

The Possibilities of the Unimagined

A Platform for Growth for the University of Oregon Art Community

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For some of us it has been four years and others five. Through our brief time at this University we have become makers, thinkers, commentators and social activists. Sometimes communication is as easy as tuning into a preset channel, and others we must fight to have our voices heard and our view expressed. With every experience comes the reflection that gives way to insight, and through insight comes understanding. As four individuals launching ourselves into the world, we put forth this platform for, makers, thinkers, and people with the passion to create, and comment on art, culture, and the human condition.

Art is a reflection of culture, a response to life, and everything in between. It is often said that art makes life worth living. From the visual to the verbal, dance, theatre, literature, film, or any other beautiful moment of existence, as makers we strive to put into this world something that touches people and engages them to entertain, visually stimulate, communicate, or break existing paradigms of thinking and broken ways of looking at, and experiencing the world. As a university we have a commitment to education and research that pushes the boundaries of what exists and what is thought possible. Research extends beyond the reaches of dusty books and historic generalizations, but into the realm of what is possible, the playful discourse between your hand and the medium that leads to the development of new ideas and techniques that your mind could never imagine on its own. The art we learn of in history, are not pieces that developed through formulaic academia, but through invested experimentation into the boundaries of the medium, shaking know paradigms and conventional thinking. Maya Lin, "I think with my hand." What makes an art education is not only the enjoyment of engaging in what you truly love, but taking that love, twisting it on its head, reversing it, writing about it with your left hand—or right for that matter—and then cutting it in half to see your beautiful creation of process and investigation. Bruce Mau, "Make mistakes faster."

As a University training thinkers we must open the door to all that is possible, to put forth a positive affirmation that anything is possible if you put your mind to it, that you are not always going to succeed and that art is life, not a separate entity in which you practice. This affirmation must begin at the very basic level of the program to instill in a younger and less stubborn group of students the fundamentals of art and design. While styles, and movements are in rapid flux, there are still basic rules of composition and color theory that apply to the practice of art and design. Basic Design [ART 115] as well as Basic Design 3D [ART 116] should be required before taking any other class in the art department. The

introduction of a color theory course as a prerequisite to most classes should be required as well.

As artists we strive to understand the world and speak about it through our unique vision. Yet, as we all know history is bound to repeat itself, and there are always artists with sympathetic ideas, and views who we can learn a lot from. Yet, these sympathetic ideas do not stop at art; many of us strive to explain dreams, the state of reality and what it means to be human in our work, the fundamental concern of philosophy. As training artists and designers, we are communicators of our ideas. Without the ability to communicate our ideas our work is left without a conceptual framework. We must understand the construct of language and the way it works in order to speak about and communicate through our work. We are also musicians, actors, sociologists, psychologists, and cultural anthropologists. Art is not merely about art as a visual construct, it is about the aforementioned studies, it is where life meets a media in which to comment upon it. We must as artists develop connections with people and departments that have so much to say about the concern of art and the state of the world. First and foremost we must develop a fluid network of thinkers, where ideas are not mutually exclusive, but part of a broader network of information. The exchange of information and ideas is an integral part of being an artist. To tune the mind early, students should take at least one philosophy course and one linguistics course within their first year to develop the mind aside the development of the hand. Without an ever developing mind in a constant state of informational flux, our work becomes stagnant and falls victim to hollow form.

Through developing thinking and conceptualization as a fundamental expectation we develop a concrete framework in which to develop a rich environment of research and investigation. We no longer suffer from cultural recycling, but from a Frankenstein laboratory in which art develops as a rich convergence of ideas and materials into something new, that in turn, develops a fundamentally important way in working in the world as artists. We are not here to learn how to use software that is becoming obsolete as we learn it, we are here to have our tools taken away and say, 'Welcome to digital imaging, your only tool for the first five weeks of this class are these colored wood blocks, what does the word hope mean to you?' or 'Welcome to Color Photography, your only tool for the first five weeks of this course is are color copy machine transparencies, what does it mean to be human?' or 'Welcome to Sculpture, for the first five weeks your sculptures will be words, I want to hear of its gentle curves, or fierce edges, what

does the word transcendent mean to you?’ We are artists, we must be resourceful and use our minds to imagine the endless possibilities of what it means to make, not what Photoshop can do for me today. We use tools to communicate concepts and ideas. In the end, it is not the tools that we use, but the potency of the product that we put forth. There is no generic formula to the artistic process, in that lies the beauty of the act of creation, and the wonder of what is humanly possible.

It is easy to focus upon what is possible while forgetting what is necessary. We must be held accountable for what we put into this world. If we cannot speak of our sculpture, our photo, or image we must fail, we must not accept mediocrity from ourselves, our peers, professors or students alike. To fail is a fundamental trait of what it means to be human. To fail makes us work harder the next time, and grow stronger from our experience. When you fail and move forward stronger and harder you push what is possible. By not accepting anything less than what is expected and what is acceptable from someone is to perpetuate a system of apathy and anti-growth. It builds the assumption that it is okay to put in fifty-percent and come out with one hundred. We are developing minds and putting forth individuals that are not only representatives of our institution, but will one day become our leaders and makers. They will move forward into the world with one of two views; it is okay to accept mediocrity and the status quo, or that you must push yourself in the quest for answers and discovery. The non-acceptance of what is handed to us is one of the fundamental ideas that fuel artists, designers, and aware individuals. A mind without questions is one of numbing atrophy. We MUST have harsher critiques, and demand more from students. We MUST not accept mediocrity on the street or in the classroom. We promise that we—as students—WILL rise to the occasion, we WILL defy conventions, push, twist, pull and stomp the boundaries IF infused with the hope, and inspiration to define who we are, and what it means to US to be makers in this world!

We are a community. We put forth this document as our suggestion for building a better, stronger, program that will instill within students the power of expression, experimentation and the passion for intellect. There circulates much dismay among the student population at the problems within our department, we neither rally nor speak up about these problems, yet watch passively. This is not so much a critique as it is a platform to step back and assess what is important to us not only as learners, but what it means to you to teach. What does it mean to put forth generation after generation of UO artists, designers, thinkers and cultural critics? What drives us as artists is not mediocrity, the status quo, and the pursuit

of the tool, but the passion for investigation, a glimpse at vision in the purity of mind, and the limitless possibilities of the imagination. No longer shall we sit by and accept nothing less than one hundred percent, or sit passively as the world passes us by; waiting for another day, another term, another life. This is right now, and change starts the moment that someone decided that it is important enough to make something happen. As students, faculty, thinkers, and people with the passion to develop a strong community of learners, makers, and thinkers, we put forth this platform as a suggestion for what is possible.