

This is for a Cal State San Bernardino student's Senior Project to interview a working professional in his field. He had seen my work and tracked me down.

1. Can you give me a brief description of yourself?

I'm an artist: freelance graphic and web designer, and a painter.

2. When did you realize you wanted a career in graphic design?

I had graduated with a BFA and thought I would try my hand at design. I liked it, it's very frustrating in the beginning as you don't know the programs that well... so I wasn't sure I wanted the career until I had gotten the gist of the 'language.'

3. How did you get your career started in graphic design?

I moved here from SF after taking a few classes... studied some more down here... put the word out I was looking to get into design professionally... my cousin was at a party and met someone who was looking for a beginning designer/production artist... and voila.

4. What do you like/dislike most about being a graphic design artist?

I love freelancing now, love the freedom and the variety of working at home. I love the project-oriented style. I hated working in offices, I'm just not wired that way. The long hours were very hard, and now that I can make my own time I love it. Sometimes it can be inconsistent and that's not easy, but it helps to save. Occasionally I'll get a very difficult client after I've been roped into something.

5. Would you prefer to work exclusively for a company or as a freelance designer?

Freelance by a longshot.

6. Which companies have you worked for? Who was your most recent client and what was the project?

Honestly, too many to mention. I'm constantly juggling. Retouching for NBC was a recent big project. I can't tell you much about it as it's confidential. But I will tell you that masking well is a skill that takes practice and retouching too is an art in and of itself. If you're really into detail oriented work, than this is the job for you. It involves drawing in individual strands of hair usually. This was 15 hour days for 3 days in a row, then an 8 hour day of revision. I don't usually have to work like this but I do get crazy deadlines sometimes and so will you.

7. Do you actively seek out clients?

Not anymore, but I am on yelp and do get quite a bit of business from there.

8. What would be the average starting salary for someone who is just starting out?

Sorry, I have no idea.

9. Have you ever done work for free? Would you recommend working for free?

In the beginning I did but I don't recommend it and I never do it now. Do work for yourself, set up practice projects. But unless it's a real learning internship don't work for free... try to work for some kind of trade. Even if it's a home cooked dinner by a family member.

10. Have you ever collaborated with other people when working on a design?

Sometimes design is a collaborative process with the client, but I haven't collaborated in a very long time. I like working alone.

11. Do you have any other background in the visual arts, like painting or drawing, which helps you in your field?

Yes, I have a BFA and I still paint and exhibit around town. I think that background was invaluable and sets me apart from the field.

12. Who is your target audience?

It changes with each client.

13. How much do you let your clients influence you when working on a design?

That's a funny question. How much do I 'let them'? It's more how much they 'let me.' Some clients have no idea what they want and give you free reign. Designers groan when they hear 'I'll like it when I see it' because that usually means constant revisions. Others know exactly what they want but don't know how to execute it. At the end of the day, you can try to sway the client from doing something awful (I'd rather quite a job than use the Papyrus or Comic Sans font) but the client is always right. You want them happy so they'll give you return business.

14. Can you give me a brief walkthrough through your processes during a project?

Websites I take a week to design after talking to the client and then depending on how many revisions and how quickly they give me material I plug everything in. With entertainment print design, sometimes the client gives me ideas, but often I just come up with concepts and jump right in. This is after doing things for many years... some new clients want to see thumbnails/sketches and I'll give them 3 or 4 rough drafts, usually mocked up in Photoshop.

15. What news have you heard in the field of graphic design that has really piqued your interest?

I'm always hearing about new avenues in web design. I'm too busy to study them and really am not as interested in the technical aspect so I outsource to programmers who stay on top of the very latest.

16. Which top 5 companies would you want to work for and why?

I wouldn't want to work for anyone but myself again. I'm so happy doing this!

17. Where do you see yourself 5 years from now?

I'd like to have 2 or 3 people working for me on the less interesting more rudimentary projects and revisions.

18. Which skills should a student focus on before graduating college that can benefit them in the world of graphic design?

Learn Photoshop and html5. Learn them until you master them. Set up projects for yourself and carry them out. Work until your eyes hurt. They're like learning a new language and they take time. If you know of a printing shop ask if they need an intern, as you'll learn 80% from being 'on the job.' I did that before my production job and it really helped.

19. What advice would you give someone who had just graduated and is in the process of looking for work in the field of graphic design?

Keep practicing and put the work out. Get with Creative Circle and Creative Hotlist and put together an interesting portfolio of only your best projects (online, nobody really looks at print portfolios anymore as far as I know, unless that's all you're doing.) Very often you'll get work by chance, and then you need to prove your ability and desire to learn by staying late and always offering to help.

20. All in all are you happy with the career you had chosen?

Now I am, it took a lot of trial and error, but now I truly love it.