

Opening:

Kali Nikitas, Chair, Otis College of Art and Design.

I have written, read, crossed out, and re-written my short introduction to today's panel entitled "The Thorny Generalist/Specialist Question. I asked Anne Burdick if she would re-write my intro. she answered by handing me her computer and saying "get to work, I'll bring you lunch,"

As you would imagine, I am bit overwhelmed by several of today's sessions but also inspired! We are surrounded by a group of educators who are committed to creating the best possible academic experience for their students, what a privilege.

To my knowledge, there has never been a better time to be an educator or student in design than now.

For Faculty: the collaborations between colleagues, fellow educators, and institutions sends a signal of generosity and a feeling that collectively, there is room for all of us and that success is available to many, not just a few.

For students; there are countless ways in which design can be studied and practiced. No longer the right and wrong approach, the pass/fail but "if what you want to do does not exist today, define your new role and get to work.

Institutional guidelines, department philosophies, student demographics, and program facilities all play a role in designing curriculum. Not to mention faculty whose ideology and personal expertise drive a program and its inner workings.

Personally, I think of curriculum as a living and breathing thing that must be respected because it calls for constant attention and change based on its context (the institution and the profession).

250 people have come to SOT 3, to examine problems in education, ask difficult questions, look carefully at their own contribution to academia and generously share, with those willing to listen, the results of their work.

With that, allow me to introduce my three panelists:

Tyler Galloway: *Creating the Strategic Generalist*, Kansas City Art Institute

Doug Kisor and Alex Braidwood: *Design Education and the Constancy of Change*, College for Creative Studies

Lisa Abendroth (presentation by Kelly Monico with Bryana Sylvester and Elysia Syriac): *Tryptych: Perspectives on the formulation and effective of a college design curriculum*, Metropolitan State College of Denver

1st presentation

Tyler Galloway: Creating the Strategic Generalist_, *Kansas City Art Institute*

(see PDF)

Doug Kisor, Chair / Graphic Design Department

Alex Braidwood, Adjunct faculty in Media Design

I can remember when what was taught was more influenced by formal themes and mechanical processes.

Those interwoven components that form a Graphic Design program of study can no longer be an emphatic recitation of technical considerations of form and historic references to style defined within a narrow scope. The reality of constant and unequivocal change is our reality; our students need to be able to work with an endless array of interlaced channels; have comprehension of not just a single world view, but many; and be able to work within a field with constantly moving boundaries while still evidencing the understanding of parameters necessary for good communication.

The shift we are all navigating in our programs has to do with letting go at a certain level and embracing the reality that what ever we do will change.

History, and the vision of individuals who understand the need and nature of their era, continues to be relevant as we seek a context in which the themes that condition our time are woven. However, our programs should not be interested simply in a celebratory exercise in graphic design nostalgia, but rather should look forward and seek to make pathways for processes that evade some notion of categorization.

As a discipline we are caught in the constancy of change, and I can't think of anything that would make what we do more interesting.

So, what are the mechanics of creating a new teaching model?

What we are talking about, and the working model we will rough out, is itself about change. Our model is based on a set of unique factors that do not necessarily translate easily.

As I began the discussion, I spoke of a new reality of category-evading processes. In the creation of these processes we let go and redefine graphic design as a language stripping away notions that would narrow our sphere of focus. This requires faculty understand the program, with the knowledge of the role of each individual course as a component of a larger matrix of experience, knowledge and skill. Technical issues of form and the why of intent are emphasized, as is, play, questioning the perceived realities and an appropriate facility combined with an awareness of form. For us the program is in a constant state of analysis and change to allow for the natural fluctuations and the advantages of shifting opportunity. This requires a particular mindset. It means what you teach each semester does not stay the same year after year, or even from one semester to the next. This idea of wholistic thinking opens the door to new possibilities not conditioned by narrow assumptions or bias. Interdisciplinary collaboration has become an engaging component of this model.

Let me frame some of the conditions and components that inform our approach:

Alex Braidwood and I work within a program at an art and design college that leans more toward the “D” part and away from the “A”, part, which is not to diminish arts contribution in any way.

In 2001, we moved into a design studies building that includes 2,500 sq. ft. of flexible classroom space. The space, combined with the increasing use of laptops, has allowed us to schedule multiple or different sections in the space. This opportunity also allows us to pair faculty; facilitating a level of faculty cross over and peer learning not possible in a traditional classroom. A key contributor to the success of this model is the collegiality among faculty and an understanding of board program goals.

As a Department, the only way what we do is possible is through the respected and collective efforts of a truly amazing and collegial team of faculty. Everything we talk

about is impossible without that interconnectedness and shared vision. All but a few of the faculty are junior to mid-career, and this team has come together over the past eight years. Even though Detroit has a large metro area, the idea of graphic design grew up subservient to Advertising. This means compared to cities of similar size the design community is relatively small. This is actually a positive factor in creating a community. The college becomes a touch point for otherwise disconnected designers.

Our program also participates in sponsored projects which allow the Department to use earned funding to pay for particular faculty expertise aligned with the needs and goals of a project. In those cases, a faculty member is teamed with a project leader and compensation is negotiated.

We also use the more typical team-teach model. This summer we will pair Alex and a senior faculty member in a three-week intensive “experience design charrette”.

We have been lucky in that we have had the flexibility to create a dynamic and adaptable pedagogic system. As many of you know this is often not the case. It is the role of any institution’s administration to create constancy. When things do not change, they are happy. Complete and utter administrative joy combines neat little FTE rows with consistent budgets.

Extracting oneself from this box requires skillful navigation of policies and hot points, finding the openings and exploiting the possibility. The administration’s world is about constancy, it must be, however the world of design curriculum can only be about change. This means your job is escape artist and navigator.

Alex Braidwood is a key member of our faculty. He has contributed enormously to the flexible teaching model and has taken advantage of its inherent opportunities. Alex will talk a little more specifically about some practical realities and outcomes of the dynamic model we are working with.

(end / summation)

Gone are the days when you can outline a course of study and sit back coolly coaching students through a solid well-structured curriculum year in and year out. Faculty who have their heads at least partially out of the sand understand that design curriculum needs to be as dynamic as the profession. What we are teaching today can seem irrelevant in a few months. The trick is sorting out core competencies, what's relevant and what is not, within a flexible pedagogic system that allows core principles to freely dance with a constantly shifting agenda.

Triptych: Perspectives on the formulation and effectiveness of a college design curriculum

By Lisa M. Abendroth, presented by Kelly Monico

- Cover Slide
- Logo Slide: Metropolitan State College of Denver is situated in downtown Denver Colorado on the Auraria campus along with the University of Colorado and the Community College of Colorado. We share facilities and resources and in some cases students.
- Campus Slide: Metro State is an accredited, four year liberal arts state college. It is one of the largest public baccalaureate colleges in the country. The median age is 26 with the majority of students transferring in from other colleges regionally and nationally.
- NASAD Slide: The Communication Design concentration which we will be referring to today resides within the Department of Art in the School of Letters, Arts and Sciences. We were NASAD accredited in 2003 and offer 10 studio concentrations of which Communication Design is one.
- Art Dept Slide: The department philosophy emphasizes a broad offering of skills while emphasizing conceptual development and formal understanding in a wide variety of art and design disciplines.

- Foundation Slide: Through the Art Department the Communication Design concentration requires a traditional one year foundation composed of four studios and two art historical offerings.

- Concentration Slide: In 2003 the Communication Design curriculum was rewritten to reflect a more comprehensive set of courses specific to the needs of a design student. Currently students must take 48 credits of specific and required courses. Previous iterations of the curriculum allowed for only 15 credits of design coursework and allowed the student to select which courses they wished to take.

- Concentration Slide: This slide demonstrates the variety of courses required within the 48 semester hours. Typography I, II, and III in addition to specialized offerings such as Narrative Design, Concepts in Motion and Design Research Methods help propel the student toward a realistic yet broadly defined career in the field of design.

- Philosophy Slide: The MSCD Communication design program is inspired to challenge traditional liberal arts students to become “thinking designers” through the following:
 - explore the theoretical and practical aspects of design,
 - create inventive and effective design solutions that address specific problems within a social context
 - examine and gain an understanding of the potential relationships between form and function
 - examine the relevance of semantics, pragmatics and syntactics
 - work with audiences and communities affected by the design need

- Conclusion Slide: The question of generalist versus specialist is the heart of this panel. At MSCD we have succeeded within our College mission, context and vision to offer a program of study that offers breadth yet depth in the Communication Design curricular structure. Criticism and debate lies in how we can continue to offer effective and viable educational options that evolve with the needs of an ever-changing social and cultural context within which design operates.