Digital Drills
How two Longhorn brothers made modernizing marching bands their business
The first building ever built for the College of Fine Arts was the stout but venerable Homer Rainey Hall, west of the Littlefeld Fountain. Rainey Hall was finished in 1940 for the music department, reconstituted in the newly formed College of Fine Arts after being struck 20 years earlier from the UT budget in a line-item veto by Gov. Ma Ferguson.

Rainey Hall was state of the art at the time, beautifully designed with sound-insulated studios, instrument lockers, practice rooms and recital halls. It now houses the Department of French and Italian, though the Butler School still holds chamber music recitals in the adjacent Jessen Auditorium, an acoustically gorgeous Art Deco jewel box.

The next great wave of construction for the College of Fine Arts came in the 1940s when the Art Building, Winship Drama Building, the Lab Theater and the Band Hall were built. A third wave of construction broke in the early ’80s when the Doty Fine Arts Building, the Performing Arts Center, including Bass and McCullough halls and the Scenic Shop, and the Music Recital Building were all completed.

In their day, these facilities were the envy of arts colleges nationally and the pride of UT’s ambitions as a cultured, creative campus. These facilities have served well many generations of students and faculty. But increasingly, what we teach, and the ways we teach for the future our students will soon inherit, have outstripped the adaptability and potential of these venerable facilities.

And we’re growing significantly as a college. Undergraduates majoring in the college will grow by more than 50 percent over the next few years, in fields and subjects that didn’t even exist 50 years ago. There are limits to how much an old facility can be adapted for new uses, and we’ve had to be creative to make room for new programs and technologies.

The University is investing annually in keeping our buildings mechanically operational and safe with new roofs, HVAC systems, ADA-compliant bathrooms and electrical and security upgrades. With the help of the Provost, the College of Fine Arts is investing as much of the college’s resources as we can collect into modernizing our aging facilities.

Over the past several years, we’ve completely renovated the Visual Arts Center, replaced ceramics studios with digital fabrication labs, modernized the technology in dozens of classrooms and studios with digital fabrication labs, modernized the technology in dozens of classrooms and upgraded Bates Hall and all our theaters. We’ve renovated and modernized the entirety of the Fine Arts Library, consolidating print collections, adding classrooms and offices, creating more study spaces, and created a maker space, a recording studio and other enhancements.

This year we’re working on upgrades to recording studios in the Butler School, classrooms and computer labs in the Art Building and creating a teaching laboratory in the Scenic Shop for a new program in live performance technologies. B. Iden Payne Theatre is being reimagined and refitted as a high-tech performance space and teaching laboratory.

But much more is needed to keep pace with our growth and, more importantly, to stay abreast of the future of the arts that is already with us today. Addressing our facilities and space needs will be one of our highest strategic priorities over the next decade as we continue to grow and evolve as a college.

Excelsior!

Doug Dempster
Major Gifts Support Students in the College of Fine Arts

The University of Texas at Austin has received significant gifts to support students in the College of Fine Arts (COFA). The second gift comes from Lisa Fasano Cartwright Fine Arts Scholarship, which is two-fold: first is the creation of a $50,000 scholarship endowment, the L. Fasano Cartwright Fine Arts Scholarship, plus a pledged estate gift that will provide a future $1 million increase to the endowment. The new gift is managed by the Career Services office in the College of Fine Arts.

Major Gifts Support Students in the College of Fine Arts

A $1 million endowment gift from Meredith and Cornelia Long will be added to the Meredith and Cornelia Long Internship Fund, a scholarship endowment that helps Fine Arts students afford to accept low-paid or unpaid internship opportunities anywhere in the country by underwriting travel and living expenses. The Longs first established the Internship Fund in 2015 at the request of College of Fine Arts Dean Doug Dempster. The new program saw immediate success, with many students applying for funding. The program is managed by the Career Services office in the College of Fine Arts.

The second gift comes from Lisa Fasano Cartwright. Ms. Cartwright received her bachelor’s degree in Art History in 1988 and has gifted a scholarship endowment to the Department of Art and Art History. The new gift is two-fold: first is the creation of a $50,000 scholarship endowment, the L. Fasano Cartwright Fine Arts Scholarship, plus a pledged estate gift that will provide a future $1 million increase to the endowment.

New Program Allows UT Students to Work, Live and Study in New York

This fall, the University of Texas at Austin announced a new program to bring UT students to New York City to study and pursue internships and other valuable connections and experiences that will help them transition into their professional careers. UT in New York (UTNY) will host its inaugural class in fall 2019.

The program was created as a partnership between the Moody College of Communication, McCombs School of Business and the College of Fine Arts to create opportunities for students interested in working in finance, the arts, design, media and other related industries and professions based in New York City. UTNY will allow students to explore their chosen academic fields while learning, working and living in one of the most dynamic cities in the world. Students will have the opportunity to explore internships directly related to their career interests and build valuable connections and experience.

Associate Professor Roxanne Schroeder-Arce Leads UTech Fine Arts

Associate Professor Roxanne Schroeder-Arce has been named the new director of UTech Fine Arts, the arts teacher preparation program in the College of Fine Arts at The University of Texas at Austin. Schroeder-Arce joined the Department of Theatre and Dance faculty in 2010, where she teaches courses in theatre pedagogy. She is also a director and playwright, as well as a faculty affiliate in the Center for Mexican American Studies, the Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies and the Center for Women’s and Gender Studies at UT Austin.

In 2017, the arts education program was rebranded as UTech Fine Arts, under the leadership of Associate Dean for Arts Education Hunter March, who retired Aug. 31 after more than three decades of teaching and service in the College of Fine Arts. Schroeder-Arce recently received the Higher Education Teacher of the Year Award from the Texas Educational Theatre Association and the Ann Flagg Multicultural Award from the American Alliance for Theatre & Education. Most recently, she was named a fellow of the Advocacy Leadership Institute of the National Association for Latino Arts and Culture.

AET celebrates first graduates from new major

This spring, the Department of Arts and Entertainment Technologies in the School of Design and Creative Technologies presented its first class of students graduating with Bachelor of Science degrees in Arts and Entertainment Technologies (AET). It’s the first Bachelor of Science degree offered through the College of Fine Arts. The AET major launched in 2016, and the students who graduated this past May all transferred into the program from other majors within the University. The program has continued to grow after admitting its first full class of freshmen in 2017, and enrollment is now 460 students.

Archaeological discovery yields new insights on history of Mayan royals

A team of archaeologists that includes UT Professor David Stuart has discovered a nearly 1,500-year-old carved altar at the Classic Maya site of La Corona, located in the jungle forest of Petén in northern Guatemala. This monument, the oldest found to date at the site, presents new evidence for how a powerful kingdom—known as Kaanul dynasty—began its two-century domination of much of the lowland Maya region. This significant discovery was made public in September at the National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in Guatemala City, where the altar is currently on display.

La Corona for many decades has been known as the enigmatic “Site G,” the source of many looted sculptures whose whereabouts had remained a mystery until its rediscovery only years ago. Since 2008, researchers have directed a multidisciplinary research program focused on this important and intriguing Maya city that has involved archaeological excavation, hieroglyphic decipherment, regional settlement analysis using lidar imagery as well as a variety of chemical and material analyses.

In 2017, excavations by archaeologists inside a small temple pertaining to the “Coronitas complex” led to the discovery of the well-preserved altar. Composed of limestone, its 1.46 m long and 1.20 m wide. Its deep-relief carving displays the image of a king sitting in profile looking to the left. He carries in his arms a double-headed serpent effigy; out of each serpent’s mouth emerges imagery as well as a variety of chemical and material analyses.

1. Meredith and Cornelia Long, photo courtesy the Longs
2. New York City, photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons/Daniel Schwen
3. Associate Professor Roxanne Schroeder-Arce, photo by Jen Reel
4. Arts and Entertainment Technologies’ inaugural class of 2018, photo by Jen Reel
5. La Corona altar, photo courtesy David Stuart
Awards and Accolades

Theatre and Dance Associate Professor Charles O. Anderson received a National Dance Project grant for his work, I'd Current Unrest. The grant supports the creation of 20 new dance works to tour the United States.

Art History Professor Susan Rather was awarded the 2018 Charles C. Eldridge Prize for Distinguished Scholarship in American Art for her book, The American School: Artists and Status in the Late Colonial and Early National Era.

Theatre and Dance Associate Professor Lisa B. Thompson was named one of The Alcalde's "The Texas Ten," an award given to UT professors nominated by alumni as their favorite faculty members.

Art History Professor Richard Shiff was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, one of the oldest learned societies for independent policy research.

Studio Art Professor Margo Sawyer won a 2018 Guggenheim Fellowship in support of future creative endeavors.

Theatre and Dance Chair Brant Pope has been named a fellow by the College of Fellows of the American Theatre.

Theatre and Dance Undergraduate Academic Advisor Mark-Anthony Zuniga received the Regents Outstanding Employee Award.

COFA Welcomes New Program Leaders

Kate Canales has joined the School of Design and Creative Technologies as the new chair of the Department of Design. Canales was previously the director of design and innovation programs and a clinical professor at Southern Methodist University.

MacKenzie Stevens joined the Visual Arts Center in the Department of Art and Art History as the new gallery director and curator. Stevens was previously a curatorial associate at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles.

Gray Garmon has been named the new director of the Center for Integrated Design in the School of Design and Creative Technologies. Garmon was previously a clinical professor of design and innovation at Southern Methodist University.

Julie Schell has joined the College of Fine Arts as the executive director of learning design, effectiveness and innovation in the School of Design and Creative Technologies. Schell was previously the director of TEXAS OnRamps and Strategic Initiatives at UT Austin.

Landmarks Celebrates Ten Years

Landmarks, UT’s public art program, celebrated its 10th anniversary this September. In 2008, Landmarks was launched with the purpose of developing a cohesive collection of public art from a curatorial perspective. Landmarks’ first initiative brought 28 modern and contemporary sculptures to the university on long-term loan from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

Landmarks has continued to grow their collection through site-specific work commissioned from renowned artists such as James Turrell, Nancy Rubins, José Parlá, Ann Hamilton and more. Today, the program boasts more than 40 works on view throughout campus, providing free and accessible opportunities for everyone to engage with great works of art.

In May, Julie Schell joined the College of Fine Arts as the new executive director for learning design, effectiveness and innovation in the School of Design and Creative Technologies, where she has served as a clinical assistant professor since 2017. In her new role, Schell will use her expertise with designing and scaling successful start-ups in universities to launch extended and executive education programs minted at the College of Fine Arts and the School of Design and Creative Technologies.

Julie Schell

What are you most excited about working on as the executive director of learning design, effectiveness and innovation in the College of Fine Arts?

Learning. We spend the majority of our lives doing it, day in and day out. The nature of our learning experiences fundamentally shapes who we are, how we live and what we can do in the world. As students, we often are exposed to mundane learning experiences that fade away as quickly as they are introduced.

Why is that? Most of us can count only a handful of transformative learning moments from our pasts. They are few and far between. How can something so critical to our identities be so ineffective? How can we help human beings learn in ways that empower them to change the world? These questions are central to the extended education programs we are building.

You’ve had an impressive career of designing innovative approaches to teaching and learning. What drew you to this opportunity in the college and the School of Design and Creative Technologies?

I have devoted my career to studying and writing about the pace of change at American universities spanning a period of more than 400 years. Advocates for transformation in higher education often use the word “sclerotic” to describe our institutions. Oxford Dictionaries defines sclerotic as, “becoming rigid; losing the ability to adapt.” I believe that the higher education sector has an opportunity to become more flexible and responsive to change.

I was drawn to the School of Design and Creative Technologies (SDCT) because it represents one of the most promising ventures toward change in higher education that I have seen throughout my 20-year career in the industry. SDCT is innovating the how—and what—students learn as well as reimagining the number of students the University can reach on and off the residential campus through extended education. I am thrilled by SDCT’s efforts to strip the elitism from traditional design education, to broaden access to design practice and to empower students from all walks of life to use design to solve their most pressing problems.

You’ve shown a particular interest in design thinking pedagogy in your work and research. What do you think are the biggest opportunities that design thinking offers in the classroom and the business world?

Wicked problems are wicked for a reason. To develop breakthrough solutions that address such problems is incredibly difficult. It is not something that can be learned in a quick-shot bootcamp or picked up in an article or book about design thinking. Learning design thinking is enhanced when the teaching is decelerated rather than accelerated. The biggest pitfalls of design thinking initiatives come from facilitators and educators who place too little attention on how people actually learn, especially given that today’s new design thinking learners are not often classically trained designers. Learning science can help improve our efforts to extend design education to non-designers.

In my experience, a student is more likely to successfully adopt and apply design thinking when the course of instruction is carefully designed around how people learn and apply their learning outside the classroom or workshop. Too often, I have found that this focus is missing in design thinking education ventures. I have observed that tremendous enthusiasm and excitement for design thinking are followed by rapid abandonment and small returns on investment. My role at SDCT will be to offer an alternative that is designed to meet the needs of new learners and to create change from the start, with a particular focus on extended and executive education programs.

What do you think are some of the pitfalls that you’ve seen as it’s become so popular in the business world?

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Entrepreneurs often share a common trait: Their business was created from something they love.

For Josh and Luke Gall, their love is the marching band.

"It’s not just the music but the sound," says Josh, who is the assistant director of the Longhorn Band. "And with the 100,000 people in the stands watching you, there’s not many things like that."

If you’ve ever seen a show, you get it. The shiny horns and fluid formations, the wave of sound that hits you deep in the chest. But behind the scenes, that seven-minute halftime show can take weeks to prepare, with hundreds of musicians learning the notes, steps, pivots and snaps that comprise these shapeshifting performances.

The Gall brothers know that workload intimately. They’ve each clocked thousands of rehearsal and performance hours as players, educators and coordinators. The experience sparked ideas in them at a young age that eventually grew into a small-scale business. Now with the help of partnerships made through the College of Fine Arts, their company, Ultimate Drill Book (UDB), is expanding.

"We rehearsed outside for 12 to 14 hours a day, and it’s raining and it’s hot and you’re rolling around on the ground and all of these things, and there was nothing durable about these dot books, so we would re-make them three or four times throughout the season. We were determined to find a way to make the least bad dot book because no matter what, something was going to happen to it," says Josh.

They found a waterproof ink and began printing and selling personalized dot books to their corpsmates, and in 2010 when Luke played in the U.S. Army All-American Marching Band, the Gall brothers saw a new opportunity. Pygraphics Inc., the software company that the Army band used for designing drills, had introduced a personalized page for players. It included a portrait and coordinates for each musician along with the image of the full formation, and although Josh and Luke liked it, they imagined a plug-in that could manipulate the software’s information to export a more user-friendly version. They had built a relationship with the company while using their products as drill designers, so they went to explain their ideas to the owner, George “Py” Kolb, a UT Longhorn Band alum who had introduced his groundbreaking software decades earlier.

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"I always joke that the band was my babysitter because instead of going to a sitter, I just went to band practice with my dad.”

When Kolb first wrote his drill-design software in the early 1980s, he was in his last year at UT and playing trombone with the Longhorns. He had switched majors from environmental engineering to computer science, a relatively new department created in the mid-’70s, and had friends who wanted to be drill designers after graduation. Coming from a family of entrepreneurs, Kolb recognized a business opportunity.
"I think this was an obvious application," says Kolb. Not only was his software revolutionary in that it expedited a process typically done with drafting tables, thumbtacks and hand-drawn sheets of paper, but within a few short years (Kolb was still running the business out of his parents’ house) it became extremely popular because of its relationship with one of the fastest-growing companies at the time: Apple. Apple found Pyware to be its top value-added reseller and would first ship the Apple IIe computer to Pygraphics so Pyware could be uploaded before being sold to consumers. It was a package deal beneficial for both parties: Pyware greatly expanded its reach, and Apple was given the key into music departments. Pygraphics has been the leading drill-design company ever since.

Kolb is now semi-retired and says UDB and Pygraphics complement each other by focusing on opposite areas in the same industry.

"I think we help each other. We have a really great, compatible relationship," says Kolb. "They’re very hardworking, they create a great product, and can you believe we’re all Longhorns!"

Eventually, Luke and Josh brought on UT Longhorn Band alum Eddie Lopez as a partner. Over the years, students a place to develop entrepreneurial skills. When he heard about UDB, he introduced Ryan to the Gall brothers, and she helped mentor and connect them to Capital Factory, an Austin-based hub for entrepreneurs, and also to Longhorn Startup, a class taught at UT by Capital Factory founder Joshua Baer. Here, the brothers were paired with mentors to share ideas, financial information and mockups, and learn the ins and outs of startups and fundraising.

"This was entering into a new world—I’ve never taken a business class or anything, and we were getting a lot of feedback and learning a lot," says Josh. "And we just confirmed our first major investor."

Ultimate Drill Book will soon be launching a new version of its app that allows for better rehearsal management, with features such as calendar and attendance integration, so everyone knows when and where rehearsal is, and attendance is taken as soon as students walk into the room with their phones—no more checking 375 names off a sheet of paper. The company is also working on patenting some of the app’s features, a move Josh says he never dreamed would happen. Ryan says the company has grown by understanding not only who its audience is and what their needs are, but also by being current and creative with technology.

"All we do as entrepreneurs is find gaps that are significant enough to bring value, and then we build resources around that," says Ryan. "Luke and Josh lived in that world. They understood it. Those were the problems that they also experienced, and they could see the gaps. And they also saw this intersection between today’s technology and this art, and they used that technology to solve a problem."

Dempster created Ryan’s position in September 2017 to give students a place to develop entrepreneurial skills. When he heard about UDB, he introduced Ryan to the Gall brothers, and she helped mentor and connect them to Capital Factory, an Austin-based hub for entrepreneurs, and also to Longhorn Startup, a class taught at UT by Capital Factory founder Joshua Baer. Here, the brothers were paired with mentors to share ideas, financial information and mockups, and learn the ins and outs of startups and fundraising.

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When entrepreneur Jan Ryan first met College of Fine Arts Dean Doug Dempster, she was surprised that it was at a conference on artificial intelligence.

"It was very clear that he understands that our economy needs innovation and creativity. And where better to tap than inside this college?" says Ryan, who is now executive director of entrepreneurship and innovation for the College of Fine Arts. Ryan has been spearheading programs and events on entrepreneurship and is teaching her first class at UT this fall.

It’s late August and the Darrell K Royal-Texas Memorial Stadium lights have just switched on, illuminating the field for the Longhorn Band’s last hour of rehearsal. A voice booms through a loudspeaker, “Let’s run No. 5 again, this time moving into 6.” Many students take out their phones for a quick glance at the app before the instructor blows the whistle and begins the drill.

Just that morning, instructors had sent a drill update through the app that took about 30 seconds to export, allowing the students to review changes before rehearsal. Pre-app, they would have had to print 375 copies and distribute them during rehearsal. Josh says before the app, the band would typically cover seven pages of drills in one practice. Now, they average 11 pages.

“I think that we as musicians have to be entrepreneurs. Not everybody has to start a business, but people have to have certain skills and have certain understandings about how to exist in this space now but also moving forward,” says Josh. “I just happen to teach music most of the time, but I love challenging people’s ideas and forcing them to think through things. That part of teaching, I think, is the essence of being an entrepreneur because you’re a problem-solver. You have to think creatively and actively.”
Dancing with Flamingos

Transmedia Assistant Professor Kristin Lucas explores environmental and ecological issues through virtual and augmented reality

By Alicia Dietrich

Flamingos are a huge part of our visual culture—you’ll see them emblazoned on everything from socks to phone cases to home décor. But as familiar as the images are to most of us, many people don’t realize that these wading birds have seen dramatic declines in population as their natural habitats have been destroyed or modified by human activity and threatened by climate change.

Kristin Lucas, an assistant professor in Studio Art, has been working on a series of projects since 2015 that celebrate flamingos and bring attention to their plight.

“I am interested in the presence and absence of the flamingo in the U.S., and how our strong visual culture around the flamingo contrasts with the bird’s status in the wild,” says Lucas.

When she was invited to do a solo exhibition in 2015 in Gainesville, Florida, Lucas began researching the state’s biodiversity, as well as its industries and the qualities that make Florida unique. As a coastal state, Florida is especially vulnerable to sea-level rise due to climate change, and projections show that wading birds will be among the first species affected by rising waters. As Lucas looked around at the visual culture in the state, she noticed one image over and over again.

“I was seeing representations of flamingos everywhere, but I wasn’t seeing the bird in the wild,” Lucas says. “I came to realize how much our relationship to flamingos is virtual.”

As it turns out, wild flamingos have not been common in Florida for nearly a century because of over-hunting in the early 1900s, when flamingos were hunted for their plumage (to make hats) and for their meat. Interested in this idea of presence and absence, Lucas created an augmented reality sculpture park that used postcards of flamingos in Florida to launch an outdoor virtual exhibition that could be viewed through a smartphone. She invited 10 other artists to create virtual sculptures for the show, asking them to focus on themes of land art and land use.

Lucas has spent her career as an interdisciplinary artist and has worked with emerging technologies as part of her practice. When she was invited to participate in a residency program at Oregon Story Board using HoloLens mixed reality headsets, she saw an opportunity to use the technology to create a virtual experience in which users could see one another as having holographic flamingo heads.

“Simply put, Kristin doesn’t think like other artists,” says Jack Risley, chair of the UT Department of Art and Art History in the College of Fine Arts. “She has a remarkable ability to synthesize ideas and methods that appear incongruous. Her work is a mash-up of the arcane and the cutting edge, the cerebral and the visceral, the comic and the despairing. Kristin knows how to command our attention and keep it directed on the exigencies of our fragile world.”

Lucas’ work at Oregon Story Board became a prototype for a larger-scale project when she was one of five artists selected to receive a $100,000 Engadget Alternate Realities Grant.

Engadget, a blog network focused on covering gadgets and consumer electronics, invited Lucas to create and showcase an augmented and mixed reality project as part of The Engadget Experience in Los Angeles in November 2017.

Before heading to Los Angeles, Lucas was able to continue her research on flamingos through another grant and residency in Israel that allowed her to spend time observing a colony of greater flamingos—the first time that Lucas had ever observed flamingos in the wild. The colony was in a salt pan of a salt factory, and although the flamingos had adapted to living in this human-made environment because of the year-round food supply, it wasn’t a natural habitat for them. Their paler-than-usual color indicated there may be deficiencies in their diet.

Also, they weren’t following their usual migratory patterns.

“I saw how much human activity was changing the behavior of the flamingos,” says Lucas. “A local conservationist who accompanied me estimated that 400 or so flamingos had made the salt pan their permanent residence, and that they would be joined by 600 more flamingos during the wintering season. They had been there since the ’60s or ’70s, and they were building nests, but they were not breeding.”

Lucas began thinking about the ways that flamingos had adapted to human-made environments and how she could highlight the ability of humans to adapt to living more consciously with other species as members of an ecosystem.

“I was inspired by the success story of conservationists in France who collaborated with a salt factory on the construction of an artificial nesting island to encourage breeding and facilitate the survival of a declining population of flamingos in the ’60s,” says Lucas. “I saw the potential for humans to adapt to flamingos rather than the other way around,” says Lucas. “I wanted to design exercises for shifting from a human-centered to an ecological worldview in ways that were social and fun at an ethical distance. Habitat disturbance and decline in habitat quality have impacted flamingo breeding, so I made the flamingo courtship march the central focus of my work.”
"I am interested in the presence and absence of the flamingo in the U.S., and how our strong visual culture around the flamingo contrasts with the bird's status in the wild."

At the end of the piece, guests could adopt a flamingo in the wild, which allowed the project to support real-life conservation efforts of flamingo colonies.

The level of visibility from Engadget and Pioneer Works together really created a perfect storm that really catapulted her into a totally new arena, new level," says Regine Basha, residency director at Pioneer Works. "Environmentalists got really excited about what she was doing. She articulated this project really well and went the full nine yards by incorporating an angle in which you could adopt a flamingo."

Lucas also developed "FLARMINGOS," a free mobile app that uses a flocking algorithm, a computational program that simulates the flocking behavior of birds, to animate flamingos performing a mating dance in augmented reality. Users can also adopt a flamingo through the app to support conservation efforts. This fall, an updated version of the app was released that allows multiple users to create a shared augmented reality experience in which they can build a virtual population of flamingos in their area, collaboratively. Lucas plans to continue her research and work during the next year while she's on research leave from the college.

"We are wading through flamingo tchotchke," says Lucas. "We have flamingo fashion, we have flamingos in the yard, we have inflatable flamingo pool floats and neon signs, flamingo auto mechanics and motels. There’s a whole economy around flamingo impressions, yet most people don’t realize the threats flamingos are up against. The flamingo to me is a flagship species. I see our affinity for the bird as a gateway activity, and I seek to illuminate pathways to agency through conservation initiatives. My work is as much about humans as it is about flamingos."

For The Engadget Experience, Lucas continued to flesh out her idea, and during a residency at Pioneer Works in Brooklyn, New York, she used her Engadget grant to hire and direct a production team including a designer, sound composer and software developers to help support an augmented and mixed reality project. Tommy Martinez, who runs the Virtual Environments Lab at Pioneers Works, helped her prototype in augmented reality using Apple’s ARKit platform.

Lucas consulted with international flamingo specialists and integrated their research into her experience. A team of conservationists in France shared their research on the flamingo courtship march, and Lucas used it to create a choreography that she later performed wearing a motion-capture suit. The flamingos featured in her AR experience were created using human motion capture of someone (me) working very hard at trying to move like a flamingo. This work goes way over the top with exuberance for the flamingo’s mating dance. The choreography is based on scientific research. You could join a colony of flamingos in their mating dance, and dance with other humans in interspecies solidarity to original flamingo-inspired music."

Guests would then be given an iPad with an app that allowed them to add flamingos to their surroundings in augmented reality. The flamingos featured in the virtual world were representations of wild flamingos that Lucas had adopted, and users could tap on individual flamingos to learn about that particular flamingo’s biographical and migration data.

The next station outfitted guests with HoloLens mixed reality headsets. Everyone wearing a headset could see the other headset-wearers as having flamingo heads alongside a virtual colony of 20 flamingos performing a mating dance. Guests were invited to join in the dance, their flamingo heads tracking with the movement of their headsets. The iPads and HoloLenses were networked so that iPad users would see the guests wearing the HoloLens headsets as having flamingo heads in augmented reality when they viewed the room through the screen.

"I wanted to alter the ground you were standing on just a bit," says Lucas. "I created a premise of ecotourism with a few degrees of distance, using fragrance design and technological mediation. The augmented reality flamingos are cartoony and flamingo-like yet uncanny because they are animated by human motion capture of someone (me) working very hard at trying to move like a flamingo."

"I am interested in the presence and absence of the flamingo in the U.S., and how our strong visual culture around the flamingo contrasts with the bird's status in the wild."
The Working Class

A student-run design agency preps for post-college life

By Jen Reel

The words “real world” are often thrown at students to describe life after college, but that’s a bit of a misnomer. It’s probably a little insulting, too. Their world must feel undeniably real already—just ask them about their deadlines and stress levels.

What we’re trying to say is that it will be different, particularly their working lives. Instead of instructors and classmates, they’ll have bosses, clients and co-workers, and what they create will be judged by people expecting expertise, not instructors evaluating growth. The transition can be intimidating and feel uncertain, which is why wkrm (pronounced “work room”), the student-run design agency in the College of Fine Arts, was created.

It’s 5:30 p.m. on a Monday in the Art Building, and students are gathering in a lab room affectionately known as “The Cave,” where they’ll work on projects for the next three hours. Assistant Professor of Design Jiwon Park arranges with pizza and reminds them of their deadlines—only a few weeks left in the spring semester, and they still need to finish their client work and their self-realized project. Are they on track? Are they running into any issues? They break off into groups and huddle around their computers, while a few students slip down the hallway to the wkrm studio.

The studio is a small (292 square feet), windowless space with exposed ductwork and a sharply angled ceiling from the stairs above that hint at its former life as a supply closet. Back in 2015, Park pitched an idea for a lab that students could apply to join—an instructor-led, student-run, full-service design agency that would produce work not just for course credit, but clients, too. Her proposal was accepted, and Park was given a $2,000 budget for materials and the closet space to use. She accepted applications from students across campus and soon had an inaugural group of 11 students, from both design and business, tasked with starting an agency. By pooling their skills under Park’s leadership, they formed specialty teams and did extensive research and planning, built their own furniture, drafted business and marketing plans, brainstormed their name and designed their logo, swag and website. Wkrm was born.

“I do think in a way that wkrm really got me this job,” says alumna Nora Green (B.F.A., Design, 2017), when talking about her position as a junior designer for a health communications company in Washington, D.C. Green was a founding member of wkrm and part of the branding team. She also took the course four times, each time receiving credit.

“I originally loved the idea of being the founding class that gets to develop this thing that’s going to live on, that’s going to continue to produce bodies of work for actual clients, but then just keep doing it because it was helping me grow as much as a designer.”

Green and her team worked on projects for nonprofits around Austin and units within UT, including animal rescue shelter Austin Pets Alive and the UT System Office of Health Affairs. The students also worked on self-made projects. Park required them to challenge themselves to push their creativity without the restrictions of client demands. Green says working in wkrm taught her how to build relationships, ask the right questions and meet deadlines, and she even took on internships with some of the clients she worked for through wkrm.

“In design class you turn in that final project, get feedback and that’s that. It’s really up to you whether you want to put in that extra time to finesse it for your portfolio. With wkrm, we get feedback and then have to implement those changes because that’s what we’ve promised this client.”

She also says that learning to build an agency helped her navigate freelancing after graduation by taking the mystery out of how to market herself and how to create her own personal brand. Park’s creative process and approach to building client relationships taught Green invaluable lessons.

“When I was imagining how it would look to have my own design studio, I thought I could do anything I want," says Park, who started a design studio in South Korea at age 23. “But I had no experience in managing the company, no experience on the business side at all. All of it was trial and error. Today’s rapidly changing industry demands that design students possess a broad base of professional experience, skills and entrepreneurship.

Wkrm was founded to provide students with those things.”

Back in the studio, a handful of students are gathered around their work space. Although they’ve completed their client projects, a T-shirt design for Notley Fund and a 3D room design for Genesis Program, there is still some work to do. Junior design major Kathy Vong and her teammates are adding final touches to the group project for their mental health awareness campaign, “Work In More You.” Vong is the campaign manager, and the team decided to create something interactive to help students cope with stress during finals and remind them to take care of themselves. They started an Indiegogo campaign to raise funds for supplies, and Vong and the crew were finishing the rewards kits for donors.

Items such as tea, stress balls, fortune cookies, essential oils, chocolate and a mini-coloring book were included with stickers and cards and messages, all designed by the product production team. These kits required a huge amount of work and were indicative of the amount of effort the team put into the rest of their interactive campaign.

Across campus in the Perry-Castañeda Library, Maieli Schmidt is monitoring the interactive installation they built for the project. Led by Dani Muñoz, the team used the wood shop to build an impressive vending machine, complete with a crank arm that dispenses colorful capsules through a maze of wood cuts before landing on the words “You got this.” The capsules are filled with various items from the Indiegogo kits, and the wkrm team strategically chose the library location, knowing students would be there studying. Many passing students pause to stare at the machine, visibly apprehensive but intrigued after someone steps forward and tries it. Schmidt encourages them, and soon a small group is gathered around, comparing and sharing their treats.

“This past year has been a really hard time on campus. A lot of things have happened, and finals add to that stress,” says Vong. “These are little bits of joy in people’s day, and that makes me happy.”

Kate Bomar, a third-year architecture and architectural engineering student, and Michelle Nguyen, a psychology and pre-med major, take their turns at the machine.

“I think a lot of the mental health pushes have been online and on social media, but it’s a lot more important to have physical spaces like this to make you remember it. When you see something on social you’re just scrolling through, you might not pay attention to it, but when you have a patch of lavender ... this is something ‘I probably carry around for a week,” says Bomar.

“And showcasing the design and these students’ capabilities is a great idea. How can I find out more about applying to this wkrm thing?”

For more information visit wkrmdesign.com

Design major Kathy Vong, right, with her co-workers in wkrm’s design studio.
EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Sept. 21 – Dec. 7
Visual Arts Center
Fall opening
Visual Arts Center

Nov. 6 – 11
Fall For Dance
B. Iden Payne Theatre

Nov. 8
Jordi Savall,
The Routes of Slavery
Bass Concert Hall

Nov. 14 – Dec. 2
The Merchant of Venice
Oscar G. Brockett Theater

Dec. 5
New Music Ensemble:
The Yellow Wallpaper
Bates Recital Hall

Dec. 7
VJ Battle
B. Iden Payne Theatre

Dec. 8 & 10
Holiday Choral Concert
Bates Recital Hall

Jan. 30
Dorrance Dance,
ETM: Double Down
Bass Concert Hall

For more information visit finearts.utexas.edu/calendar

1. Landmarks bike tour, April 2018, photo by Lawrence Peart
2. Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, April 2018, photo by Quinn B. Wharton
3. Transcendence, March/April 2018, photo by Lawrence Peart
4. Butler School of Music alumna Chelsey Green, COFA commencement speaker, May 2018, photo by Lawrence Peart
5. Studio Art M.F.A. Colloquium, April/May 2018, photo by Lauren Macknight
6. Mariachi band camp, July 2018, photo by Alicia Dietrich
Rosa Nussbaum
"Maiden Voyage (Boatolin)"

Art and Art History Lecturer and recent graduate Rosa Nussbaum (M.F.A., Studio Art, 2018) is a German-born English artist who uses performance, sculpture, and new media in her work. For her M.F.A. project, Nussbaum challenged herself by building and playing a floating instrument (she’s neither a musician nor a boat builder) and showcased the performance as a video installation during the 2018 M.F.A. thesis exhibition, Affordable Dream House.

Nussbaum built her "boatolin" with a stitch and glue boat building technique, sewing together panels of marine grade plywood with wire and sealing and strengthening the joints with epoxy. She spent hours in her apartment complex’s pool, testing the vessel and making adjustments before performing a live show at the Glasgow International 2018 art festival, where the audience was encouraged to join her in the water and feel the music as she plucked and bowed the three strings stretched across the boatolin’s body.

“Sound is embodied and personal, it literally vibrates you,” says Nussbaum. "I think of sound as sculptural material. It can command space in a way visual work cannot.”

To see more of Nussbaum’s work, visit www.rosanussbaum.com