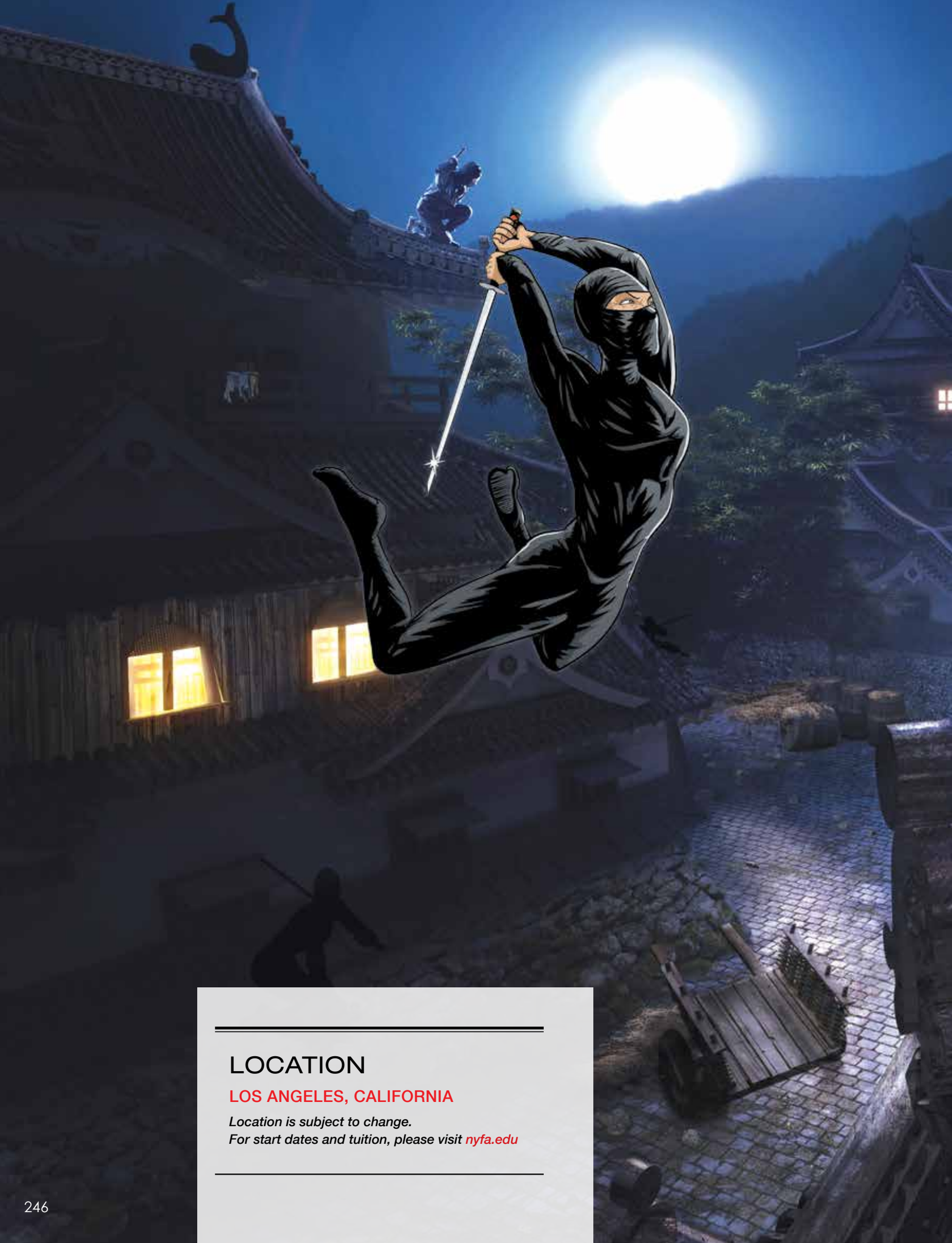


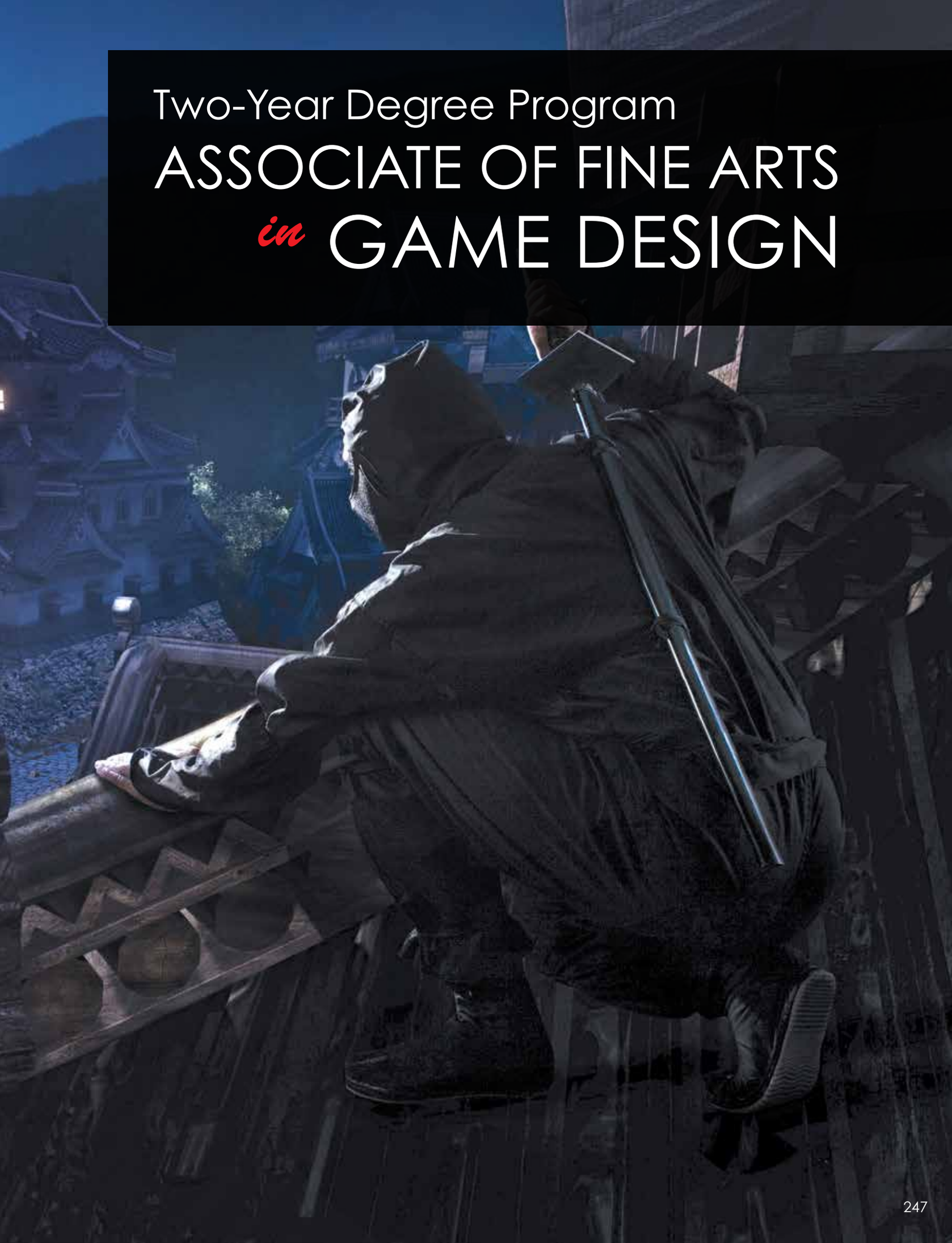
LOCATION

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Location is subject to change.
For start dates and tuition, please visit nyfa.edu

Two-Year Degree Program

ASSOCIATE OF FINE ARTS *in* GAME DESIGN



OVERVIEW

Video game designers are creators of new worlds and designers of one-of-a-kind experiences. Established to train the next generation of video game designers, the New York Film Academy is home to one of the best game design schools in the world.

Simply put, unlike other video game design programs, students at the Academy receive intensive, hands-on education in how to create an original and engaging video game experience. As one of the leading game design colleges, students can expect a full-immersion educational experience that will place them in the Academy's hallmark game design studios in order to develop their own unique video games.

The New York Film Academy Associate of Fine Arts (AFA) in Game Design is a four-semester conservatory-based, full-time study program that can be completed in two years. The curriculum is designed to immerse gifted and energetic prospective game writers and designers in all aspects of the discipline. The AFA in Game Design program provides a creative setting in which to challenge, inspire, and perfect the talents of its student body. Students follow an intensive curriculum and achieve multiple learning goals.

The strength of the NYFA AFA in Game Design Degree Program exists in its combination of storytelling studies, game design theory, game arts education, game programming education, and the hands-on direct application of each. Based on a high concentration of narrative and playable system design workshops, the program is further enhanced by concentrating on the commercial realities of the medium, and collaboration on a game designed and deployed by a team of students who work hand-in-hand with our senior faculty recruited from the top companies in the game industry.

In the Academy's Game Design Program, students work with professional, industry standard software to create their own video games.

Students do not merely study the theory of game design, but also get the one-of-a-kind experience of working in our singular Game Studio course. Each semester, student teams of 1-4 students work with a professional programmer to develop an original, functional digital game for a variety of different platforms. The programmer both helps students to expedite their work and meet their deadlines while also educating students in the essentials of coding.

One of the hallmarks of the New York Film Academy's AFA in Game Design program is the distinguished and experienced faculty that works one-on-one with students. Each faculty member is dedicated to providing students with hands-on experience alongside the tools and know-how to succeed in a professional environment.

The AFA in Game Design program is offered exclusively at our Los Angeles campus. However, **QUALIFIED STUDENTS HAVE THE OPTION OF COMPLETING COURSE WORK AT THE NEW YORK FILM ACADEMY IN NEW YORK CITY IN A ONE-YEAR NON-DEGREE PROGRAM AND THEN APPLYING THEIR COURSE WORK TO BE ACCEPTED FOR ADVANCED STANDING IN THE AFA GAME DESIGN DEGREE PROGRAM.**

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

Upon graduating from New York Film Academy's AFA Game Design program students will demonstrate the following skills:

- Develop and deliver working game software using industry standard methods and tools.
- Code games hands on using Unity and C# and possibly other programming environments.
- Demonstrate skill at game prototyping, playtesting, iteration, presentation, and collaboration across a range of game types.
- Master, through frequent collaboration with peers in the Game Design and other NYFA programs, the ability to work effectively in a high pressure creative environment.
- Mastery of an individual area of focus in the industry through exposure to all game development job roles – producer, programmer, and artist.

CHRIS SWAIN
Chair of
Game Design Department

An industry leader for over twenty years, Swain co-founded the Electronic Arts Game Innovation Lab at USC. He has led over twenty award-winning games and products for companies that include Microsoft, Disney, Sony, Acclaim, BBC, Activision, and many more. He is an in-demand speaker and writer on the game industry and innovation.

WHAT YOU WILL ACHIEVE

YEAR ONE

The Associates of Fine Arts in Game Design Program requires successful completion of the following in partial fulfillment of the graduation requirement:

- 2 collaboratively created digital games.
- 2 game wikis from their digital games.
- 3-D Art Portfolio.
- Graphic Design Portfolio.
- Satisfactory Participation in Narrative Design Workshop.
- Satisfactory Participation in Playcentric Design.

YEAR TWO

The Associates of Fine Arts in Game Design Program requires successful completion of the following in partial fulfillment of the graduation requirement:

- 2 functional games developed by the student in collaboration with classmates.
- Two fully developed, 30+ page design wikis.
- a reel of no less than 1 minute of rendered, professional-quality game animation.
- Satisfactory participation in Collaborative Thesis course and Ethics of Game Design course.

Please Note: curriculum and projects are subject to change and may vary depending on location. Students should consult the most recently published campus catalog for the most up to date course information.

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

YEAR ONE OVERVIEW

In Year One, students receive a comprehensive introduction to the subject through courses in the deconstruction and theory of game design, game writing, game art, and game programming. Students complete multiple projects in their exploration of the medium during the year.

SEMESTER ONE

NARRATIVE DESIGN WORKSHOP

This course examines the critical elements that make strong story concepts and how they can be shaped to create the foundations of great games. Students will design narrative, game play, physical environment (world, gameplay spaces), and other key elements. Guest speakers will include veteran game designers and writers.

2D GAME DESIGN

This is the first in a series of four hands-on development courses wherein students collaboratively deliver a working game over the course of one semester.

The course uses the beginning technology of 2D – meaning all action takes place on a flat plane with only an X and Y axis. Examples of 2D games include: *Super Mario Brothers*, *Asteroids*, *Joust*, *Space Invaders*, *Braid*, and others.

Students conceive and build a 2D Game of their own design. Each student gets the experience of running her own game studio in collaboration with classmates. Industry standards such as Agile, Scrum, Confluence and JIRA expose students to state of the art production methods and enable teams to deliver software efficiently.

In all courses in this sequence students are supported by a technical instructor/mentor who assists with programming as an active member of their team.

Students take increasingly advanced variations of this course in this sequence so acquire more sophisticated skills each successive semester. At the end of the degree they will have a portfolio of working game projects posted online.

GAME CODING WITH UNITY AND C#, I

The course accommodates students of all levels of existing experience with programming. It is taught by professional game programmers who organize students into Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced groups based on experience level. Individualized instruction is given to each student to ensure that he/she finishes with hands-on ability as a programmer. The development platform used is Unity and C#. Unity allows you to build your game once and deploy at a click across all major console, mobile, and desktop platforms. Each student will complete the course with a Github portfolio of coding modules appropriate to their experience level.

GAME STUDIO I

This is a companion to the 2-D Game Design class. It is the first in series of four hands-on studio companion courses.

Students work in teams to build their working digital game and receive individualized tutelage and direct coding support from their instructor. Students learn that they can produce working software – even with beginner skills in a short time. They sharpen their skills by practicing this process multiple times in the degree.

PLAYCENTRIC DESIGN

This course provides a foundation of knowledge for understanding games as playable systems. Students learn the language of Playcentric Design and practice the craft of prototyping, playtesting, and iteration in an environment independent of computers. This is to provide the student hard skills that can be used throughout a career in games—transcendent of changing technologies.

INTRODUCTION TO 3D ART

This course introduces students to Autodesk's Maya Animation, Visual Effects, and Compositing software, a robust application used throughout the video game industry for the creation of visual assets. Students learn how to optimize the Maya interface for enhanced productivity. They are introduced to polygon tools and taught polygonal modeling in a hands-on environment.

Students gain practical understanding of polygonal modeling for organic characters, and hard surface models. Students will also learn the basics of UV mapping, nurbs modeling, texturing, and three-point lighting using D-map and raytrace shadows.

SEMESTER TWO

SYSTEMS LITERACY

This course builds upon the foundations established in the Playcentric Design course, and focuses on advanced study of system design and play mechanics. The course is workshop-focused, meaning a substantial portion of time is spent actively engaged in the paper prototyping process. Readings and lectures supplement discussions as we explore more sophisticated facets of the playable systems and user experience design. Creating system literacy is the primary goal; and everything else we do supports that aim.

3D GAME DESIGN

This is the second in the series courses wherein students collaboratively deliver a working game over the course of one semester.

The course uses the intermediate technology of 3D – meaning action takes place in a three dimensional space and can present on the X, Y, and Z axes. Examples of 3D games include: *Battlezone*, *Deus Ex*, *The Sims*, *Grand Theft Auto V*, *Minecraft*, and others.

Students conceive and build a 3D Game of their own design (single player or multiplayer). See details about this course sequence under 2-D Game Design on page 238.

PUBLISHING VIDEO GAMES

This course provides the student with an understanding of the business of video games with a special focus on game publishing, deal structures, and product lifecycle. Students learn to see the world through the publisher's eyes and in the process gain insight in how to plan, budget, pitch, launch, and monetize games. Students are exposed to these topics via lectures, exercises, and assignments. Students leave the course with a practical knowledge of the game business, including perspective on mobile games, console games, browser games, free to play games, and other business paradigms.

GAME CODING WITH UNITY AND C#, II

This course provides students of Intermediate and Advanced ability extended training with Unity and C#. Like, its precursor course, it is taught by professional game programmers who organize students into groups based on experience level. Individualized instruction and self-paced tutorials are given to each student to ensure that her hands-on skills with coding are improved and her Github portfolio site has additional modules and prototypes. Students will create at least one project that is deployed to three platforms e.g. console, mobile, and web browser.

GAME STUDIO II

This is a companion to the 3-D Game Design class. It is the second in the series of hands-on studio companion courses.

See details about this course sequence under Game Studio I on page 238.

ART DIRECTION FOR GAME DEVELOPERS

This course examines the role of visual design in building games. The course exposes students to the craft of the Art Director via a combination of theory and practice. Students learn basic skill set presentation and to think about projects in terms of the constraints of technology, client needs, and end-user experience. The course covers basic UX/UI concepts.

YEAR TWO OVERVIEW

In Year Two, students continue to grow as prospective game industry entrants by way of fully immersive advanced workshops. Each student is challenged to complete a thesis project that showcases his or her best work. The completed projects also serve as high quality work samples for prospective employers.

SEMESTER THREE

MOBILE GAME DESIGN

This is the third in the series courses wherein students collaboratively deliver a working game over the course of one semester.

The course uses the intermediate technology of Mobile devices – meaning the game is played on a handheld device such as an iPhone, Android phone, and PS Vita. Students can build 2D or 3D games. Examples of mobile games include: *Angry Birds*, *Clash of Clans*, *Doodle Jump*, and others.

Students conceive and build a Mobile Game of their own design. See details about this course sequence under 2-D Game Design on page 238.

GAME STUDIO III

This is a companion to the 3-D Game Design class. It is the third in the series of hands-on studio companion courses.

See details about this course sequence under Game Studio I on page 238.

LEVEL DESIGN

In this class, students work on paper and with level editor tools from commercial games to create high quality play experiences within existing games. Students learn and practice scripting to optimize the play experience including pacing, save points, ratio of obstacles versus power ups, and other game play concepts.

HISTORY OF VIDEO GAMES

This course focuses on the rich history of digital games starting with MIT's *Spacewar* from 1962 and showing how and why the medium transformed through the 1970s when *Pong* and Atari first had mass cultural impact—all the way through each successive era to today's world of connected consoles, smart phones, and Google Glass.

SEMESTER THREE ELECTIVES

STORYBOARDING

This course teaches the student how to communicate stories and ideas effectively using visual storyboarding. Students learn storyboarding best practices and practice the craft. Case studies are presented from animation, motion graphics, and interactive media. Students get hands on practice making storyboards for game concepts and formally test whether they communicate what the student intended to an audience. Students learn about rapid storyboarding using hand-drawn sketches as well as state of the art storyboarding software.

3D ART & ANIMATION I

This course builds on the knowledge developed in Introduction to 3D Art and explores deeper technical, workflow, and artistic aspects of 3D visuals.

OBJECT ORIENTED PROGRAMMING

This course educates the student on the principles of OOP. OOP is a model organized around objects as opposed to actions and data rather than logic. Using the C++ programming language, students learn that other, less popular object oriented languages operate on the same core principles.

IMPROVISATIONAL ACTING

Students learn by doing that improvisational acting helps them develop skills in team communication and collaboration. They also learn about problem solving, spontaneity, and listening skills through group performance.

SEMESTER FOUR

THE GREAT VIDEO GAMES

This course explores both the concept of games as art including opposing scholarly points of view. The artistic merits of commercial games is explored through case studies of seminal works, and the nascent field of art games is explored via a survey of the field.

COLLABORATIVE THESIS

This is the fourth in the series courses wherein students collaboratively deliver a working game over the course of one semester.

The student has the advanced responsibility of choosing her own technology (in collaboration with teammates) for her AFA thesis project.

Students conceive and build a thesis-worthy digital game of their own design. This project is expected to be the student's most ambitious and polished work to date and a culmination of four semesters of practice with the craft of game development.

See details about this course sequence under 2-D Game Design on page 238.

GAME STUDIO IV

This is a companion to the Collaborative Thesis class. It is the fourth in the series of hands-on studio companion courses.

See details about this course sequence under Game Studio I on page 238.

THESIS PRODUCTION WORKSHOP

This course provides the student with thesis mentorship, support, and guidance through their final AFA semester.

ETHICS OF VIDEO GAMES

Ethics refers to standards of right and wrong in society. Students study and debate ethics in play experiences and how play is a way of learning about the real world. Poignant case studies are presented from games such as *September 12* (an anti-terrorism simulator), *Grand Theft Auto* (an amoral, open world), *Populous* (a god game), *BioShock* (a game with a morality engine), and other games.

SEMESTER FOUR ELECTIVES

ADVANCED LEVEL DESIGN

This course builds on the knowledge from the previous Level Design course and delves deeper into core concepts. Student's work with level editors from the games Minecraft, Little Big Planet, and Warcraft III to make sophisticated play experiences.

STORYBOARDING

This course teaches the student how to communicate stories and ideas effectively using visual storyboarding. Students learn storyboarding best practices and practice the craft. Case studies are presented from animation, motion graphics, and interactive media. Students get hands on practice making storyboards for game concepts and formally test whether they communicate what the student intended to an audience.

NARRATIVE THEORY

This course builds on the knowledge from Narrative Design Workshop and delves deeper into core concepts. Works of scholars such as Henry Jenkins, Jesper Juul, and Gonzalo Frasca provide the student with an intellectual venture through advanced narrative theory supported by case studies. Examples include Emergent versus Embedded Narrative, Narratology versus Ludology, and the Neuroscience of Narratives.