

Instructor's Journal

Before

The first thing I did for this project was familiarize myself with Blogger. Although I had visited blog sites and considered myself relatively knowledgeable of the technology, I felt I needed a little more information to actually create one. So, at the suggestion of Kathleen Forester, I signed up for the Lynda.com tutorial. It was great. What it helped me do was plan and organize the blog site while trouble-shooting at the same time. Also, I continued to visit blog sites to get ideas for what I could possibly do. I especially decided to focus on sites created by artists and sites for artists.

I already had an idea of the kinds of prompts and discussions I wanted us to have. One early morning, at 3 a.m., I woke up and all of the questions I wanted to ask the class came to me. Actually, that was the most stressful part of this project. In my opinion, it doesn't matter how fancy or visually attractive a site is; if it doesn't have meaningful content, especially for a class, then it still doesn't mean much.

Week 1

Creating the site was a virtual breeze (pun intended). Everything is up and running. I put images up and it is looking quite neat. After I posted the first prompt, their responses trickled and surprised me pleasantly. This thing began to take on a life of its own. In the layout of the site, I didn't have a prompt section. The prompt was imbedded in my initial post. So, after a few responses, the prompt was lost. What happened is that students began posting responses to each other's posts. The prompt was entirely lost. For a few seconds I was irritated—I think more at myself than at the students or the unexpected turn of events. Why didn't I foresee that? Then I began to really appreciate the life that the discussion took on of its own accord. It reminded me that I am only a facilitator and catalyst of sorts. I was pleased to discover that my role is secondary and that this site is all about the students' discussion and exploration of ideas.

Week 2

After the shock of this blog coming to life on its own, I discovered another glitch. Some students were not getting their invites. I had to manually enter all of their e-mail addresses. I cannot express how irritating I found that—I look for ways to cut and paste, export data, anything to not have to manually enter 35 e-mail addresses. I knew that I would probably have typographical errors, but I wasn't prepared for 10 or so students telling me that they were not receiving invites. I went back, manually changed e-mail addresses and still was unable to get some of the students on. My suspicion is that they haven't accessed their Otis accounts or haven't changed the settings to have their Otis mail sent to another e-mail. Whatever the case, I decided to save time and bypass all of the drama by having them post comments—that way they participate in the discussion and can still earn credit. Hurray!

Week 3

This is the week I finally try to resolve the problem of the disappearing prompt. I chose to add a layout element at the bottom of the site page. Now, as Kathleen Forrester pointed out, it is not exactly neatly within the color margins of the template, but at this point I didn't care. This is when I realized that the template I chose might not necessarily be the best for what I want to do; nevertheless, I am going to make do with what I have chosen. I have also added links that I think are relevant to Otis art students. There are artists out there and art-centered blogs that are, in my opinion "cool."

Week 4

Reading student posts is absolutely intriguing. Some of their reflections give me hope. There are other students who are responding and seem to be merely trying to fulfill the requirement. It is ok. I didn't think everyone would embrace the assignment with fervor or passion, but as long as I have a few who are willing to respond with depth and feeling, I feel this project is moving toward success. I am at a point in the project now where I feel the content is doing what was intended, which is to get students to think consciously about their current and future lives as artists and students within the context of Otis College.

I believe that writing too is its own form of art. So I believe that improved writing also strengthens your artistic abilities as well. Having not only one but two channels of which to channel your creative energies provide a greater artistic creation in my opinion. Writing can not only strengthen your creativity but your own mind as well, providing you with organizational skills to balance out the jumbles of the artistic mind. Though many would argue that anyone can write, but not a lot of people can draw. To this I say, true, people can write, but can they write with organization and still remain competent? Writing is a key, in my opinion, part of the art world. It not only is in its own respects, an art form, but it provides us with key aspects to improve upon our artwork, such as the ability to put some organization and thought into our piece in order to better express ourselves. Posted by William Cheng

Week 5

I want to see more happening on this blog page. I want to see pictures and images. I wish my students would post their pictures with their comments and posts. I love what they are writing and how they are able to process their experiences in a way that is fresh and genuine, but I want to be visually stimulated as well. I want people who visit Otisstar to be intrigued and captivated by the conversations taking place.

Week 6

Finally! At least one student was feeling me when I asked for more images. He chose a YouTube video that was not exactly content related, but it definitely breaks the monotony of the text. Now all I feel I need to do is encourage them to find content related

information or start posting my own. As far as their posts and comments are concerned, I'm satisfied. The posts I've read so far actually show some depth of thought and the demonstrate a level of critical thinking that is the main element I wanted to see in their posts and comments:

before i entered into the Otis College of Art and Design, i did not expect myself to be seen with so many different artists. i always thought of going to an art school when i was in high school but when i realized that it was coming true, did not really put much thought but to say that i wanted to go here. Once i entered into the school, beginning was tougher than i had imagined. People that went to an art school that i encountered with have always told me how tough it is to be an art student, but until i experienced this school never imagined the stress and the work overload that was to come. First semester was so much harder than i thought it would be. It involved many hours staying up to finish projects and homeworks as well as to study for midterms and finals. Form&Space was something that i didn't know that the school would provide, but when i started was the most difficult. When i got to the second semester, i began to realize on how to time manage as well as getting more lazier since it is coming to an end to my first year as an art student at Otis College of Art and Design. In some areas, Otis contained things that i expected to encounter as well as having so many new things that i have never imagined.

Posted by SunA Huh

Week 7

I hit an emotional brick wall and I couldn't even post this week's topic. My students were understanding, and surprisingly they missed the weekly topic. Part of this brick wall is trying to understand why the students are not sending images or posting images. Although the students who are responding, are responding well and from an authentic place, why aren't ALL of the students contributing as they are required to do? What do I plan to do? I think I'm going to steal photos of them in class, and I am going to ask students to give me topics they would like to discuss or post for discussion.

I eventually climbed over my brick wall. I put images from Otis portfolios onto Otisstar—some of them from former students of mine. My current students commented that they liked the images, but they still had no explanation as to why they would post their own. One student quietly suggested that some students might not know how to post images, which would explain why so many students had problems getting logged into Otisstar. Biggest lesson I've learned doing this project: Don't overestimate the tech-knowledge of young people. I thought the MySpace generation would have no problem logging on! So, for the next class, I will introduce the blog by demonstrating EVERYTHING from logging in, to posting text and images.

In the student evaluations, students overwhelmingly wrote that they enjoyed the opportunity to write in a medium that allowed them to express their feelings without the constrictions of essay format. Also, many of them appreciated being able to see other student comments and respond. The critical feedback came from students who thought the assignment was lame, but they had no other positive feedback. Students mostly

responded to each other and the posted topics, but there was one comment from Biby Cletus of India. Being able to reach out to the "flat world" was the highlight of my blog experience.