

12/1 VAMA Advisory Board Meeting: Illustration

Present:

LACC: Amarpal Khanna (Illustration, Graphic Design),
Mike Kline (Prof. Game Design),
Ly VI (Dean),
Alexandra Wiesenfeld (Chair)

Advisors:

Joe Cepeda: President of Society of Illustrators, Children's Book illustrator and editorial illustrator

Jon Messer: architectural illustration, in past: illustrator of children's books, concept design, animation and storyboarding in film. Teaches at Cal Arts, SMCC, teaches for Animation Guild

Jim Higgins: Comix editor, DC comix for 6 years, small publishing company for 3-4 yrs. Teaching at school of Visual Arts with only Comix and Cartooning Major, taught at Otis, Cal Arts, LAFA, started comix class program at melt down comix: big cultural hub, freelance editor for screen writers, entertainment for Graphic Novel

AK: Illustration falls into multimedia, fastest growing sector. No longer under commercial arts.

Graphic Design is its own category. 65% submission of illustration is digital. Rapidly evolving, cross sections
Why do we need a **Certificate** in Illustration? How do we get students ready to transfer? Do we upscale from **Certificate to AA**?

Vi LACC has robust traditional art program. We are pushing out simultaneously: game, animation, illustration. The **certificate** needs to lead to degree and to job. Clarified: our students: older, more focused, returning from industry to brush up on skills, add new skills.

Jim: Started out as engineer through CC with goal to transfer, once he figures out, he wanted to make pictures. Has BA and MA in Cinema. Understands transfer students. Schools that were previously 4 years change to 2 years as important avenue, because student debt is horrifying,

AK:

AK: What skills and what courses would students need in a Certificate? And what would they gain
If you were putting together what would you do?

Joe: **Certificate** needs to be comprehensive. Instructional specific: teach modern Technology, Digital Media is essential. But especially in LA: editorial storytelling aspects is everything. Many young students he meets, come to him how to make good pictures, compositions, sound etc. But can they tell a story? That is the skill set that will separate you from others. Editorial side of Illustration: Needed element of editorial story telling (especially in LA and proximity to entertainment, the visual storytelling element key). He had private school debt, went to Long beach State because of university environment, wanted to be around Journalism, History etc. Having access to broader experience helps add to the editorial aspect of what would be in a **Certificate**. Take advantage of overlap, storytelling, journalism is powerful.

Jon: Illustration is not to make things up, but to visually communicate ideas. Spends a lot of time teaching in editorial. Teaching at Cal Arts and Animation Guild have taught me that drafting by hand is as relevant as it ever was. Students would need certain basic skills: storytelling, good compositional skills, fundamentals of perspective, life drawing, storyboarding. Understanding concepts, in animation is crucial. 3 bits of software:

Toon Boom, Maya, Clip Studio Paint for animators/illustrators. **Certificate** needs to teach students how to make a career as Illustrators. When he started out, there was much more work in advertising. Animation and the film industry is really where artists have a lot of really good opportunities going forward. And right now, in particular. Animation industry is keeping Hollywood afloat right now. Animation tightly linked to Illustration. The need for content so crucial. **Certificate** needs to show drawing, painting, color theory, perspective, once foot in the door in the studios then they can switch. **Certificate of basic competencies**. So a **certificate** of illustration program in my humble opinion would mean that a student would come out of it with certain basic skills. Okay. Storytelling is one of them, but also good composition skills. Perspective. I teach it both traditionally, and I also teach students how to draw using Photoshop. I know from my experience as a teacher that in the animation field that's a crucial a crucial skill. the need for content is crucial. And so I really think that a **certificate** of illustration that would show the achievements of students who do have a good understanding of perspective drawing, painting and that would include color theory. The truth of it is, once a student or a young artist or a middle career artist just looking to change jobs, once they get their foot in the door at one of the studios. I've met a ton of people who then say, well, now I want to get over to this other department. Going into that department means new skills. And so a basic competency, a **certificate** of basic competencies seems to me to be an extremely helpful thing to have for a young artists.

Joe: another member on the board taught drawing and comedy writing. In animation industry there is a lean towards writing content as well, especially for board artists. Drawing a picture and writing a sentence is the same thing for me. Tools are getting good, but it is hard to find someone who has an original idea. For employment well rounded skill-based aspect to that: photoshop, should have something that also creates content, like writing. A need in the industry. Story is king. Maybe this is the nature of what John is speaking to that there's such a strong me that people As they always do start to wear two hats. So yes, content creators, I think. So I, you know, in a **certificate** you're going to need a pretty well rounded skill based aspect to that certificate maybe learn Photoshop, but also learn how to create content.

Jim: Agree with Joe and Jon: all is story. I am on a mission to get art schools to incorporate writing in their art classes. In Cal Arts no writing class. Students need to understand narratives. Story artists is not the same as writing class. Teach a fundamental of Comics class, Story structure and writing and character development: first 4 weeks. Comics in my mind are where art and literature meet. In the industry it's about Create IP. Comic books have the option: film and TV scooping up content like crazy: Some examples on Netflix shows like Umbrella Academy and October Faction and huge shows like the Walking Dead are all based on Comix Books. Track in the comics(a major comics publisher): get work at Marvel in DC, so few avenues to create your own content. They will go to Image comics, has best deals and they own their IP. Be owner and part controller and producer of their own content. IP: intellectual Property. Create their own characters and stories. Multiple avenues that students can enter with the **Certificate**

Joe: Students always complain they didn't get enough education on the business end. On the business end of what it is to be an illustrator. If students are not transferring to 4 year and just going to start working, they will benefit by that course. Can discuss what is IP and how to protect IP. Even if introductory. Students coming out of a City College Illustration **certificate** program, they're going to use that **certificate** to start working whether, under, you know, the roof of someone else or they're going to create intellectual property and content of their own. They would be definitely benefit by a course or something in in that arena to protect themselves, and I would guess in the larger scope globally. Anything you you learn to protect yourself that way in this day and age is going to be utterly, utterly useful, even if it's introductory

AK: Images go out on worldwide web; How to protect that work: Blockchain technology may be used in order to track image. The technology powering Bitcoin, the blockchain, may have implications for illustrators.

Jim: I know of a very successful artist using blockchain technology to sell his original digital art. That is the future. Another area to consider is that Nonfiction comics, long form as graphic novels, are doing very well (Journalism and Visual Journalism, Reportage!!). 10-15 years have been publishing comix stories, using the best of the best. Entire website dedicated to nonfiction storytelling in sequential art: The Nib: Newspaper platform in Comics.

Joe: you see that in the Children's book arena a well. As visual story telling proliferates, the education market is becoming more accepting of individual cultural points of view and personal stories. I think you're seeing nonfiction picture books and stuff like that along with learning academic subjects through picture books and comics, also you know, community based stories, more and more because as a visual storytelling graphic novels, Middle grade graphic novels as that...that whole area just continues to proliferate, the education market. I think it's also like they(the publishers) become more accepting of it. And so now you have that, you know...

Jim: History and Science education have comix built into them. New model for education.

AK: At the ICON, National Illustration Conference, the panelists and keynote speakers all had their own voice in the work. In the industry there is a shift towards acceptance of illustrators with own voice and experiences in the work and art directors looking to commission illustrators with their own voice. When I went to school it was all about: can you do the work, skill wise. Today it is about identity and experience. Sequential or editorial or children's illustrations

Joe: Every author who signed a book deal recently is making work about identity: gender, racial etc. They look for people with a voice. **Certificate:** mix of creative writing and how-to bring identity into your work. Is this something you would want to see in a framework? Would it give students an edge?

Jim: so many non-fiction books high quality, all in response to different populations getting their voice heard and publisher support this.

Joe: Today's Illustrators do their own stories, rather than waiting to be told. Inject your own story or have an opinion about something. You create that story. If there was an illustration class, to be generator of that story, powerful semester long, special studies class on one subject. It could be nonfiction: visually write the story about BLM or where you grew up. That's what all the editors want. They woke up: that they need to get people from the community to tell stories about the community. Editorial storytelling based on personal experience.

Jim: Creator is a term used in the comix industry; you are a writer/ director of sorts. Can't just be technical. There needs to be more meat to a **Certificate** than technical skills

Jim: A story writing class could apply to various job lines. Comix, games, children's books. In game is it similar to animation: storyboard driven shows, plotting out the episodes, you have to write. You have to understand story.

AK: To prioritize: Breath of knowledge, technical skills, fundamentals, writing, software, what is priority?

Jon: Will use film industry as metaphor: talk about story on one hand, on the other is the cinematographer. Same with architectural illustration. Take what is designed, assimilate info, translate, light it, make it romantic, tell story. Seemed dry to me at first, but now is everything. Basics are not just about competencies. It's more like music theory. So all can play in tune. Be competent in assimilating lots of information. Storyboarding: Plusing the script. Add extra to the script. Never just dry technical skills.

Joe: can't just illustrate but find story between the lines. Was not entertained by most games. But World building is interesting. Collaborate with others under someone else's roof and share ideas. **For Certificate** priorities : Give basic skill set. Basic competencies. Basic structures, robust training: architectural and figurative. Then your storytelling and then learn to bend the rules. A Certificate in a vibrant city like LA, needs to give competency and a little experience-- that would be solid. Students need more perspective skills. Need to draw figures proportionately

AK: Are you proposing a production team for Larger projects ? "Plusing" a scene within a department: layout artist, figures, perspective

Joe: love that idea. A project over multiple classes would be a great idea. From individual to collaborative: mimic industry, real-life experience.

Vi: we could marry this to Mike's production classes. In each module they wear different hats

Jim: at Cal Arts all individual creators , no avenue to serve everybody: that's a problem. How do they find a place in the pipeline? Maybe there are 3 slots and students find their place.

Vi; We create structure and give freedom to profs

AK: work in silo is traditional, but in film today we work together, both frameworks: individual and pipeline for our students. **Certificate** dovetailing into the degree can serve both things while being focused.

Jon: at Cal Arts: some very good students, with good perspective skills, but others are lost when it comes to backgrounds. I like the structure that can develop in these course . Start with perspective and composition. 2: environment design. 3: Life Drawing (throughout as elective). The importance of digital programs while having basics of drawing, while someone writes a good story

Jon: for portfolio: storytelling from the beginning and build worlds. One of the problems with traditional art schools with 1 year nothing but foundational, you drive students out. Burden of the school is to have great teachers to keep students inspired. **Certificate** competency is important but not just skill set

Joe: One has to make sure one doesn't turn people off. Even worse for an older student. Have access to story from the start. Tap into unique circumstances with diverse community and personal work. Freed them from the beginning

AK: Our brand: what would our **Certificate** identity be. What would distinguish it. Students would have a portfolio or have a body of work, possibly with with a viewpoint to it, and/or be able to service a variety of different types of briefs, as well as be aware of the the breadth of the areas where you can apply these various skill sets, whether it's an animation or editorial and I sequential art or live action production design or what have you. Game Design and Illustration as cousins.

Mike: Back to story building. Get illustration students to go to game, teach them technical skills but also teach story. Concept design in Game design. Illustration students could help the look for the game: visual designers.

Jon: use art history and concept artist in world building. When I do a background without people you want it to exist so fully that you sense the people in it. It's another world you are drawn into.

Jim: a class called world building that's starts out with that about writing and creating stories and then it goes to the art and visual concept design for film or games.

Joe: A project would go over multiple classes. So it felt, you know, from the very the very moment someone types. The first word on the page To the time an editor reads it to the time it gets, you know, edited into something else to the time it gets storyboard it to the time You know, other people are brought in someone buys it to make a movie out of it or whatever, then it's that, you know, I don't know what that is, but if you could, if you could pull that that over a series of class. Now you have going from individual thing to collaborative thing, you know. That that's that that's a, that's a talk about a real world experience. You know what I mean. Yeah. That can translate into something else. And some people will find themselves more comfortable in the beginning of that trajectory, or the middle of it. Or the end of it. I don't know. I don't know how you. I don't know how you design that academically over time and whatever. But that sounds fascinating.

Joe: Illustration is about Humanism. Favorite quote: history is the study of what happened. Art history is the study about how people felt about what happened. Have to sense the background. By building the background I will start to feel the characters. Humanism of being a storyteller. Program can't be purely technical.

AK: Narrative based illustration, sequential art, editorial, humanity, evokes emotion. What about equity

Jon: seeing where we are today, we need alternatives in education. Have to create equity. Need on the industry side. A program that shows skill set and how to use it will be vital, reason for this **Certificate** A **Certificate** allows people to just go out and get work.

Joe: why **Certificate** is so valuable , is in many groups in the city, like in East LA , where I grew up, no one said I could be an artist. For many parts of our society an art education seems luxurious. You need to offer certificate to allow validity to studying art. Something to show for. A **certificate** in LACC in Hollywood, that anybody can get, and go transfer, will create equity and access. Makes art education not vague, not a luxury, it is accessible as a education and career

AK One tech piece: tablets versus desktop. Digital camera, tablets, portable devices. What do you see being used?

Jim Problem with tablet format with photoshop and Procreate but couldn't be printed. Software only now getting there so it could be printed. In a year or two maybe. I-pad and Procreate and tablets getting more robust.

Jon: You can download photoshop draw and photoshop sketch. Output of jpgs and pdf is easy and compatible. I have a scanner for my flat artwork. I have the latest iPhone with the high end camera for image capture.

Jim: students need technical knowledge

Joe: Image capture devices. Using oil paint and cintiq. Use both. For me to hire: Don't need to be print ready , but need to know how they think: need to see perspective, figure. Can show on I-Pad. But the more you can do, the more you can serves.

Jon: Cintiq is wonderful. Practical. Macs, wacoms, or XP- pen is very good.