IML456 Nature, Design and Media
Spring 2017
USC School of Cinematic Arts
37441
Wednesdays 4:00-6:50 SCI L104

Faculty: Pablo Frasconi
Professor of Practice
213-740-07244 (office)
805-895-5943 (cell/text)
pfrasconi@cinema.usc.edu
www.pablofrasconi.net

“There is geometry in the humming of strings…
There is music in the spacing of the spheres. –Pythagoras

“To see a world in a grain of sand
And heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour.” –William Blake

“Make everything as simple as possible, but not simpler. “–Albert Einstein

This course will explore the impact of patterns of order (and disorder) in nature on digital media design, including the relationships among chaos, harmony, beauty, proportion, spirituality, holistic systems, and shaped experience. Students will explore key design fundamentals common in nature, including: divine proportion, the golden section, pentagons, ratios, triangles, spirals, synergy, calendars, music, and rhythm, and apply these forms to the creation of three digital projects.

Each student will create work using a variety of media platforms and methodologies including filmmaking, interactive media, text, visual arts, immersive experiences, and installations. Each project will begin with a personal sketchbook, an “Image Bank,” of 25-40 of digital files (images, movies, observations, moments, etc.) that will help each student to define and narrow their response to each assignment. These will be stored on the class Wiki:


In the process of creating each project, the student will experience a narrowing of intent through consecutive iterations presented each week, and each exploration will culminate in final presentations of three projects according to the course outline. The sequence of the three projects broadly follow the stages of human development from “me, to us, to all of us” –the egocentric, the ethnocentric, to the world-centric:
1) The Inner Eye – exploring the enrichment of private life,
2) The Shared Experience – facilitating engagement with others,
3) The Trades – reinventing commerce or barter.

P1: The Inner Eye invites each student to explore their own emotional/ psychological/ spiritual landscape to create media that encourages the same exploration in the viewers/participants. These projects begin with a chosen method of exploring inward consciousness – for example, Jungian symbolism, Buddhism, mythologies, brainwave monitoring, meditation, or other integrated theory. Design sources will include human, animal and plant forms, architecture, painting, sculpture, installations, and man-made landscapes.

P2: The Shared Experience facilitates ways of fostering human empathy, the exchange of ideas, and synergy among two or more viewer/participants. These projects move outward from the self (creator/viewer/player) to engage and collaborate with others and may include games, crowd-sourcing, interactions with others which employ indeterminacy, performances and installations. Sample design-systems include the symbiotic, synergistic relationships in nature among plants and animals, and their parallels in human creativity, such as collaboration in musical improvisation, and the Surrealists’ exquisite corpse.

P3: The Trades moves outward from collaboration to the greater community to foster exchanges (trades, sales or bartering) of goods, services and ideas in collaboration with nature. The projects are invited to address “meta-paradigms” with a commitment to reducing the carbon footprint, living more sustainably, reversing damage to the planet, and heightening public awareness. Design samples include: permaculture, landfill as resource, sustainable land-use, architecture and agriculture.

Statements of Intent (“SI’s”) are due for each of the three projects on January 25, March 1, and April 5, 2017. SI’s must be rooted in the foundational Wiki readings provided by faculty according to the class schedule. See form at end of syllabus for a sample. SI’s should be uploaded to the course Wiki, along with your “Image Bank” by 9am on these dates.

Image Banks are the first media prototypes of each project. They are visual resources (links, photographs, or other media) that provide the visual foundation for each of your three projects. They should be uploaded to the course Wiki according to the assignment schedule.

Students are encouraged to use their own equipment for this course, including smartphones, tablets, and laptops and low-cost, or free, software including the Adobe Creative Cloud, SketchUp, FCP, or iMovie. Hardware and software access is also available through MA+P.
To log into the workstations in the SCI computer labs, the default username is your USC email username, and the default password is your 10-digit USC ID number. Once you enter this information, you will be prompted to choose a new password. (Returning students can use their login information from last semester.)

If you are having problems logging in to the wiki, or the labs, please contact Dave Lopez at dlopez@cinema.usc.edu.

Office Hours are arranged with Frasconi by appointment. You are requested to have at least one pre-production meeting with Frasconi during the semester.

Safety is our highest priority during production. Hazardous Shooting Conditions forms and procedures are required IN ADVANCE for any hazardous shooting conditions, especially scenes involving: vehicles, weapons, violence (real, impending or implied), weapons, water, sand, electricity, minors, animals. Please contact us well in advance if you have any questions about how to shoot anything safely.

Permits: Check with the Student Production Office for the latest rules about shooting in L.A. Many locations do not allow filmmakers; many require permits or fees. In most cases if you are going to be visible by the public (on or off campus), you will need a permit. Many permits are free but are time-consuming. PRODUCTION HANDBOOK AND SAFETY GUIDELINES are available at https://scacommunity.usc.edu/index.cfm. If you have trouble accessing SCA Community, please advise Frasconi.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or the TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301, and is open 8:30am-5:00pm Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems
Academic Conduct Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standardshttps://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-universitystandards-and-appropriate-sanctions/. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity.
http://equity.usc.edu/ or to the Department of Public Safety
http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contactus. This
is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university
community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate
the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women
and file://localhost/Men http://www.usc.edu:student-affairs:cwm: provides 24/7
confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu
describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems
A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly
writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose
primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute
http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for
international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs
http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides
certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations.
If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency
Information http://emergency.usc.edu/ will provide safety and other updates, including
ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing,
and other technology.

Grade breakdown:
Grading will be based upon student growth during the semester. It is required that all
deadlines on the calendar are met. Incompletes or delays are only acceptable due to
illness (Dr’s note required).

15%: evidence of synergy among discussions, critiques and class Wiki readings/viewings
during in-class discussions and in Project 1-3 assignments
25% Project 1 Statements of Intent, Image Bank, Prototype, and Final Project
25% Project 2 Statements of Intent, Image Bank, Prototype, and Final Projects
25% Project 3 Statement of Intent, Image Bank, Prototype, and Final Project
10%: Overall Class Participation

Incomplete Grade (IN) - Grades of incomplete (IN) are given when a student cannot
complete the course requirements as a result of a documented illness or an emergency
occurring after the twelfth week of the semester.
COURSE OUTLINE:

1. January 11 – Course overview, introductions, sample work
   Assignment: readings on Wiki: Dowrick, Louf, hale, Doczi, Hemenway, Das, Bayda, Kabat-Zinn, and Haskell

2. January 18 – Project 1 faculty lecture, demonstration, discussion; first assigned readings due
   Assignment: create Project 1 (see P1 description on page #2)
   Statement of Intent & Image Bank to be viewed and discussed at next class

3. January 25 – Project 1 SI Due “Image Bank” presentations, discussion
   Assignment: create first prototype of P1 according to description on p 2

4. Feb 1 – Project 1 View and discuss first prototype of P1
   Assignment: final P1 due next week

5. Feb 8 – Project 1 final presentations and in-class discussion
   Assignment: readings on guest artists (past guests have included: Steve Fisher, digital journalist; Chad Wright, designer; Sonia Rensch, still life artist; Peggy Weil, media designer; Genesis Boulanger, combined media artist; Jean-Pierre Hebert, digital artist)

6. Feb 15 – guest artists in-class and via Skype (TBA)
   Assignments: readings/viewings on Wiki: poets.org and MOMA on Exquisite Corpse; Deviant Art; T. Monk; NYC Subway Project

7. Feb 22 – Project 2 faculty lecture; second assigned readings due
   Assignment: create Project 2 (see description on page#2)
   Statement of Intent & Image Bank to be viewed and discussed at next class

8. March 1 – Project 2 SI Due “Image Bank” presentations, discussion
   Assignment: create first prototype of P2 according to description on p 2

9. March 8 – Project 2 View and discuss first prototype of P2
   Assignment: final P2 due next week

SPRING BREAK

10. March 22 – Project 2 final presentations and in-class discussion
    Assignments: readings/viewings on Wiki: Ehrenreich; global warming; sustainability; permaculture; tiny houses; Film: The Island President

11. March 29 – Project 3 faculty lecture; third assigned readings due
    Assignment: create Project 3 (see P3 description on page #2)
    Statement of Intent & Image Bank to be viewed and discussed at next class
12. April 5 – Project 3 SI DUE “Image Bank” presentations, discussion
   Assignment: create first prototype of P3 according to description on p 2

13. April 12 – View and discuss first prototype of P3
    Assignment: First iteration of P3 due next week

14. April 19 – View and discuss first iteration of P3
    Assignment: final P3 due next week

15. April 26 — Project 3 final presentations and in-class discussion
    Assignment: prepare final presentation

16. FINAL – in a spoken and visual presentation, relate the chronology of your
    Projects 1-3 (SI’s, Image banks, prototypes, iterations & final work) to the Wiki
    readings, faculty lectures, and in-class discussions

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Ghyka, Matila, The Geometry of Art and Life, Dover, NY (1977)

Hanh, Thich Nhat, Love Letter to the Earth, Parallax, Berkeley (2013)

Hemenway, Priya, Divine Proportion: Phi in Art, Nature and Science, Sterling, NY
(2005)

Lehner, Ernest and Johanna, Folklore and Symbolism of Flowers, Plants and Trees,
Tudor (New York), 1960

MacDonald, Scott, The Garden in the Machine: a field guide to independent films
about place, UC Press, Berkeley & Los Angeles (2001)

McKibben, Bill and Al Gore, American Earth: Environmental Writing Since
Thoreau, Library of America (2008)

Wilber, Ken, The Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision for Business, Politics,

(rev 1/18/17 PF)
WEBSITES:

P1

Alan Watts – The Dream of Life
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wU0PYcCsL6o

Ken Wilber / Integral Post
http://integrallife.com/node/37539
http://www.kenwilber.com/home/landing/index.html

Thich Nhat Hanh http://plumvillage.org/

P2

Exquisite Corpse http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/5619

MOMA Exquisite Corpse http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/1256

DeviantArt http://theexquisitecorpse.deviantart.com/ NYC Subway Poetry Project
http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/subway-poetryproject-connects-nyers/

P3


Michael Tellinger: UBUNTU PARTY
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFo0khKqvX4

ART INSTALLATION http://jamesturrell.com/

IMAGE/INSTALLATION: Politicians discuss Global Warming
http://misleddit.com/p/2f43bm/

Small Housing http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/17/garden/square-feet-84-possessions-305.html?_r=0

Documentary on birth & humanity: http://microbirth.com/

Human extinction / Nick Bostrom
http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2012/03/were-underestimating-the-risk-of-human-extinction/253821/
STATEMENT OF INTENT (SI)

Name:

Project: P1, P2, P3 (circle)

Title:

Statement of Intent: (200 word max):

Nature Design elements/forms: (200 word max)

Digital media: (100 word max)