4D Project 2: Mining the Past

4D concepts: light, color, sound, composition, nonlinear structure, nonlinear narrative, movement, time

Contemporary art practice(s): cultural appropriation, détournement, video, performance, animation

Conceptual Prompt:
In *The Runaway Species: How Human Creativity Remakes The World*, authors Anthony Brandt and David Eagleman write that, “(a)n education in creativity lies in the sweet spot between unstructured play and imitating models. This sweet spot gives the students precedents to build on but it doesn’t condition or constrain their choices.” Using preexisting cultural artifacts as a launching point, they argue, “shows students how to mine the past for ideas, and it teaches them not to be intimidated by what has come before. It argues for mastering our cultural legacies and simultaneously treating them as unfinished.”

This project asks that you mine our cultural heritage for the creative models and raw materials of tomorrow’s art, and in the process, argues that culture advances through acts of appropriation.

The Project:
Combine preexisting cultural artifacts (e.g. sounds, images, ideas, etc.,) to make a 4D work. Choose artifacts that fill you with inspiration. Do not let the artifacts do the heavy lifting in your piece; they should just be a conceptual point of departure that lead you toward something new and original. For example, when Picasso integrated his love of African masks with his appreciation of the human figure, his interest in western mythology and his understanding of western art, he produced *Les Demoiselles d’Avignon*, changing the trajectory of Western painting forever.

If you choose to create an animation you must utilize a nonlinear structure. A nonlinear structure can be defined as having little or no recognizable story arc and/or no direct causal pattern between events, sounds, or images. This loose structure allows for more poetic, whimsical, symbolic, and abstract outcomes than a traditional linear narrative arrangement. If you find it hard to think abstractly, use a nonlinear narrative structure, which uses devices such as flashbacks, flash-forwards, parallel narratives, stories within stories, and story fragments to tell a traditional story, non-chronologically. The films *Pulp Fiction* and *Memento* both utilize flashbacks and story fragments to weave nonlinear narratives.

Ideation Process:
**Step 1: Brainwrite-Brainwalk+Analogous-Crowdstorm:**
1. List 10 possible sources of inspiration (10 artifacts);
2. Post them on the wall;
3. Walk around the room and contribute to your classmates’ lists by adding analogous sources of inspiration to their lists;
4. Repeat until you have worked your way around the room;
5. Read through your updated list and select the artifact/artifacts that inspire you most.

**Step 2: Inspiration Library:**
Create an inspirational visual library by printing high quality, color images of your artifacts. Bring them to class with you everyday and tape them up around your workstation/computer while you work. Draw or write notes on them when inspiration strikes and refer to them often. The best work is often the result of combining two or more seemingly incongruous elements together in a novel way. For example, what do we get when we combine Mr. Chips (a schoolteacher character) with Scarface? Nothing less than the hit series, Breaking Bad!

**Step 3: Storyboard:**
Use the storyboard template provided to work out the sequence of your shots and establish crucial aesthetic details such as staging, color, composition, and transitions. Put your director’s hat on to compose your shots for maximum clarity and emotional impact. Print as many copies of the template as you need to to adequately convey your ideas. Include a color script with notes explaining how your selected palette relates to your artifact and the tone you’re trying to convey. Completed storyboards must be in color.
Schedule:
02/24: Brainwrite-Brainwalk+Analogous-Crowdstorm – In Class
02/26: Due: Image Library and Storyboards – Small Group Crits #1
03/02: Due: Storyboard Revisions and color script – Small Group Crits #2
03/09: 1-on-1 Crit
03/25: Final Project Due