

Reflective Teaching Portfolio

Michelle Courtois

PT Adjunct/ Fashion Design Dept.

Teaching Philosophy

As an experienced Textile Director, I approach teaching as a unification of technology and artistic practice. Harnessing the advantages of computer design (speed, rendering and versatility) and the ability to import paintings, drawings and photography truly merges fine art with technology and allows for the speed and efficiency our industry demands.

I believe that design should be fun and inspiring while reflecting an individual designers' aesthetic. I want the students that enroll in my class to be inspired by the technology that is presented to them but also learn how to apply their own fine art skills and point of view. My greatest motivation is allowing students to develop their own brand identity through textile design. Presenting the technological tools built into CAD software can generate a students' idea into something immediately tangible whether it be a printed fabric, woven plaid or knit design. Giving students the ability to create a visual narrative with their patterns sparks their ability to design and also merchandise a collection.

Textile design has long been a medium in which fashion companies identify themselves. Using proprietary plaids such as Burberry, G logo's at Gucci and graphic floral patterns at Marimekko, the consumer is visually triggered to recognize a brand. In my classes, I present students with industry information on how textile design is currently used to communicate a brands story or make a specific statement. I encourage the class to demonstrate their ability to create and reflect their own personal story through patterns and color.

Examples of an Unsuccessful Lesson

Fortunately I didn't have just one unsuccessful lesson but encountered a series of setbacks teaching the program. Students faced constant challenges. I realized that many of them were not grasping the computer functionality. There was a learning curve. Not everyone came to the class with the same computer experience. Unfortunately, the class did not have a teaching assistant (none of my CAD classes do) and tutoring support was extremely limited. Students would have to make an appointment in the tutoring center or come to my office hours. The software manual was not task oriented. Students would have difficulty finding the information they needed to complete an assignment or have the information presented to them in a digestible manner when class was not in session. It became even more difficult if a student was absent. That's when I realized that I needed to find a new way of teaching through real time, video tutorials.

Examples of Successful Lesson

Utilizing the technology available in the CET, I was able to start off with Voicethread as a teaching tool. For the software and content that I teach, it was not the most effective. I still provide some older material to students using this platform but have moved over to Camtasia. Using Camtasia, I had the ability to create live action videos and also build content series based on the modules we were learning

in the classroom. I created a YouTube channel that houses the content and have each video labeled in a task oriented manner, “How to Create a Color Palette”, “How to Create a Half Drop Repeat”, etc. The videos are all under 10 minutes long.

Students can watch the videos at home, in the classroom or computer lab and they are available 24-7 during the semester. They also have the ability to use the files demonstrated in the video. This digital format also gives the students move ahead more quickly and learn more about its capabilities.

Technology in the classroom

Since I teach technology, I realize how daunting it can be to learn a new program or use tools that are unfamiliar. There are a few challenges that I encounter in my classes. One is getting my students to embrace the Wacom tablet for designing. Using a mouse to create natural movements or draw is pretty impossible but with a Wacom stylus & pen, it’s very easy. It also keeps the user from developing carpal tunnel. But, using the tablet takes time to adjust to the interface.

The other challenge is getting students to navigate the software on their own. My own approach to technology (when I get stuck) is to try finding the answer by searching the icons and drop down menus. Basically getting dropped in the deep end until I solve my problem.

Implementation of Workshop Topics

The Teaching with Technology workshop covered many items that I already have experience using such as Blackboard and Voicethread. I use Blackboard for my syllabus, grading, attendance and course content (YouTube videos and Lynda.com lessons).

I found the presentation on Augmented Reality the most exciting. Based on the presentation, I used Airlyn as a business tool to engage new customers. It’s a very easy interface to use. I am fascinated by its ability to use a graphic or pattern as a trigger. It’s another way to engage or educate the consumer. It can also make a brand stand out. At some point, I would like to incorporate this technology into my textile design curriculum.

I also thought that the LinkedIn presentation was beneficial. At the end of the semester, I encourage my students to LinkedIn with me. I also and explain how important this site is for networking and creating your own profile. I’m excited that LinkedIn Learning is going to be the new home of Lynda.com. Hopefully, it will encourage students to start building their professional profile and connecting with others in the design community.

The Bigger Picture

In the near future, I want to use other technologies such as laser cutting and 3D printing for the production of textile design and embellishment. Using these tools can give designers the ability to truly create as many unique elements for their garments or over all collections.

I am also very interested in the capabilities of AR software such as Airlyn. When a designer creates a textile pattern or graphic, they will have the ability to create their own 4D brand enabling the launch of a message or video for the AR user. Creating a narrative or marketing opportunity.

What more can I do

I believe that in order to do more with my skills and the resources available at FIT, I should focus on developing a more advanced class that uses CAD textile design, 3D printing, laser printing and AR together. This would be offered to Senior level students or could be integrated into a thesis project. I would also like to branch out from just teaching in the Fashion Design Dept and work more with Textile Design.