples, pages 7-16)

Next, select 10 examples of all your other finished artworks. <u>These should be the best works you've done, either in classes or your own personal work</u>. The portfolio should only represent your original work (no fan art, no master copy). In this same spirit, you are discouraged from selecting collaborative artworks; however, if you pick any, make sure you clearly describe your role in their creation. Just like with prerequisite class works, when picking from your best artworks, give preference to those that demonstrate your abilities in:

- **Composition:**
  - Focus, hierarchy, grouping, placement, visual weight
- **Structure:**
  - Volume, perspective, line weight
- **Light:**
  - Value, color, light/shadow logic, bounce light, atmosphere, color language
- **Anatomy:**
  - Gesture, expression, acting
- **Imaginative Art:**
  - Storytelling, creativity, point of view, design language
- **Observational Art:**
  - Detail, proportions, texture, rendering, realism
- **Graphic Design:**
  - Layout, presentation, spacing, optionally some typography/calligraphy

Any form and medium that may be broadly found in illustration is acceptable. If you decide to include any three-dimensional art in this category, they should be a part of your illustration approach (for example, some illustrators create scenes in clay and then photograph those; other illustrators use software such as Maya to create 3D environments or characters for their 2D illustrations – those would be relevant and valuable examples of your work).

4. Sketchbook Artwork (10 examples, pages 17-26)

Select those sketchbook pages that excite you the most. Select examples that provide insight into the kind of art you love creating. Show your interests, style, and creativity with some of your best sketches.

At the end, including the Cover Page, you should have 26 pages total in your portfolio.

HOW TO PREPARE THE INTEREST SURVEY?

To be considered for the Illustration concentration, please clearly define your artistic focus, goals, and preferences as a 500-word essay. Please try to answer the following questions:

- Why do you think Illustration is a good fit for you?
- What illustration industries and careers are you already familiar with and are interested in?
- What are you trying to accomplish by graduation? Professional goals post-graduation?
- Who are three current illustrators who you consider your art heroes that inspire you?
- What do you like to do for fun? What are your hobbies and favorite intellectual properties?

Q&A

- **When does the faculty review portfolios and applications?**
  - Once per semester in the fall and spring. Usually, the deadlines are October 1st for Fall and March 1st for Spring. If the dates occur on a weekend, the deadline is the following Monday.

- **What if I am already a BFA student in this concentration?**
  - If you were already approved & processed by Admissions and Records prior to August 20, 2018, and are currently a BFA student in the Illustration concentration, then you do not have to apply AGAIN to the BFA concentration in which you are currently registered.

- **What if I want to be in two concentrations?**
  - If you are already an approved BFA student currently within a concentration and ALSO want to apply to Illustration (or GAAIM or EAA) as your second area of study (dual concentration), then YES, you must complete the Portfolio Review process to apply for the second concentration. You must still apply for the concentration that is not currently showing on your TDA even if you are already a BFA student in another concentration.

- **What is my current degree and concentration?**
  - Please check your TDA for your specific degree and listed concentration. All art students enter CSUF as BA in ART majors.

- **Does every Visual Art student need to do a Portfolio Review?**
  - No. Currently, there are no Portfolio Reviews for the following undergraduate concentrations in the BA: Art History, General Studio, Teaching (Art Education); and the BFA: Ceramics, Creative Photography and Experimental Media, Drawing and Painting, Graphic and Interactive Design, Jewelry and Metals, and Sculpture. Students must still complete the BFA prerequisites with a 3.0 GPA or better.

- **What is the degree or concentration for first-year and transfer students?**
  - All students enter the university as BA in Art majors and must apply for their specific concentrations in the BA and BFA degrees. The majors of Computer Animation & Game Art, Entertainment Art/ Animation, and Illustration have Portfolio Reviews for their BFA programs. The application for all other majors is completed by filling out a Change of Major form once students have completed the prerequisites for their degrees after the first year.

- **Can I use class projects as portfolio pieces?**
  - Of course. However, try to limit the number to a maximum of only two projects per each class so we can see a wide range of your artworks and artistic abilities.

- **Can I use personal work (art not created for classes) as portfolio pieces?**
  - Of course. Whether it's created for a class or not matters less than the quality of the illustration.

- **Is fan art to be avoided in the portfolio?**
  - Generally, yes. The exceptions are if you create very original fan art (not art closely based on another artist's style, a derivative style) or if you create a very original take on the intellectual property (IP). Even so, limit fan art pieces to one or two at the very most, and only if they are very strong and creative.

- **Does the filenames of the TDA and Portfolio matter?**
  - Yes, very much. When reviewing your submissions, that is how the faculty finds them. Remember to use these conventions:
    - TDA file:
      LastnameFirstname-TDA.pdf   Example: RockwellNorman-TDA.pdf
    - Portfolio file (under 10MB):
      LastnameFirstname-Portfolio.pdf   Example: RockwellNorman-Portfolio.pdf

- **Should I label the artwork in my portfolio (PDF)?**
  - That's not necessary. As long as you follow the proper page order, we will understand which image is for what category. The only text for the portfolio that helps is your name in the filename (LastnameFirstname-Portfolio.pdf) and your name on the very first page of the PDF.

- **Can I upload my portfolio images as separate files, say inside a folder?**
  - Please don't. Combine all your images in one PDF (you can use Adobe Acrobat, with FILE > CREATE > Combine files into a single PDF).

- **Does the PDF of the portfolio have a size limit?**
  - Yes, 10MB. If you the PDF of your portfolio is just a little above 10MB, it will still be reviewed. Keep in mind that big files take long to open, and when looking at many portfolios, large files are not practical.

- **What if I do my sketches on a screen, such as an iPad, instead on a sketchbook or on paper?**
  - Digital sketches count and we will review them. Just make sure they look like sketches, not like final art. If your sketches are too polished and look like final (clearly finished) art, we may have questions about your spontaneous sketching skills.

- **What is the distinction between finished artwork and sketches, especially with digital sketches?**
  - If it looks finished, if it's at a point where you would be confident to turn in the artwork to your professor for a grade or as a commission to a client for payment, it is probably "finished." If it looks unfinished (and not purposefully so), then it's probably in the "sketches" category. If you do roughs, café sketches, explorations, quick-draws on a tablet or computer, or if those images took you less than 30 minutes (maybe much less), or if they look and feel like they're "sketches", then they are probably suited for "Sketches" category. On the other hand, when applicants try to include too many overly worked or mostly finished art in the "sketches" category, the reviewers question if you can tell the difference between finished art and sketches. Usually, it's a pretty clear difference.

- **Can I cut-and-paste or collage several sketches into one page of sketches?**
  - You can, but we encourage quality over quantity. Ten amazing sketches by themselves will make a stronger impression than 25 sketches made up of ten amazing sketches and fifteen not-as-amazing sketches on ten pages. Only show your very best, and no more, because then you risk introducing weaker art into the mix and making a weaker impression.

- **Can I include AI (Artificial Intelligence) generated artwork?**
  - Students may not use AI generated artwork in their portfolio submission. All portfolio pieces are to be original to the applicant.

MORE QUESTIONS?

For questions about the portfolio, please contact the faculty in your concentration. If you need procedural help, then please contact Charlotte Bouck at cbouck@fullerton.edu.