

JIONG LI

858.761.7872

www.jiong.com

jiong@jiong.com

Design Education Philosophy

My design education philosophy is directly based on my experiences as a working professional for the past eight years and an instructor for the past two years. I feel that, first of all, students need to be provided with clear course objectives. A detailed syllabus including project description and class schedule is absolutely necessary. Secondly, design reviews should be direct and professional. Comments concerning student projects should be focused on two things: effective visual communication and strong visual impact. And finally, I believe design education is to guide, not to train. Graphic software training may be necessary in the beginning but my ultimate goal is for students to discover various ways to research assignments, define visual problems, and create solutions on their own, in their own way. The following are essential elements I include in all my classes.

Design Fundamentals. Basic design concepts, such as figure/ground, shape, unity, contrast, balance, visual rhythm, composition, color, value, need to be introduced to the students in the very beginning, and to be reinforced through critique of students' work. Too often these basic ideas are forgotten or not applied when more sophisticated digital tools are introduced. Awareness of these classic concepts throughout their education will help students analyze their own work as well as others for years to come.

Design Tools. Computer and software, like pencil and sketch book, are tools for a designer in this digital age. Graphic design students obviously need to know how to use them comfortably but not at the expense of design principles. The classes I taught at Utah State University are divided into two parts: one is design critique class, the other is computer lab class where I demonstrate how to use different design software. In this way I reinforce the difference between the creative side of graphic design and production techniques.

Design Process. Research and concept development are the first steps of professional design. Many beginning students often ignore the importance of research. They need to be aware that each design is not a spontaneous endeavor and requires study and purpose. Research will help to clarify the goal and lead to the development of a design concept that meets the needs of the audience. The other part of my design process is to learn to integrate meaningful and personally satisfying content while solving design problems. This is more of a challenge. Few commissioned projects lend themselves to artistic expression but when it is possible I try to include a part of myself in my designs. This will not only give me personal satisfaction but will give the design uniqueness which should set it apart from the competition.

Typography. Type is a form of art by itself. I believe it is the most important graphic design element. Students need to know the classic typographic theory but should by no means limit themselves to its rules. They need to be taught that type or text are not simply for reading, but something that can provoke a strong emotional response just by its pure form.

Design History. I emphasize the historic awareness of design. Using well chosen visual design examples, I want to impress upon the student the importance of past design styles and trends. Having a clear understanding of how design is related to culture and society is vital for students trying to develop their own sense of design.

Experimentation. Students should be encouraged to experiment and not be satisfied with merely mimicking the rules and regulations associated with design. School is a perfect environment to question the establishment and the conventions of typography. While understanding design's commercial function, students need to passionately search and try out new and alternative solutions. They should realize that design is not just a facilitator of messages; it is also a way of expression.

Professionalism. As a professional designer for the past eight years I know that talent is essential but without a professional attitude you will not get far. Making deadlines, attention to details, organized presentations, and the ability to analyze and communicate visual solutions effectively are qualities that students need to understand to be competitive in a very demanding design market place.