



Final-year students Kylie Woon, 26, who is majoring in photography and digital imaging, and Kamarulzaman Mohamed Sapiee, 26, who is majoring in interactive media, feel that changes to the Bachelor of Fine Arts programmes would make graduates more marketable by demonstrating how their skills can be applied to other disciplines. The changes were sparked by the need to equip students for the evolving needs of the art and design industry. ST PHOTO: FELINE LIM

New NTU fine arts courses expand students' skills

Bachelor programmes include compulsory internship and interdisciplinary module

Nathasha Lee

Nanyang Technological University (NTU) will launch two new Bachelor of Fine Arts programmes this August for the School of Art, Design and Media (ADM).

The Bachelor of Fine Arts in Design Art consolidates existing specialisations in interactive media, product design and visual communication. And the Bachelor of Fine Arts in Media Art consolidates specialisations in digital animation, digital film-making, and photography and digital imaging.

Under the revised curricula, stu-

dents can select their major at the end of their first semester instead of at the start of their second year.

They will also undergo a compulsory 10-week internship that will supplement their knowledge with industry exposure. An interdisciplinary seminar module will also be introduced that involves talks by practising artists and designers.

ADM students can now also choose up to two electives from the university's College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences to fulfil the requirements of their major. The changes were sparked by the need to equip students for the evolving needs of the art and design industry.

"The new Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) programmes have been developed to fit the future needs of creative professionals in Singapore, the region and beyond," said Professor Alan Chan, dean of the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences.

"Interdisciplinary learning adds value to one's education. Addressing real-world challenges requires the concerted effort of multiple disciplines and approaches.

"This is why we need to provide a more integrated learning experience for our BFA students, whether in media art or design art," he added.

The School of ADM was formed in 2005, one year before NTU became an autonomous university and gained greater flexibility to plan its own curriculum.

Ms Kylie Woon, 26, a final-year student majoring in photography and digital imaging, enrolled after she moved back to Singapore from Hawaii in 2012.

She pursued a minor in creative writing at the university, which helped her with incorporating her photography into a book for her final-year project. "My end goal is to be able to tell stories no matter what the medium," she said.

Though she is not eligible for the new programmes, she felt changes to the BFA programmes could help fine arts students find more employment opportunities by showing how their skills can be applied to other disciplines. Mr Kamarulzaman Mohamed Sapiee, 26, a final-year interactive media student, agreed that the new programmes would make graduates more marketable. "It's much better because it gives students a larger spectrum of skills," he said.

He pursued a minor in art history, which not only catered to his deep passion for the subject but also helped him gain practical experience from curatorial internships at the National Gallery.

Ms Joanne Tay, managing director of United Kingdom-based independent brand design agency Design Bridge Singapore, said the firm hires many NTU fine arts graduates.

The students' interdisciplinary education helps them, she said.

While the firm has been working with NTU to offer internships for the past 10 years, Ms Tay felt the success of the fine arts programmes "depends on how in touch lecturers are with the industry".

Ultimately, however, Prof Chan believes that the value of arts education goes beyond preparing graduates for the industry as the arts contributes significantly to the development of a society. "Cultural flourishing is like a flower in bloom that reflects well on the development of society," he said.

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ADDING VALUE

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PROFESSOR ALAN CHAN, dean of NTU's College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, on why changes were made.