BFA in GRD
Application & Portfolio Guidelines
Spring 2018

Portfolio Dropoff
May 3, 2018
12:00-4:00pm
AH 468

Portfolio Pickup
May 7, 2018
11:00-2:00pm
AH 468
I. Preparing for the BFA

Our goal, as we conduct our 3000-level GRD classes and review student portfolios, is to build a community of graphic design students who demonstrate their readiness and preparation for the rigors of the Bachelor of Fine Arts program. In general, a BFA is a professional degree with depth and rigorous classes, which prepares students for professional careers as artists, and for entry into M.F.A. graduate programs.

Strong BFA applicants have:
• Widely-ranging process of research, exploration, iteration, refinement, and presentation
• Willingness to seek out, offer, and apply constructive and meaningful feedback
• Maturity and accountability to both experiment and then readjust when things don’t go as anticipated
• Focus on graphic design as problem-solving and communication, not just image-making
• Discipline to dig deeper, away from surface level treatments and expected solutions
• Determination to improve, to be unafraid of difficulty, and to see every challenge as an opportunity
• Skillful management of and sensitivity to the details of composition, color, typography, image-making, and craftsmanship
• Passion for subject matter, processes, and media beyond the computer and graphic design

Students who are most successful in the BFA program graduate to become designers at firms, corporations, and other creative entities all over Atlanta and the world. Some of their personal characteristics include:
  - Resourcefulness
  - Initiative
  - Optimism & can-do attitude
  - Respect for themselves and others
  - Hardworking & smart-working
  - Continually asking ‘what if…’
  - Recognition that they have more to learn
  - Leadership
  - Team player
  - Community-building
  - Professionalism (reliability, accountability, preparedness)
2. Portfolio Dropoff
On the day of GRD Portfolio Drop-off, bring the portfolio, your Panther ID, and all required forms to room 468. You will sign in with your Panther ID#, and email address. Find the corresponding number for your portfolio. Place your forms on top of your portfolio box.

Be on time. Have all forms printed, filled out, and ready to go. Give yourself adequate time to allow for traffic or technical issues. **DO NOT wait until the last minute to bring in your work. The room will be closed, and we do not accept late submissions.**

3. The Review Process
There are typically 40-60 students applying to the major. The twenty best-prepared students be accepted to the BFA.

After dropoff and until the following week, all instructors who have taught an Introductory or Intermediate GRD class will review the portfolios. Each instructor comes to his or her own conclusions about quality and therefore, the ranking, of the work.

All GRD faculty meet the following week to compare notes and discuss selections. BFA majors are chosen based on not only the strength of the portfolio, but also on a student’s work ethic, attendance, class participation, and a positive, facilitating attitude in the studio. All instructors’ voices and votes are heard. It is not uncommon for instructors to weigh in on specific students whose merits, potential, or shortcomings may not be clear from their materials (for instance, a strong portfolio offset by low grades needs explaining, and vice versa).

4. After the Review
All applicants are notified whether they have been accepted or not via email, typically sent as soon as the faculty review is completed. **Feedback on the portfolios is not provided.** Students who would like specific comments should arrange an appointment with one of the GRD instructors in the fall.

Not being accepted to the GRD BFA does not mean that you are not a designer, or cannot be. It means that, at this time, we do not think that you are sufficiently prepared for the structure, challenges, and intent of our program at GSU.

There are generally three options available if you are not accepted into the major. Have a backup plan in mind in case you are not accepted (be positive, but also be prepared).

**Option 1: Reapply the following year**
Some students re-take Intro classes or dedicate to rework projects that could use improvements. This is not a guarantee that you will be accepted the second time around; however, some students were accepted the second time, and saw dramatic improvements in their work after another year to prepare and become a stronger designer.

**Option 2: Pursue a BFA (Bachelor of Fine Arts) in another discipline**
Some students decide to apply to another discipline. The BFA degree at GSU is “Studio Art with a Concentration in...” (Art Education, Ceramics, Graphic Design, Interior Design, Photography, Drawing, Painting, and Printmaking; Sculpture, Textiles). A BFA is considered the professional degree for artists and designers, with deep expertise.

**Option 3: Pursue a BA (Bachelor of Arts) Degree**
Some students decide that rather than pursuing a BFA, they are eager to graduate and start their careers, so they choose to finish their time at GSU with a BA (Bachelor of Arts) degree. The intent of the Bachelor of Arts in Studio is to develop a student’s expertise in four different art disciplines. (A BFA has focused study in only one area.) Deciding on a BA degree will not typically alter your anticipated graduation date, or invalidate any of the GRD coursework you have completed. People can still become designers with a BA and pursue MFA degrees.

**Advising**
We highly recommend that students be in touch with their University Advisors as they apply to the BFA. After the new incoming class of students is determined, we send a list to advising so that they can reach out to both those accepted and those who were not in order to help with next steps.
5. Portfolio Formats
Your work needs to stand on its own (you will not be present at the review), so carefully consider how instructors will understand and appreciate what they are seeing. You might give context to each project with a statement, keywords, process examples, a creative brief, or even just the project brief from class. While we are familiar with all the projects that we’ll be seeing, sometimes where you took it, or how your instructor customized it, will benefit from some brief explanation.

Book Format
• Work may be presented in book format, at 11x17 or 12x18 size, bound along one edge.
• Include a cover with your personal logo/lettermark, name, and contact info clearly displayed. The binding should allow the book to open flat. Divide the book into sections, by class.
• We do NOT recommend investing in expensively produced, perfect or hard bound books (such as can be produced on blurb.com or other online publishers). We want to see that you spent time and careful attention on your work, not that you outsunk everyone else on it.

Video or Animation Work
If you have motion work to present, include a print or page which establishes the context of the project, and contains key stills from the piece, as well as a thumbdrive containing the file(s). Brand the thumbdrive, name it for the desktop, and name your files appropriately – all digital files must be uploaded for review onto one computer, and may not be in direct context of your portfolio. Test your file formats and make sure they will open into or as players.

Prototypes
Include your constructed prototypes (packaging or other finely-crafted work) in their own branded container or bag. Some projects (booklets, stationery) might simply designed to be tucked into a pocket. Consider presentation and ease of access for the reviewers. Do not include actual food in your prototypes, or anything that might leak or spill.

6. Required Content
Core Design Projects
The portfolio must include all work completed in the three 3000-level Graphic Design courses:
  - GRD 3000 (Intro to Graphic Design)
  - GRD 3150 (Intro to Typography)
  - GRD 3200 (Intermediate Graphic Design).

You should have about 20-25 pages; some projects may require multiple pages or spreads. Prints can be either inkjet or color laser, but evaluate how clearly they reflect your intended colors and small details (esp. typography). Image and print quality should be clear and clean.

There may be variation between the projects completed for each class, depending upon the instructor. Typically, the format in which your work was presented for the critique is suitable for the portfolio. Adjust artwork size to fit the space as needed, but do not minimize work such that details or typography is lost.

Revising Work
We anticipate that you will be applying feedback you heard in critiques to improve your work. Projects should stay true to their original problem parameters, but some students have not only revised each project, but completely redesigned certain ones as well. What helps you put your best foot forward, and demonstrates your preparedness for the program?

Process
We expect to see examples of your process for several (but not all) projects. This might include research, brainstorming, sketches, digital variations and iterations – the story of your project which leads the reviewer through your decisions and deadends that led to the final design. Process could be documented and presented as pages in the portfolio book itself, as separate mini-books, or other formats. However, keep it simple, and having the process in context of the project is more relevant and useful than a sketchbook full of random, unorganized drawings from several classes.
Additional Projects
You may include up to 3 examples of other work in addition to your core graphic design projects, such as extra assignments, client work, or work from such classes as bookmaking, illustration, photography, painting, printmaking, drawings, as well as graphic design completed at other institutions. Be critical in evaluating whether additional pieces add to, rather than duplicate, the skills and potential already demonstrated in your portfolio.

Application to Major Form
See page 1 for the link information. Have both pages printed and NEATLY filled out before you come to drop off your work. You may not know your final grades for GRD 3200 (or 3150 if you are taking it this spring). Leave them blank; however, indicate your instructor on the form. Enter your grades accurately, as we will know (or will find out) if they’re wrong.

Essay
As noted on the Application to Major Form, you must write a one-page statement about your work and discuss what makes Graphic Design a relevant or important pursuit to you; what do you bring to the program? What do you have to share with your classmates and contribute to your studio community? We do read these, so give them serious thought. Be sure also to proofread – proofread everything you submit so typos do not distract from your work. Use a 12 pt. font, 1-1/2 line-spaced. Staple your statement to the form.

7. Production & Planning
Do not underestimate how long it takes to plan, organize, revise, lay out, print, bind, and present your work. Like any of your 3000-level projects, this requires a timeline, a realistic sense of what can be accomplished, research about your resources and how you’ll get things done (and where), allowing time for X factors and mistakes, and leeway to step away when you get too tired, overwhelmed, or distracted to think clearly. Use your time during spring break (and even winter break) wisely.

8. Checklist
Items marked with an asterisk* may be presented (alone or in addition to a print) as a mockup or dummy in a separate container.

GENERAL
☐ Application to Major Form (2 pages filled out)
☐ Essay (printed, include your name)
☐ All work from 3000, 3150, 3200
☐ Process examples for 3-4 projects. Be organized.
☐ 0-3 Optional work samples

GRD 3000
☐ 1. Logo(s)
☐ 2. Event Poster(s)
☐ * 3. Book Cover (or set of 3)
☐ * 4. Packaging Prototype

GRD 3150
☐ 5. Hand-drawn Letters
☐ 6. Expressive Type Poster
☐ 7. Flyer (2 versions)
☐ * 8. Type Specimen Booklet

GRD 3200
☐ 9. Logo Redesign (and creative brief or relevant research about the business)
☐ 10. Stationery Layout (actual size)
☐ * Stationery Prototypes
☐ 11. Ad Campaign
☐ 12. Online Presence
☐ * 13. Additional Items (if any)

Note that as long as you include all project work you did for your respective class, differences between classes are not important. Similarly, some projects may have been assigned as exercises instead, or may have expanded beyond what is listed. Exercises do not need to be included.