"Digital Foundations: Merging New Media with Art School Traditions."

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True Mixed Bag: Great Successes and Stunning Failures with Digital Foundation Projects

In this paper/presentation, the presenter will discuss the conceptual goals behind several computer-based 2D foundation projects that his undergraduate students have completed in the last three years, ranging from photographic collage (studies of fractured perspective), line/shape/color triptychs (study of positive/negative space and color system transitions), and grid-based experiments (implying emotion with color and pattern). Coming from a digital background, the presenter believes firmly that digital art projects have a home in foundation courses. However, based on the "successes and failures" of various projects, the presenter believes the pitfalls of approaching foundational art education with digital tools are many, including a lack of physicality in art-making, a reliance on pre-determined mark-making, and the often difficult translation from promising sketches and ideas to an intriguing visual design in digital space. A hybrid approach — the integration of both analog and digital techniques into the same projects — will be proposed.

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Creating with Code: Critical Thinking and Digital Foundations

While students are often attracted to opportunities to learn how to use software applications commonly employed by digital artists and designers, the fact remains that time spent on purely software-based instruction in the classroom is time that could arguably be better spent on exploring the broader conceptual issues of making digital work. This paper begins to frame an argument for the comprehensive integration of code-based technologies, such as HTML, CSS, JavaScript, Processing/Java, openFrameworks/C++, and Objective-C, into digital art and design foundation curricula. This integration holds the potential to position code-based technologies as new media for teaching art and design alongside relevant critical and analytical thinking skills, and not solely as media through which art and design work can be executed. In addition, a focus on promoting engagement with the tools used to create software, rather than simply on the use of software applications themselves, serves to empower students as they develop critical awareness of their individual processes.

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Academic Graphic Design and Theme Based Curriculum

The field of "Graphic Design" is a rapidly shifting profession. Change will continue as new forms of communication media are introduced and must be accommodated. Effectively preparing students requires that University departments regularly evaluate / update course curriculum to accommodate an industry that changes often too quickly for the bureaucratic world of academia can keep up. Overcoming these challenges requires new approaches in teaching and curriculum structure.Theme-based curriculum and better use of classroom time are two solutions to the aforementioned challenges. Theme-based curriculum develops from a focus on objectives. What understanding and which skills should students have when they leave? Which critical skills do designers need in the workplace?