

Teaching Statement

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I had the great opportunity to be part of the team that created a graduate program in Singapore for New York University in 2008 -- Tisch School of the Arts Asia (TischAsia). I became Chair of the Animation and Digital Arts department (ANDA) where I served during the past four years. This graduate program required thinking beyond the blueprint of an existing department at New York University, as it was the first graduate program granting a Master degree outside of New York and the first to offer a new curriculum outside of the New York based Tisch School of the Arts. Because of my personal involvement in defining and creating this project, I will talk about this program as the presentation of my teaching philosophy.

Goals of teaching

The main goal of my teaching is to create an artist and professional who is comfortable with analytical, communicative and creative ideas. An artist who will demonstrate strong skills for the practice of traditional art forms while integrating technology and digital tools. The goal is for students to develop leadership skills, the capacity to work alone or in teams, to manage their production process and to produce high quality art projects.

Learning core values about art, animation and digital design.

The practice of animation and digital design both require a rigorous learning of the foundations of visual arts which takes place at school. This is different than the learning of creative thinking that will continue to grow with the students throughout their lives. In school, students follow a curriculum with exercises that help them to develop their own creative process. These exercises include:

- learning how to listen
- observing and asking questions
- developing a conversation on a topic
- developing the capacity to see creativity as an intrinsic feature of all human activity
- understanding human organization and the role of individual initiatives
- research and practice for the production of a project

“That imagination, not calculation, is the “difference” that makes the difference.” - Red Burns

Seed ideas

Some of the seed ideas for the program include creating artistic content in Asia, learning about Asian cultures, developing student interests in different cultures, history and collaborative practices, giving the possibility to showcase work, to meet an audience, to initiate long-term projects, and collaborations that may evolve after graduation.

I was careful to create the new courses from scratch and presented a curriculum that reflected critical thinking and advanced tools for the production of their projects. Our concern was to bridge eastern and western culture and question the place of western culture in eastern culture. For example, the integration of new structures of storytelling from the east that were not based on the western tradition of telling a story in three acts was very important. Six years later, some Asian students from the department created interactive storytelling projects that combined the use of traditional Asian puppets and technology.

Why is it different?

From our mission statement: “Students are immersed in a unique creative environment that teaches the traditional forms of the art of animation while exploring a sandbox of advanced techniques and digital technologies.”

Teaching storytelling and technology

The foundation classes taught during the first semester of the first year are based on learning the traditional arts (drawing, sculpting, painting, shapes and colors), storytelling and communication. One of the foundation courses that I taught is “Digital Tools for Communication” which focuses on design, storytelling and the interdisciplinary qualities of digital media.

During the second year, students reinforce their storytelling skills through sequential animation projects and new

media projects covering interactivity and diversification of media. Some of the work created in class was presented during a joint presentation with Organic Motion, a motion capture company at Siggraph in Los Angeles (2010). My class evolved into "Introduction to Interactive Animation" which covers interactive animation in 2D and 3D. Some of the students works were presented at the symposium on "Diversifying Digital Film and New Media" at Hongik University in Seoul (2012). This application of motion capture for storyboarding animation has been used by Ubisoft, a leading game company.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration with other departments inside the school

Michael Burke, Chair, TischAsia's Film Department wrote:

"The Animation and Digital Arts Department has been a very vital addition to our community since its inception. Grass-roots collaborations have taken place throughout the cohorts with Film and ANDA students and ANDA's presence has encouraged Film students to challenge their own notions of filmmaking and encouraged them to "think outside the box". Elective courses open to Film have allowed our students to deepen the collaborative spirit and artistic and intellectual exchange fostered by the department and to also explore new, cutting-edge, technologies and new approaches to their own art form."

Bill Kovacsik, Chair, TischAsia's Department of Dramatic Writing writes:

"Over the past five years, the Animation & Digital Arts program has produced some outstanding young artists, whose work has been marked by originality and depth. The winter and spring ANDA shows have always been one of the highlights of our work at Tisch Asia; it is surely a mark of success when the entire community, including both faculty and students from other departments, gather together in such celebration of the work of their colleagues.

Jean-Marc and the members of his faculty have created a world-wide network of professional contacts for their students – a network that enhances the education of students in the program, and creates professional opportunities for those who have graduated and are making their way into the working world."

Beyond the lab?

The program also encouraged collaborations with professionals from around the world as a preparation for future professional life. This began with the "Friday talks" that I organized almost every week. Students, faculty and often groups of students from schools and universities in Singapore meet face-to-face with a professional from the industry, an artist, or a teacher, during one hour at the end of the week. This is an opportunity for students to increase their "360 degrees awareness of the world" and to develop their curiosity about "transmedia" topics. The topics range from 'financing projects using crowd sourcing' to 'the art of the story by Blue Sky studios'.

We have developed special relationships and collaborations through master classes by stars and accomplished professionals from the Melbourne animation community (Australia), the New York animation scene (USA), the Folimage studio (France) and visits with the Bangkok animation community (Thailand).

The online education component has also been an important part of our teaching and attracts new opportunities for collaboration. Examples of blogs and forums that the students and I created for the classes can be found at:

Texts from students <http://blogs.nyu.edu/blogs/jfg201/digitaltoolsforcommunication2010/>

Projects from students <https://blogs.nyu.edu/blogs/jfg201/dt4c2011/>

Tutorials for students <http://blogs.nyu.edu/blogs/jfg201/i2ia/2012/03/>

More detailed information about ANDA can be found at

Web: <http://www.tischasia.nyu.edu.sg/object/AboutAnimation.html>

Videos: <http://vimeopro.com/nyutischasia/anda>

Feedback from students

"Jean-Marc has had a profound impact on my academic preparation and subsequent career."

"His contributions to my research were equally salubrious, given that he often suggested fecund new directions and was instrumental in solving several difficult problems I encountered. But beyond his professional roles, I also regard Jean-Marc as a good friend. His innate kindness combined with an indefatigable friendliness and affability make him a pleasure to be around both at work and outside. Given his quick wit, easy laugh, and incisive perspective, I often find myself immersed in stimulating conversations ranging far outside the bounds of our strictly professional interests. I think Jean-Marc's good-natured optimism radiates out into the community, making it a more pleasant place to work and learn."

"Jean-Marc is always supportive about our project ideas, as well as giving amazing advice to us. He has given me a lot of help and inspiration for my projects and thesis, I always trust him for his suggestions. He has an sharp eye for both the things that stand out and the things to be improved. He is a very inspiring teacher as well as a friendly and responsible Chair."

"I remember that he told me: "Yang, no matter how old you are in the future, there will always be a little girl living and speaking in your heart, she makes you say and do a lot of interesting things, she is the inspiration of your artworks, please never silence her." I think a lot about what he said after that, even now when I am writing novels, it gives me a lot of inspirations and freedom to express myself."

"Jean-Marc reminds many of his students that they can create anything they can imagine. Whenever I see a Michel Gondry video it brings up the the feeling I had during Jean-Marc's class; one of complete anxiousness towards all the possibilities of expressing one's imagination. It is this feeling that drives me often to beautiful and unexpected inspirations."

"The most valuable element I learned from Jean-Marc was the ability to add narrative and human expression to traditional architectural visualizations. While at ITP I was on a mission to bring architecture to life in new and non-traditional ways. Jean-Marc's class was extremely critical to my studies because he uniquely merged experimental cinema techniques with 3D visualizations. It was in his class that I had my first collaboration with my future business partner and current collaborator Gabriel Winer. Our ideas for bringing architecture to life by using live greenscreen were guided, analyzed carefully, and defined by Jean-Marc's expertise. After graduation Gabriel and I went on to create multiple large scale architectural video productions for various NYC based architects. I feel very fortunate to have had Jean-Marc as a mentor and professor as many of my present ideas and work are rooted in his class."

"Mr. Gauthier has a passion for the artistic side of technology. Where others see equipment and code he sees canvas and brushes. Mr. Gauthier is able to paint the detailed aesthetic of reality and at the same time loves to uncover the possibilities of unimagined worlds. When drawing from a background of analog art and media, Mr. Gauthier does not try to force old styles and techniques into the digital realm but rather extracts and enhances to form new and exciting hybrids. His work and ideas consistently push the creative envelope while surpassing technical limitations."

"Jean Marc teachings were the gate to the world of 3d for me. The teaching method was inspirational, on one hand teaching the basic technique with a lot of patience and passion and on the other hand always building the context on a wider perspective - the usage of 3D worlds in film, art, architecture science and more."

Other links of interest:

[Some of the graduates](#)

[Goals](#)

[Students in festivals and conferences](#)

[Masterclasses](#)

[Industry partnerships](#)

[Museums and Art Shows](#)