Clusters

The Media Arts major offers a series of "clusters" that can serve student specializations while still allowing a general introduction to the broader field. As part of completing the Capstone sequence in their fourth year, students will officially align themselves with a cluster. Prior to Capstone, students are welcome to use clusters to help organize their studies and are encouraged to discuss their interests with the Director of Undergraduate Studies during the declaration process and throughout their studies

Clusters can help students achieve depth in a particular area, which will put them in a stronger position to apply for graduate programs and pursue careers in media arts and design following graduation. Available clusters are based on areas that have garnered significant student interest and in which MAAD has substantial course offerings. The major currently offers the following clusters:

1. Creative Computing
2. Digital Sound and Music
3. Expanded Cinema
4. Games
5. Media Performance

Creative Computing

In this cluster students will explore the expansive possibilities of the "meta-media" of computing, learning to harness its capacity to merge text, images, sound, and interactivity in blended and novel ways. The Creative Computing cluster encourages students to redefine the landscape of digital media, challenging conventional norms and crafting innovative forms of creative expression not previously possible with traditional media. Key faculty in this cluster include Jon Satrom, Jason Salavon, Nick Briz, Pedro Lopes, Diana Franklin, and Ken Nakagaki.

Sample Creative Computing Pathway

2 Media Theory Courses
MAAD 12043: The Aesthetics of Artificial Intelligence
MAAD 14109: Machine Learning at the Archive

2 Media History Courses
MAAD 18306: Data History: Information Overload from the Enlightenment to Google
MAAD 25201: Art and Machine Intelligence

2 Media Practice and Design Courses
MAAD 23645: Body and the Digital
MAAD 22502: Data and Algorithm in Art

4 Elective Courses
MAAD 23220: Inventing, Engineering and Understanding Interactive Devices
MAAD 21111: Creative Coding
MAAD 23281: Topics in Human Computer Interaction
MAAD 20380: Actuated User Interfaces and Technology

Digital Sound and Music

In the Digital Sound and Music cluster, students delve into the world of digital sound production, learning techniques to compose and score for nonlinear media such as video games. This cluster goes beyond traditional music-making, inviting students to redefine its boundaries, creating sound installations, algorithmic instruments and other innovative auditory experiences that challenge and expand our understanding of sound. Classes in this cluster are often cross-listed with the Music Department which has an Electronic Music Studio that students can take advantage of for their projects. Key faculty to note include Paula Harper, David Bird, Jennifer Iverson, Nick Briz, and Takashi Shallow.

Sample Digital Sound and Music Pathway

2 Media Theory Courses
MAAD 12422: Hearing Popular Music
MAAD 14723: Divas, Idols, Material Girls: Gender and Sexuality in Music Videos

2 Media History Courses
MAAD 15521: Music and the History of AI
MAAD 16718: Approaches to Live Electronics

2 Media Practice and Design Courses
MAAD 24618: Electronic Music I: Composing with Sound
MAAD 24817: Electronic Music II: Introduction to Computer Music

4 Elective Courses
MAAD 24820: Video Game Music Production and Sound Design
MAAD 26720: Musical Robotics
MAAD 22506: Online Algorithmic Music
MAAD 17212: Sonic Cultures of Japan

Expanded Cinema

In this cluster, students push moving images outside their typical frames exploring an assemblage of contexts including mixed reality (VR/AR), transmedia storytelling, video installation and AV performance. This cluster is a creative playground for filmmakers interested in experimental, participatory, hypermedia and other non-linear modes of storytelling that engage audiences in unprecedented ways. Key faculty in this area include Daniel Morgan, Marc Downie, AE Stevenson, Tom LaMarre, Ian Jones, and Scott Wolniak.

Sample Expanded Cinema Pathway

2 Media Theory Courses
MAAD 20810: Sound / Image Mapping
MAAD 14110: Digital Cinema

2 Media History Courses
MAAD 15300: The Loop as Form
MAAD 15630: Television in an Age of Change

2 Media Practice and Design Courses
MAAD 21011: Experimental Captures
MAAD 24920: Virtual Reality Production

4 Elective Courses
MAAD 24540: Multimedia Fashion Design
MAAD 14865: Adaptation: Text and Image
MAAD 24910: Short Form Digital Storytelling: Creating a Web Series
MAAD 23820: Oral History and Podcasting

Games

In the Games cluster, students explore the vast universe of game design and development. Beyond video games, the cluster also explores the intricate design of card games, the imaginative realms of role-playing games and the innovative landscapes of alternate reality games. Here, students learn to craft not just games, but compelling experiences, mastering the art of storytelling, strategy, and design to create interactive adventures that resonate with a diverse set of audiences and themes. Key faculty for this cluster include Patrick Jagoda, Katherine Buse, Ian Jones, Chris Carloy, and Ashlyn Sparrow.

Sample Games Pathway

2 Media Theory Courses
MAAD 12320: Critical Videogame Studies
MAAD 25630: Videogames and Genre Storytelling

2 Media History Courses
MAAD 25416: 1990s Videogame History
MAAD 17010: Gaming History

2 Media Practice and Design Courses
MAAD 20500: ARTGAMES
MAAD 22322: Introduction to Game Design

4 Elective Courses
MAAD 14350: Videogame Level Design
MAAD 24820: Video Game Music Production and Sound Design
MAAD 22911: Augmented Reality Production
MAAD 23220: Inventing, Engineering, and Understanding Interactive Devices

Media Performance

The Media Performance cluster offers a unique blend of traditional performance arts with the dynamic realms of digital media. In this cluster, students dive into the world of experimental audio-visual real-time performances, exploring how technology can augment and transform the theatrical experience. Key faculty for this cluster include Heidi Coleman, Patrick Jagoda and Jon Satrom.

Sample Media Performance Pathway

2 Media Theory Courses
MAAD 24515: Contemporary Political Strategies in Performance
MAAD 14207: Mindfulness: Experience and Media

2 Media History Courses
MAAD 24550: Evolution of Improvisation in Chicago
MAAD 13020: Opera Across Media

2 Media Practice and Design Courses
MAAD 24420: Games & Performance: Live Action Role Playing Games
MAAD 24410: Transmedia Puzzle Design & Performance

4 Elective Courses
MAAD 24530: Staging the Internet
MAAD 24410: Transmedia Puzzle Design & Performance
MAAD 20420: Painting with Light in Space
MAAD 23860: Screendance: Movement and New Media