

2026 Drawing & Painting Applicant Guide

How to Apply:

To apply to the drawing & painting program, applicants may submit **up to 3 previously created works** and must complete **1 still life drawing**. The three portfolio pieces can be any combination of paintings, drawings, mixed media, and/or 3-D artwork. The still life drawing must be completed using a #2 pencil and one sheet of 8.5" x 11" paper. Applicants will photograph their artwork to upload online. Applicants will also complete a brief description of work that includes the title and medium of each piece. Please label each piece with the title of the work or component name (e.g., "Still Life").

Portfolio Guidelines:

- Artwork must be no larger than 18" x 24".
- There should be no identifying information in your images (including social media handles/watermarks).
- Artwork must have been created after March 1 of the prior year, and former OSAI students cannot submit artwork created at OSAI.
- Your three portfolio pieces can be any combination of paintings, drawings, mixed media, and/or 3-D artwork. (Photography is not permitted.)
- When selecting artwork, choose whatever best represents your personal strengths and style. Submit portfolio pieces that are based on original ideas and subject matter.

To create a strong portfolio, choose subjects that:

- Invite creative choices in composition, point of view, and style
- Let you explore personal interests, passions, or lived experiences
- Encourage experimentation, including abstraction or expressive mark-making
- Show us something only you could make—your eye, your voice, your perspective
- Allow you to work from direct observation (people, places, objects, scenes from your actual world)

Less successful subjects (best to avoid):

- Fan art, cartoon/anime characters
- Drawings of isolated objects without context
- Logos, brands, or work driven by words, numbers, or symbols
- Artwork based exclusively on photos—especially posed photos of friends and pets
- Images copied from the internet or other sources outside your real life (e.g., celebrities, sunsets, cars, city skylines)

Still Life Drawing Guidelines:

Applicants are expected to complete their still life within one hour. Because OSAI takes place within a very compressed timeframe, evaluators need to understand an applicant's ability to work quickly and effectively in order to succeed at OSAI. Here's a time-lapse of a one-hour still life drawing—notice what is completed in that time and what remains loose or unfinished. That's the level of completion applicants should be aiming for: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hl-5HpQarDs>

You must use the following supplies to draw the still life:

- #2 pencil (HB)
- One sheet of 8.5" x 11" unlined paper

There should be 3-5 objects in the still life, and all objects must appear in your completed drawing:

- One or two organic forms or objects found in nature (e.g. driftwood, figurine, flower, fruit/vegetable, plant, rock, skull, tree branch)
- One piece of cloth - This can be draped over the table and perhaps over a rectilinear form like a box or stack of books. It may also be taped or tacked to the wall behind, to serve as a backdrop.
- One or two various 3-D geometric objects: something conical, cubical, cylindrical, pyramidal, or spherical (e.g. roll of paper towels, basketball or baseball, books or boxes, funnel or hourglass, door wedge, etc.)

It can be helpful if there is some variety to sizes of these forms, as opposed to having objects that are all the same scale. Objects should be arranged in a way that their spatial configuration is clear. Place forms in front of other forms so overlapping is apparent, rather than lining the forms up next to each other.

Direct a single light source on the still life from above or to the right or left of the still life (not in front of, behind, or below the still life). The single light source should allow you to see both light and shadow sides of these forms, as well as cast shadow shapes from these forms.

When drawing the still life, pay attention to composition, scale, overlapping, volume, and how light changes across the forms. Think about how line, mark-making, and tone can help relate to these things.



How to Photograph Artwork:

Photograph each piece of art individually: up to three pieces of your choosing and one still life drawing.

Please use the following resources when you are ready to photograph your portfolio pieces and still life drawing:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7XVI6hSU2Q&ab_channel=HappyD.Artist
- <https://willkempartschool.com/how-to-photograph-your-paintings-with-your-iphone/>

Evaluation Criteria:

Portfolio – 40%

Do the applicant's chosen portfolio pieces demonstrate technical skill, personal artistic style with mature vision, and an appropriate and/or thoughtful choice of media in conveying their subjects?

Still life drawing – 20%

Does the still life drawing show thoughtful use of composition and technique? Does the still life drawing follow the requirements as set forth by OAI? Does the still life drawing incorporate bold use of mark-making and a demonstrated understanding of value and proportions?

Creativity – 20%

Do the applicant's four pieces demonstrate an overall sense of originality and present novel ideas and/or techniques?

Potential – 20%

Do the applicant's four pieces captivate the viewer? Could the applicant achieve excellence with appropriate training at OSAI? Does the applicant seem to show an artistic ability that may or may not yet be developed?

Read general information about our evaluation process here:

<https://oaiquartz.org/application-selection-process>