

visual design – guidelines

... / art(s) / game(s) / idea(s) / cycle(s) / – / .

The goal of the course *visual design* is to get you familiar with various aspects of design, as detailed in the original proposal.

You may well understand that the Faculty of Exact Sciences is not the natural habitat of such a course, and these guidelines and regulations are provided, not only to give you an idea of what the course will offer but also to counter-act against the potential risks involved.

perspective(s)

In general the course aims at establishing *aesthetic awareness*, by providing suitable exercises and assignments. In addition, you are supposed to become familiar with the craft of design, which necessarily involves the use of tools and techniques.

track(s) – perspective: To accommodate for the various interests and backgrounds of the students following this course, we distinguish between several *tracks*, as summarized below.

track(s) – perspective

- styling – concept and presentation
- digital content – material, animation
- tech track – special effects

process: The process of design is very complex, ranging from conceptual explorations and sketching up to the stage of finalizing delivery.

process

- spectrum – sketch ... finalize
- ignore/exploit – the rhetorics of the material

As a rule, try to master the material, and do not let the material master you.

cognitive modes It is generally recognized that there are different cognitive modes at work when working in different phases of the design.

cognitive modes

- reflect – sketch
- experience – finalize

tools: Clearly, you need to choose the tools appropriate for the problem you work on.

tools

- sketch – paper & pencil, text editor, simple drawing program
- finalize – photoshop, maya, rendering engine, etcetera

guest speakers: To assist you in finding your creative path, we will have a number of guest speakers, experts from a variety of disciplines, that will tell about their work from a personal perspective.

guest speakers

- game(s) – concept(s) & realization(s)
- art – to provide (a change of) perspective
- concept(s) – to establish an alternat(iv)e (approach) to reality
- visual design – styling, design, aesthetics, management

These experts will also take part in judging your portfolio.

deliverable(s)

Design results in a number of products. This may, but need not necessarily, include the final product. It must, however, include the earlier stages of concept formation and sketches.

products: For the final assignment you must, dependent on the track chosen, deliver any one of the following products.

products

- web site – e.g. conference, campaign (browse)
- 2D/3D animation – promotion/ad (temporal sequence)
- virtual space – game/infotainment (navigate)
- ebook – story (sequential experience)

As indicated between brackets, each of the products favors a particular mode of interaction.

portfolio – design as a product: Regardless of which specific assignment you have chosen, the results of the process of design must be collected in a portfolio.

portfolio – design as a product

- concept(s)
- sketches & explorations
- finalized products
- evaluation & reflection

Note, that the portfolio itself must be regarded as a product (of design).

themes and variations: For the assignments and exercises you should select a theme, which may also determine the range of possible end-products. As themes, we suggest:

themes and variations

- design a house style for ...
- non-linear visual storytelling

- game design – style, content and effects

game design: But even within one theme, such as *game design*, there are several options, dependent on the track you are most comfortable with.

game design

- style – develop concept, plot and visual assets for *a game of choice*
- content – develop environments, models and animations for *a game of choice*
- effects – develop models, textures and special effects (shaders) for *a game of choice*

exercise(s)

To learn any craft, you must generally acquire some basic skills.

assignments – basic exercises Although more detailed assignments will be given later, as basic exercises you may think of the following:

assignments – basic exercises

1. text-only logo – 3D text
2. story plot – with sketches
3. visual workshop – experiment with graphic features

templates: To assist you in developing a portfolio, you must develop some templates, that serve as a model when creating your portfolio.

templates

- portfolio page – content & layout
- visual labs – text, images, movies
- tech lab – shaders, models, ...

regulation(s)

The first requirement when working in an area such as visual design is that you acquire sufficient self-discipline to find the challenge in the assignments and to complete the tasks involved.

rules: To ensure that the course runs in an acceptable way, we have to impose some strict rules.

rules

- be present – 2 omissions max.
- be in time – hard deadlines
- be online – have your portfolio available
- be creative – don't steal without a reason/mentioning
- be smart – there is no 2nd chance

At the risk of stating the obvious, please show respect to the guest-speakers. They are experts in their own field, although they may not be as computer-wise as some of you.

remarks: Design is an interesting field, full of implicit (not always so obvious) wisdom and apparent paradoxes.

remarks

- if you cannot make it, fake it
- you may (have to) reverse engineer your design
- deliver – silence is lethal
- be authentic – but only if possible

final remarks: And of course, in a time in which so much information is available as in ours, a statement like the following cannot be omitted.

final remarks

... postmodern design is of a highly reflective nature ... appropriating design of the past ... in other words, sampling is allowed but no plagiarism

reflection(s)

When working on your favorite theme, within the track of your choice, it is well worth reflecting on what you are doing, and perhaps ask yourselves *why*

essay topics: So, do some additional reading and write an essay (up to 5 pages) addressing one of the topics suggested below.

essay topics

- 2D vs 3D aesthetics
- animation – stills, sequences and stories
- elements of style – diversity and confluence

Or, if you think of a better topic, try to get it approved by your supervisor.

peer review: You also need to acquire and exercise some critical skills. So you will be invited to perform a peer review, that is a critical assessment of your colleagues' work.

peer review

- creativity, productivity, quality

You will also be asked for a self-assessment!

recommended literature

- David Dabner, Design and Layout: Understanding and Using Graphics, Quarto Publishing Inc.
- Simon Danaher, Digital 3D Design, Thomson 2004
- David Santiago Creating 3D Effects for Film, TV and Games, Thomson 2005

A. Eliëns (nov 2004)