

Art School or Trade School?

Moderator

Tad Leckman
Savannah College of Art and Design

Panelists

Larry Bafia
Vancouver Film School

Pam Hogarth
Gnomon School of Visual Effects

Dug Ward
UCLA Animation Workshop

Peter Bardazzi
NYU - New Media Development
SCPS

Harry Mott
Otis College of Art and Design

Peter Weishar
Savannah College of Art and
Design

Introduction

With formal programs in digital visual effects, games and animation coming into maturity, many faculty are rethinking the kind of educational experience they provide their students. Are they simply producing rotoscopers, modelers, and match-movers, or are they producing digital artists?

An experienced group of educators from a variety of schools will discuss the merits of both the trade school and art school models and the ways in which they intersect while meeting the needs of students entering the job market.

Moderator

Tad Leckman
Chair of Visual Effects
Savannah College of Art and Design

Tad Leckman has over ten years of experience working in visual effects starting as a model maker for commercials and ending up at Industrial Light and Magic where he acted as Desktop Systems Manager, production manager for the "Rebel Mac Unit," and Previsualization Supervisor for the ILM Art Department. In the Fall of 2002, Tad transformed his hobby of teaching, writing and lecturing about visual effects into a full-time career. He is currently the Chair of the Visual Effects Department at Savannah College of Art and Design and has also taught at Academy of Art University and NYU's Center for Advanced Digital Applications.

Panelists

Larry Bafia
3D Animation and Visual Effects Department Head
Vancouver Film School

An animator who works with numerous media, Larry started his career in stop motion and claymation before moving into CGI. During his seven year tenure as Commercial Animation Director at PDI/Dreamworks, Larry directed commercials for many top clients including Coca-Cola, Sega, Intel, Kraft, Circle K, and Saturn. While with PDI/Dreamworks, Larry was also Sequence Lead Animator on several hit films including Antz, Batman & Robin, A Simple Wish, and was a Sequence Animation Supervisor for Mission Impossible II. In addition, Larry served as Animation Supervisor for the Stop Motion Division on Tim Burton's feature Mars Attacks. In 2002, Larry founded his own CGI company Blam! Animation. As the company's Creative Director, Larry continues to develop commercials with animated characters.

Peter Bardazzi
Founder
NYU Center for Advanced Digital Applications

Peter Bardazzi is an artist, professor of the digital arts and director of new media. He founded and directed the Center for Advanced Digital Applications at New York University in 1996-2004, developing its curriculum, facility design, and philosophy. He also co-founded the digital animation area at NYU's Tisch School of Art. Later at CADA, he created a wide-ranging graduate program in digital imaging and design based on his concept of a "Digital Bauhaus". He has exhibited his work at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Indianapolis Museum of Art, the Neuberger Museum, the Brooklyn Museum; and is in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, NY. In addition Mr. Bardazzi has appeared on CNN, ABC, CBS, E-Entertainment and VH1-TV and quoted in the LA Times, Boston Globe, Dallas Morning News, NY Times and Associated Press, on the subject of New-media, film and the pop-culture. Today Peter Bardazzi is developing a comprehensive curriculum based on the integration of new-media and experimental video while working on his own interactive documentary film.

Peter Bardazzi Position Statement

Most universities and colleges, who started with “computer graphics”, are drifting into being trade schools because they are spending too much time teaching software functionality and not creativity. However, the real issue is that they are not addressing the conditions of the contemporary artist. Computer imaging has given up its uniqueness and lost its status as a new medium and has become a picture making tool in most schools.

Pam Hogarth Director of Industry Relations Gnomon School of Visual Effects

Pam Hogarth has been in the world of computer graphics for over 21 years. In that time she has done marketing, public and industry relations, and training for a wide range of companies and educational institutions. She has taught at The American Film Institute, Otis College of Art and Design, and Digital Media Institute (where she was Director) and has lectured on computer graphics, digital careers and visual effects at various international conferences here and abroad. Pam is on the Board of Directors of the Visual Effects Society, Co-Chair of the VES Education Committee, and a co-founder and steering committee member of the Alliance of Digital Effects Production Trainers (ADEPT). She holds a B.S. in Fine Art from Springfield College and an M.Ed. in Vocational Counseling from Kent State University.

Pam Hogarth Position Statement

We tread a fine line between art and technology, theory and practice. Gnomon is much more vocational school oriented in that we work very hard to provide our students with the skills they need to succeed in the entertainment industries. But we are well aware that those skills include the traditional arts.

Harry Mott Founding Chair of the Digital Media Department at Otis College of Art and Design

Harry Mott is an educator, designer and producer who has the distinction of being the first Education Director for the American Film Institute's Advanced Technology Division. In addition to his work as an educator, Harry owns Mott 4 Productions which produces motion graphics, broadcast design, web design, and provides general creative consulting.

Harry holds a MFA/MBA as a graduate of the first Peter Stark Motion Picture Producers Program at USC.

Harry Mott Position Statement

Traditional skills must be married with storytelling and digital skills. A good liberal studies education helps round out the potential leaders of the next generation of artists and designers.

Dug Ward Program Manager and Faculty UCLA Animation Workshop

Dug Ward's responsibilities at UCLA include: teaching, technical direction and administration of the day-to-day operations of the graduate program. Prior to UCLA he worked at Film Roman for two seasons, 1995-97 on Fox's, "King Of The Hill" as a character layout artist and animation timer. Prior to Film Roman, Dug was a producer/designer for Western Technologies a computer game

company. Between 1989 and 1995, Dug was an animation director at Philips Interactive Media. In 1994, he created, wrote, directed, and animated a CD-I interactive miniature golf game for all ages called, "The Wacky World Of Miniature Golf" narrated by comedian Eugene Levy.

He also works as an independent animator creating his own short films, which screen at various film festivals around the United States. Dug is married with two kids, two cats, and a fish.

Dug Ward Position Statement

Even though students can learn more and more digital tools at home, they still can't necessarily learn how to become good animators. Speaking for the UCLA Animation Workshop, which is a graduate MFA program we can't call ourselves a "trade school."

since we are an academic institution of higher learning. We teach the art and history and techniques of animation, both traditional and digital. The reality is that even though we don't have a job placement center that a trade school might offer our graduates still manage to find work in their chosen field. From here I would need to go into more detail.

Peter Weishar Dean of the School of Film and Digital Media Savannah College of Art and Design

The School of Film and Digital Media has over 1,750 students majoring in Animation, Broadcast Design and Motion Graphics, Film and Television, Interactive and Game Design, Sound Design, and Visual Effects. Peter Weishar has been a professional artist, art director, and animator for almost twenty years. His work has appeared in Newsweek and US News and World Report, Disney's EPCOT, the Siggraph Electronic Theater in 1998 and 2000, and The Museum of Native American Culture. Before accepting the position at the Savannah College of Art and Design, Peter Weishar was professor at New York University, Tisch School of the Arts. At NYU, Prof. Weishar taught computer animation and design in the graduate interactive program and later animation at the Undergraduate School of Film and Television where he served as Director of their New Media Program as well as the Director of the Computer Animation. He is the author of three books on computer art and animation; "Digital Space: Designing Virtual Environments" (McGraw-Hill, 1998), "Blue Sky: The Art of Computer Animation" (Harry N. Abrams, 2001), and "CGI: The Art of the 3D Computer Generated Image" (Abrams, 2004).

Peter Weishar Position Statement

As educators in the field of digital media we must strike a balance between the technical or practical instruction, design, and aesthetic and theoretical pedagogy. Most of us would recognize that conceptual work, created without sufficient craft, lacks in credibility as well as quality of execution. Conversely, a display of technical prowess without due regard to context and conceptual communication is a hollow effort.

Digital media requires exceptional technical skill as a prerequisite to artistic expression. We must assure that our students have the necessary mastery of the craft to express themselves as an artist in both commercial and fine art environments. However, teaching the proper utilization of tools does not fulfill our responsibility as educators in an accredited institution.