THE EMBEDDED STORY: DESIGNING DIGITAL LANDSCAPES & LANGUAGES

Wed. 10:00-12:50 SCI L105

Instructor: Professor Pablo Frasconi
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SCA415
Office hours: Thursday, 10:00am-12:00noon

“Landscapes were the first human texts, read before the invention of other signs and symbols.”
–Anne Whiston Spirn, Language of Landscape

“The face of the water, in time, became a wonderful book...which told it’s mind to me without reserve, and its most cherished secrets as clearly as if it uttered them with a voice.”
–Mark Twain, Life on the Mississippi

“If you don't know where you are, you don't know who you are.”
–Wendell Berry

“Language is fossil poetry.”
–Ralph Waldo Emerson, The Poet


**COURSE DESCRIPTION**
Intermediate students will work collaboratively in a cross-platform environment, to create media that explores the imagined territories where languages and landscapes originate, converge, and are transformed.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**
This course is designed for students who have begun to explore the relationships between verbal and visual literacies in CTPR457 Creating Poetic Cinema, and the relationships between the individuals, interactions with others, and the natural world in IML456 Nature, Design and Media, to merge and expand their studies in a collaborative, transmedia, conceptually based, learning structure.

Student-teams will explore shared concepts of verbal and visual literacies:
- Visual, verbal, and geographical patterns and metaphor;
- the relationship of the part to the whole;
- the transitory loop of meaning: media, the participant/viewer, and meaning
- the process of visual and verbal “reading and writing”;
- a flow of processes and materials;

**COURSE STRUCTURE:**
The emphasis will be on in-person collaboration during scheduled labs. Each 3-hour class will begin with 1-hour of faculty (or student) presentations, followed by two hours of presentations & discussions.

Each student will work on four teams to create four projects during the semester. All projects will incorporate world-building, immersive and trans-media, and game-theory.

In a pod of 4, each student will be assigned to work in the interconnected and overlapping metaphorical roles below for each project (redefinition and reinvention of roles is encouraged in consult with faculty); rotating through four metaphorical positions, on four different projects, during the semester.

1. Designer, 3D Space: “BERNINI” (Baroque architect and sculptor)
2. Designer, machine, time, interactivity: “FOX” (British engineer, inventor of railyard switcher)
3. Character/Icon/Avatar: “KI” (Sumerian earth Goddess)
4. Willful supernatural spirit: “JINN” (Arabian spirit)

**Leading Concept:** The leading concept will shift (#1-4 above) for each of the four projects, allowing each student in a pod to explore different intersections of landscape & language, and to collaborate in different capacities.
TECHNOLOGY:
Tools will include: traditional 2D and 3D media (painting, sculpture and modeling); digital pre-viz software (such as Sketchup); digital media (films, photographs, animation); digital magazines (such as Flipping Book); immersive environments; and interactive applications.

REQUIRED TEXT:
Anne Whiston Spirn, Language of Landscape, Yale University Press (2000)
Chapters: “Dwelling and Tongue: The Language of Landscape,” “Survival and Imagination: Reading and Telling the Meanings of Landscape,” “Artful Telling, Deep Reading: The Literature of Landscape,” “A Rose is Rarely Just a Rose: Poetics of Landscape,” “Polemical Landscapes”

BIBLIOGRAPHY: (faculty posted selected readings on-line each week)

Chapters: “Swamp as Metaphor,” “Dreaming of Trees”

Chapter: “January 1st – Partnerships”

John Brinckerhoff Jackson, A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time, Yale University Press (1996)
Chapter: “The Accessible Landscape,”

Chapters: “Listening to the Land,” “A Language Older Than Words”

Chapter: “Magic and Enchantment”

Chapters: “Art as Idea as Idea: Conceptual Words I,” “A Heap of Language: Conceptual Words II”

Chapters: “Speaking of God,” “The experience of God”

Readings #1: Spirn, Daynard, Rose, Morley
Readings #2: Spirn, Jackson, Haskell
Readings #3: Spirn, Jensen (Keith)
Readings #4: Spirn, Moore, Pannikar

GRADING BREAKDOWN:
P1: contribution to the project in specific role 10%
P1: Collaboration (including leadership): 10%
P2: contribution to the project in specific role 10%
P2: Collaboration (including leadership): 10%
P3: contribution to the project in specific role 10%
P3: Collaboration (including leadership): 10%
P4: contribution to the project in specific role 10%
P4: Collaboration (including leadership): 10%

Articulating concepts in lectures, presentations & readings to creative work: 20%

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION
Assignments must be uploaded to the course WIKI by 9am on the day of class in weeks 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

August 22; Week one: Lecture/Presentation: “Creativity in Transmedia Environments;” key concepts explained; Readings #1 assigned (Spirn, Daynard, Rose, Morley; see chapters in TEXTS below); P1 teams and leaders assigned; first iterations due next week

August 29; Week two: Lecture/Presentation: “The Language of Collaboration: Intentionality, Artists’ Statements, and the Self; “Building & Planning:” view P1 first iterations in teams; discussion; second iteration assigned

Sept 5; Week three: view P1 2nd iterations; discussion of works; final iteration assigned

Sept 12; Week four: view final P1 iterations; critique works in view of concepts in Readings #1

Sept 19; Week five: Lecture/Presentation: “World-building, Interactivity & Game Theory;” key concepts explained; Readings #2 assigned (Spirn, Jackson, Haskell); P2 teams and leaders assigned; first iterations due next week
Sept 26; Week six: Lecture/Presentation: “Talking & Making: Prototypes & Iterations” view P2 first iterations in teams; discussion in view of key concepts & texts; second iteration assigned

Oct 3; Week seven: view P2 2nd iterations; discussions; final iteration assigned

Oct 10; Week eight: view final P2 iterations; critique works in view of concepts in Readings #2

Oct 17; Week nine: Lecture/Presentation: “Character, Player, Observer” key concepts explained; Readings #3 assigned (Spurn, Jensen); P3 teams and leaders assigned; first iterations due next week

Oct 24; Week ten: Lecture/Presentation: “The ineluctable modality of the visible”; view P3 first iterations in teams; discussion; second iteration assigned

Oct 31; Week eleven: view P3 2nd iterations; discussions; final iteration assigned

Nov 7; Week twelve: view final P3 iterations; critique works in view of concepts in Readings #3

Nov 14; Week thirteen: Lecture/Presentation: “Real & Divine Metaphors: knowing the unknown;” key concepts explained; readings #4 assigned (Spurn, Moore, Pannikar); P4 teams and leaders created; iterations due in two weeks

NO CLASS NOV 21 THANKSGIVING

Nov 28; Week fifteen: view P4 iterations; discussions; final iteration assigned

Finals Week: Dec 10, MONDAY 8-10am; view final P4 iterations: critique works in view of concepts in Readings #4

POLICIES

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 Standards. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on 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 or to the Department of Public Safety. 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 Men provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage 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, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs 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 will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Disruptive Student Behavior
Behavior that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students’ ability to learn and an instructor’s ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action.

PLEASE NOTE:
FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX

Citation Practices
Fair use is a legal principle that defines certain limitations on the exclusive rights of copyright holders. Media Arts + Practice seeks to apply a reasonable working definition of fair use that will enable students and instructors to develop multimedia projects without seeking authorization for non-commercial, educational uses. Four factors that should be considered when determining whether a use is fair: (1) the purpose and character of use, (2) the nature of the copyrighted work, (3) the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole, and (4) the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work. In general, we regard the reproduction of copyrighted works for the purposes of analysis or critique in this class to be covered by the principle of fair use.

All projects will need to include academically appropriate citations in the form of a Works Cited section, which covers all sources, in order to receive a passing grade. The Works Cited is either included in the project or as a separate document, as appropriate to your project. There are several different citation styles and practices; please ask your professor(s) what style manual s/he would prefer. Below you’ll find some online resources for the most popular options.