

Michael Wheeler - Digital Arts

Being in the digital art field, there are so many different aspects that one can focus on. Personally, I believe that my strengths are in illustration and html5 coding. I have always been into illustration ever since I was a little kid, and I only recently started getting into coding. Coding is by far the most rewarding form of art I have ever done and goes hand in hand with illustration. Being a good illustrator means having a vision and seeing it come to life while drawing, whether it be digitally or on paper. Coding is the same concept, but instead of having a pen and paper or the pen tool and Illustrator, you have a language that is comprised of different commands that produce an output.

Recognizing your strengths is only beneficial if you can recognize your weaknesses as well. Within my art, I think my biggest weakness is 3D modeling. Using the Adobe Application Maya, I was able to model digitally during my sophomore year. I think that this has been my weakness because I have only taken one class on the subject and was very overwhelmed by the new media and program I was using. I think that with a few more classes and maybe some personal teaching I can better these skills, but I know that I don't excel as well as I would like to in modeling at this point in my education, and that is at no fault to any of the classes or professors that I have taken up until this point.

In regards to my classes and professors at the University of Tampa, I have two in particular that I strongly believe has shaped me into the artist and student I am today. In the spring of 2016, I took Beginning Digital Arts with professor Alan Hampton. Professor Hampton truly helped me get an amazing understanding and foundation for the Adobe programs I longed to be good at: Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign. His projects were engaging and his method of teaching really helped me to understand the basic concepts of these programs and gave me the backbone that I needed to continue within my major. The next class and professor that has helped me grow as a person and an artist is FMX 310 - Creative Coding with Santiago. Santiago is by far the most intense professor I have ever taken at UT but because of that, my skills have grown tremendously. He pushed me to challenged my artistic abilities and got me to learn a new program, Dreamweaver. Learning html5 has been one of the most fun art forms for me and has skyrocketed my progress and has broadened my application range.

After graduation, I plan to stay in Tampa for a while, hopefully working in a swanky graphic design firm. I want to be able to express myself and make a difference using my artwork. I hope that my major will give me all the tools I need to be a successful new partner for any company and will continue to inspire me to reach my potential and produce stunning artwork that can bring back the importance of art in the workplace and further. I hope to eventually travel and end up in San Francisco, doing either digital artwork or tangible illustration. Because of my major and the amazing resources that UT has given me, I hope that my BFA in Digital Arts can change my life for the better.

My Senior Project was dedicated to creating a restaurant from concept to completion. My project was titled "The Artist's Kitchen" and revolved around a restaurant that acted as both a restaurant and a gallery, where people could come and submit their artwork to be displayed on the walls of the building. This project completely pushed my boundaries of 3D modeling in a way I never thought imaginable and brought me outside the realm of what I was used to. With developing a 3D model, a complete business menu and business card, logo and character design, and an infomercial, this project challenged me to work in all aspects of my field to create one, cohesive piece. I am absolutely so proud of it and can't wait to see where my skills continue to grow to.