

Production Design for Animation

The Production Designer works with the director to define the overall look and style of the film, and then is responsible for ensuring that their artistic vision makes it on screen. For both animated features and series productions, this entails overseeing a team of art directors, character and environment designers, and production artists.

Course Overview:

The primary tool a Production Designer uses to communicate the artistic vision of the film is the Visual Bible or *Style Guide*. This course will place students in the role of Production Designer of an imaginary film (determined by and guided by the instructor), requiring them to execute a series of artistic assignments resulting in the creation of a comprehensive Style Guide of their assigned film.

Learning Objectives and Outcomes:

Each student will attain an intimate understanding of the role of a Production Designer through hands-on development of a Style Guide for their assigned film, consisting of (but not limited to) exploration of shape language, character and environment design, color script, moment painting, look of picture, branding, and packeting.

Students will receive detailed critical review and artistic feedback from the instructor to strengthen their work, but this is not a "how-to-draw" class. Instead, the focus is on the visual storytelling process and how best to conceptualize and then communicate the vision of a film.

Students enrolled in this class should have a fundamental knowledge of drawing and painting skills and aspirations of becoming visual development artists and designers within the animation industry.

This is an In-Person Class:

In accordance with university recommendations, all meetings of this class will be held in person. Students who become ill and need to self-isolate will be supported in their efforts to stay current with classwork and assignments, to the extent possible. Please contact **Josh Staub** and your **SA** at least one hour prior to class start time if you become ill and need to self-isolate. Do not come to class if you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 or other illnesses. Requests for longer term exemptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and must be supported by a written accommodation request from the USC Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS).

Regarding use of AI:

AI may be used as reference or inspiration for your work but we do not accept AI-generated art as your own original work as it is deemed derivative of other works whose originators may not have granted permission for its use.

USC School of Cinematic Arts

John C. Hench
Division of Animation
& Digital Arts

CTAN 542

Units

2

Term/Day/Time

Fall 2024
Mondays / SCB 102
1pm - 3:50pm

Instructor

Josh Staub
jstaub@usc.edu

Student Assistant

Stella Chen
schen443@usc.edu

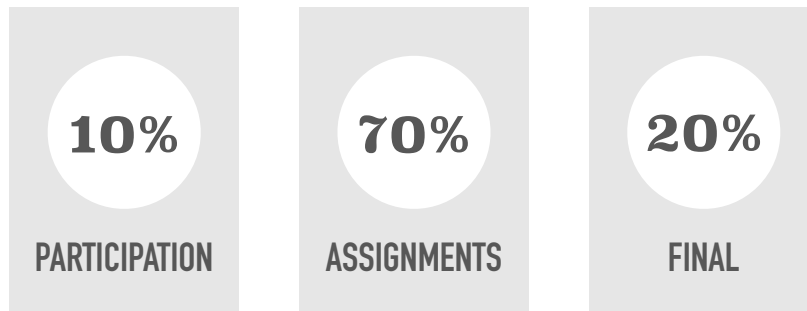
Prerequisites

CTAN 220
or CTAN 547

Land Acknowledgement:

USC acknowledges that we are on the traditional land of the Tongva People. For thousands of years, the Tongva people lived on this land we occupy today and were considered the most powerful indigenous peoples to inhabit the Los Angeles basin. Along with the Tongva, we also recognize the Chumash, Tataviam, Serrano, Cahuilla, Juaneño, and Luiseño People, for the land that USC also occupies around Southern California. To learn about the Indigenous land on which your learning location resides, please visit Native-Land.ca to discover the Original People of your home.

Grading Allocation / Assessment:



Participation: (100 points)

Grades for participation are based on the student's level of engagement with the professor and fellow students. There will be animated film critique/roundtable opportunities throughout the semester to share thoughts/ideas with fellow classmates. Students who wish to receive full credit for participation will engage enthusiastically during these moments.

Description of Assignments: (7 Assignments / 100 points each / 700 points total)

This is not a "how-to" drawing and painting class, however weekly assignments will primarily consist of drawings and paintings which will be critiqued by the instructor.

1. Film Beats: 6 - 10 drawings to represent the major beats of the story.
2. Mood Boards / Packet Branding: Gathered reference from comparative projects for discussion, plus a branding pass (logo, layout) to represent the underlying look for the style guide.
3. Character Design Packet: Visual design breakdown of the film's primary characters including expressions /turns and callouts.
4. Environment Design Packet: Visual design breakdown of the film's primary environments with callouts.
5. Color Script: 6 - 10 loose color study images of the film beats to communicate the emotion and mood along with a breakdown of the overall color strategy and philosophy.
6. Moment Paintings: 1 - 2 finessed color paintings to communicate the energy and feel of the film's most important moments.
7. Look of Picture: 1 - 2 technically refined color paintings to represent what a final frame of the film will look like including a breakdown of the process and technique.

Final Project: (1 Assignment / 200 points)

Each student will assemble and layout a final Style Guide based on the assignments executed during the semester.

All assignments will be reviewed in class and must be submitted digitally to our class dropbox the evening before the due date / class review.

Grading Scale:

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale. Partial percentage points will be rounded to the nearest full percentage point.

A [95-100+]	A- [90-94]	B+ [87-89]	B [83-86]	B- [80-82]	C+ [77-79]
C [73-76]	C- [70-72]	D+ [67-69]	D [63-66]	D- [60-62]	F [59 and below]

About the Professor

Josh Staub is an award-winning filmmaker, production designer, and visual effects supervisor of Walt Disney Animation Studios and Netflix Animation, and currently serves as writer/creator and executive producer of an original animated series in development. Over the course of 14 years at Walt Disney Animation Studios, Josh contributed to more than 20 film projects including the Academy Award winning film *Frozen* and the animated short films *Paperman* and *Feast*.

In addition to helping create some of the most successful and popular animated feature films ever made, Josh is also an accomplished independent filmmaker and sole-creator of the animated short film *The Mantis Parable*, which screened in over 100 film festivals around the world (Annecy, Tribeca), graced the screens of the nation's top art museums (National Gallery of Art, Smithsonian, LACMA, MoMA), and twice qualified for consideration of an Academy Award nomination.

In 2018, Josh was inducted into the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences (Oscars) for "exceptional accomplishments in the field of theatrical motion pictures."

Josh is also a founding member of *Rise Up Animation* (dedicated to increasing diversity in the animation industry), and has given countless lectures at studios, festivals, and schools around the world.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

	Class Focus	Assignment	Deliverable
Week 1 Aug 26th	Overview / Films Assigned Josh Staub	Film Beats	
Labor Day Holiday / No Class: Sept 2nd			
Week 3 Sept 9th	Film Beats Review / Mood Boards	Mood Boards / Packet Branding	Film Beats
Week 4 Sept 16th	Film Beats Review / Character Design	Character Designs	Mood Boards / Packet Branding
Week 5 Sept 23rd	Character Design Review		Character Designs (1st Pass)
Week 6 Sept 30th	Character Packets Review / Environment Design	Environment Designs	Character Designs Packet
Week 7 Oct 7th	Environment Design Review		Environment Designs (1st Pass)
Fall Recess: Oct 10th - Oct 11th			
Week 8 Oct 14th	Environment Packets Review / Color Script	Color Script	Environment Designs Packet
Week 9 Oct 21st	Color Script Review		Color Script (1st Pass)
Week 10 Oct 28th	Color Script Review / Moment Paintings	Moment Paintings	Color Script
Week 11 Nov 4th	Moment Paintings Review		Moment Paintings (1st Pass)
Veteran's Day: Nov 11th			
Week 13 Nov 18th	Moment Paintings Review / Look of Picture	Look of Picture	Moment Paintings
Week 14 Nov 25th	Look of Picture Review		Look of Picture (1st Pass)
Thanksgiving Break: Nov 27th - Dec 1st			
Week 15 Dec 2nd	Look of Picture Review / Style Guide	Style Guide	Look of Picture
Study Days: Dec 7th - Dec 10th			
FINAL Dec 18th 11 - 1pm	Final Projects Due Style Guide Review		Style Guide (Final)

Additional Resources:

Books:

Inspired 3D Short Film Production [Jeremy Cantor, Pepe Valencia]

I Moved to Los Angeles to Work in Animation [Natalie Nourigat]

Instagram Portfolios:

@joshstaub.art [Josh Staub]

STORY

@tallychyck [Natalie Nourigat]

@whittlewoodshop [Jeremy Spears]

@briankesinger [Brian Kesinger]

@samstyle [Samantha Villfort]

@ryangreenart [Ryan Green]

@domeeshi [Domee Shi]

@leomatsuda7 [Leo Matsuda]

@stevehatguy [Stephen Anderson]

ASSETS

@alenawooten [Alena Wooten]

@chadstubblefield [Chad Stubblefield]

@andrewtaylorjennings [Andrew Jennings]

ANIMATION

@andrew_chesworth [Andrew Chesworth]

@michael.franceschi [Michael Franceschi]

@trentanimation [Trent Correy]

@agreenster [Adam Green]

ART / DESIGN

@coryloftis [Cory Loftis]

@grizandnorm [Griselda Sastrawanita]

@dethancooper_art [Dan Cooper]

@bschwaby [Bill Schwab]

@dicetsutsumi [Dice Tsutsumi]

@woutertulp [Wouter Tulp]

@peteremmerich [Peter Emmerich]

@bobbypontillas [Bobby Pontillas]

@rrr_yaga [Daniel Arriaga]

@ryanlangdraws [Ryan Lang]

@aaronblaiseart [Aaron Blaise]

@robertkondo [Robert Kondo]

@ladyadorabeezle [Ami Thompson]

@megprk [Meg Park]

@britsketch [Brittney Lee]

@myamada1979 [Mike Yamada]

@theillustratus [Jeff Turley]

@robhruppel [Robh Ruppel]

@lorelay_bove [Lorelay Bove]

Websites:

www.awn.com

www.animationguild.org

www.cgsociety.org

Periodicals:

Animation Magazine

CGW

VFX Voice

Inspiration:

CTN Gallery [North Hollywood]

Nucleus Art Gallery [Alhambra]

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity:

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, comprises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see **the student handbook** or the **Office of Academic Integrity's website**, and university policies on **Research and Scholarship Misconduct**.

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at **osas.usc.edu**. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at **osasfrontdesk@usc.edu**.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health:

(213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:

988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP):

(213) 740-9355 (WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

Office of Equity and Diversity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX):

(213) 740-5086

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment:

(213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and micro-aggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS):

(213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

Campus Support & Intervention:

(213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:

(213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency: UPC:

(213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety:

UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds:

(213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323) 442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice:

(323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

PLEASE NOTE:

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