Summative/Self-Reflective Statement

Teaching Development

Over the past ten years at Woodbury University I have developed my scholarly research on the subject of animation education as a way of articulating my goal to cultivate life-long learners who develop confidence through the exploration of hybrid learning methods and on-site learning opportunities available in the L.A. area. My research has led me to examine and continually explore differing applications, learning styles and technologies.

Through my teaching practice, I have been carefully observing what has worked and what has not worked not only for my students but also for myself. I advance my teaching to structure the progression and development towards life-long learners. In an article that was published in the journal of International Digital Media Arts (iDMAa), I mapped out an approach to bringing more rigor into the classroom by first establishing a reason for learning, what is possible within animation and then expanding animation’s interpretation as an art form.

I find our students to have had limited exposure to develop the culture of animation and art. Through a course that I continue to evolve, Design Symposia, students gain admittance into a larger discourse not only of animation but also in the larger context of the culture. Among the sites visited during the fall of 2013 was an exhibition at the Academy of Arts and Sciences on the work of Richard Williams. Williams’ commercial work (you are probably most familiar with Roger Rabbit) and personal work was showcased, which led to a comparison of personal vs. commercial animation and expanded the discourse to include animation as an art form.

My next step in the process of developing life-long learners is for the student to experience problem-solving activities. Using my Introduction to Digital Media course as an example, I first give the students the problems to solve in the form of assignments or tutorials. These tutorials are not the end products but rather students are led through a series of assignments so that by the end of class they are asked to develop a personal statement or theme. The students then create a time-based piece to describe their theme by visual means. In this way they progressively develop personal concepts or problems to solve.

I consistently use my student concerns and evaluations to affect change in the classroom and to make changes to my course design. As an example, in my Professional Practices (AN495) class, I have adjusted the outcome to include an online presence through the creation of a blog or web site and learning professional practice through social media. The class culminated with the students’ realization that portfolios are a living document, constantly updated or tailored to the company and specific job that they are applying to.
Finally I promote students' internal motivation in exploring differing avenues for art/animation making beyond the classroom. Motivators include; (1) viewing animation and art beyond the context of “cartoons”; (2) creative journaling as a device to launch the imagination; (3) a bibliography on my course home page linking students to various applications and forums within digital media.

Through our department’s continuous implementation of rubrics and frequent assessment, we now implement progress portfolios in the sophomore year to articulate into junior studio. It is a departmental change that was necessary to reinforce the rigor necessary for entrance into a very competitive field. There are students not clear about the skills necessary for advancement and I make every effort to be as clear as possible as to the skills necessary even if this rigor occasionally results in negative evaluations.

My evaluations and critiques are intended to encourage rigor in the student’s work. In my syllabi I break down the criteria for assessment and use these principles in evaluating student work. The rubrics address the learning outcomes developed by our department. What is more important, though, is that students learn to use these outcomes in evaluating their own work.

**Personal Creative Endeavors**

I contribute to the critical discourse of art and animation as a practicing digital media artist working within a time-based medium. Through the continuous development of my personal work, I give myself really interesting problems to solve, and then go about realizing these “problems” or visual statements. An example of one of these problems was: how can I create an animation simulating the flow of watercolor on paper within the computer environment? I further pushed this problem to have the flow timed to music. In solving these visual problems, I am continually learning new applications and technologies. Through my problem-solving efforts, I realize that I’m a visual learner, which is how I teach and is then reflected in my classroom. I strive to launch my student’s imagination and ask students to continually search for that interesting visual problem which will spark them to go forward creatively. I bring this passion for learning into my classroom with excitement as to the possibilities of digital media, animation and art.

My latest project, *Lots O’ Bubbles*, was a delight to work on. After assisting a fellow faculty member, Will McConnell, in transferring the video he shot exposing the impact of pollution to the underwater environment in the Sea of Cortez, I was inspired by the transitions through the water. I composed a short animated piece using his footage in an abstract way. During composition of my piece I worked with a piece of classical music to add structure to the timing of the animation. The frame rate is 30 frames (or pictures) per second and needs to be continually addressed when animating as the composition needs to follow the sound to which it moves as a constant reference so that the two, visual and audio, join together in a cohesive whole. I then turned to composer, Chas Smith, to create a
soundscape with his sculptural musical instruments. *Lots O’ Bubbles* is currently installed at the Brand Library and Art Galleries in Glendale, California. I am also exploring other possibilities of festivals and showcases for this experimental film.

After showcasing my animated short film, *Watercolors*, at the 2011 international Digital Media Arts association (iDMAa) conference, I was honored with the selection of one of my stills from *Watercolors* to be the facing image for the iDMAa journal web site. I am pleased to represent Woodbury University for iDMAa’s online presence.

*Watercolors*, with music by Meredith Monk, went on to be accepted into the juried 2011 *Punto Y Raya* abstract film festival in Madrid, Spain. Two of my previous films, *Tribute* and *This Thing Called Hair* have been in previous festivals and it is a wonderful ongoing connection to establish with the founders of *Punto Y Raya*. This festival, *Punto Y Raya* is one of the largest festivals focusing on pure abstraction and it is a privilege to be included in this prestigious festival.

My commercial work as an effects animator has influenced my personal art as it has evolved over the years. I view effects animation as an abstraction of nature, that is, to create the abstraction as a believable reality. Everything we view on a screen is a simulation or interpretation and an abstraction of reality. I question our connection to reality and give the viewer the responsibility to look beyond our immediate environment and consider differing signatures of reality connecting us to a wider universe.

Art and animation meet as a reference to all the screens that now surround us, our eyes are drawn to movement and the art of animation furthers the signature of our cultural love of viewing images on a screen.

**University Service**

I campaigned to sit on the Faculty Development Committee, as I wanted to change the exclusion of technology in the grant application process. As a digital media artist, I thought it necessary that the tools and applications necessary for experimentation and presentation be made available to a changing faculty, one that was now creating media. I was elected to chair the committee and effected three important changes during my tenure; (1) technology or equipment requirements would no longer be excluded; (2) an expanded grant award, from a maximum of $2500 to a maximum award of $5000; (3) digital organization of the criteria for assessing applications and the awards that were given.

I was then elected to the Personnel Committee and found that service to be a wonderful opportunity to become familiar with faculty from beyond MCD. I served as the at-large and MCD representative during my tenure and was able to acknowledge exhibition criteria presented by the MCD faculty in their applications towards rank advancement as being equitable with publication and at times even more rigorous than publication.
Most recently I have been asked to serve on the Special Needs Advisory Committee and I have met with Teresa Young to keep up to date with the committee’s work. I am also serving on the ad hoc Communications Committee and we are working on surveys to best gage the needs of Woodbury University faculty.

Presently I have just started to work with the EPC committee.