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Timothy Carvalho: Professionalism in the Classroom

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Timothy Carvalho is an adjunct instructor in the Graphic Design program at IADT Las Vegas. He has taught in the program off and on since 2005 as a part-time way of pursuing his passion to teach and mentor hopeful designers. As an award-winning designer and creative director, Tim brings a level of excellence and professional experience to the classroom that gives his students a unique look into what the real world of advertising and design is like.

His 15 year career has had its challenges and successes, and he brings those experiences into his lessons as he tells stories and gives insights into the profession. He'll tell his students that this industry is not for the faint of heart, it's difficult and challenging and only the best will make it. "Everything you do in the classroom is a reflection of your heart and passion for your craft, and you have to give it your all." As he works with his students he continually grounds each assignment with real-world application, speaking about what the client may want or expect from them. "We're not hired to make pretty pictures or create fine art," he'll say, "designers are hired for our brains. Our clients need us to be able to strategically and creatively solve business problems for them. Weather it's a logo, or a mailer, or an integrated branding campaign, you have to be able to approach each project with the goal of communicating the Client's message to the intended target audience, in a smart, strategic, and visually engaging way. And you have to strive to be the best at it."

At the start of each new quarter, Tim spends time getting to know the students in his classes, what their backgrounds and future goals are. "It's interesting to see the diversity of backgrounds, skills and interests that these students have." As the quarter progresses, he works to tailor the coursework to the needs of the students in the class. "No class is ever the same. Sometimes I'll have students with a good deal of experience so far, other times I'll have students that are just beginning their education and haven't even used a Mac before!" By getting to know where each student is at, he finds that he can customize the projects to be challenging to their skill level, while still teaching the material needed for the course.

Tim has a passion for mentoring and teaching student designers. "I love teaching and guiding young designers, inspiring them to be the best at their craft that they can be." He's even created an internship program at his studio, Carvalho Creative, that allows him to take mentoring to the next level, providing real-world projects for students to work on during their internship. "I don't treat interns differently than any other designer in my studio. They work 8 hr days and take on projects big and small. In fact, almost every designer I've ever hired has had to survive my internship program before being brought on full-time. It's very difficult and demanding, and I ask a lot out of them. But it's so beneficial for them too. They go from an academic environment where they have a week or two to produce a compelling design, to a real live studio where they have only hours to do the same thing. It's really a baptism-by-fire type of experience. And it's not all glamorous big-time work for Nike and Pepsi either! I want my interns to experience what working at an every-day small agency is like." As a local small design business, Carvalho Creative has mostly small to medium sized local clients (salons, developers, churches, bands, etc.) with a couple of larger accounts (Pinnacle Entertainment, UNLV, and the Regional Flood Control District). Interns work on projects from any and all clients in the studio and learn what it is like to work under a creative director, within client constraints, tight deadlines, and with production concerns seeing a project from concept stage through to print production.

Tim's long-term plan is to eventually become a full-time professor at the University level while overseeing his studio operations. He is currently working to further his education to make this plan a reality, and has just completed the first year of his three-year MFA program at SCAD (Savannah College of Art and Design). So far in his first year of Graduate work, Tim has explored some interesting themes and topics that will inform his proposed thesis idea. "My graduate research focuses on the exploration and definition of stylistic movements as it relates to design, communication, and establishing meaning. My thesis will actually be the start of a book that I want to publish on the topic of Design Styles."

One project that he produced this year was a re-telling of the Snow White story for a contemporary, social-media driven audience. Analyzing Snow White's downfall to the Witch posing as an Innocent Old Woman, he extracted the moral lesson: Don't Talk to Strangers, and re-positioned it as a message to elementary school aged children, Don't Friend Strangers! "As with the original fairy tale, this would be a great lesson to communicate to our modern day children, particularly girls and boys ages 8-12. Children of this age level are naturally trusting. The majority of them haven't had the experiences in life that teach you to be cautious of strangers and that there are some people in this world that are bad and will want to hurt you. Additionally, children are being exposed to the web, and particularly social media, and a younger and younger age. While technically they are not allowed to have a facebook account until age 13, I know plenty of kids younger than that that are already on social media in some form, and even some parents that allow them to sign-up as early as 7 or 8 to 'keep in touch with family.' I feel that communicating them before they engage in social media with this message will have a positive effect on their online behaviors and safety." Using the theme of Snow White, he designed a whole campaign of pieces including collectable stickers, t-shirts, and posters, as well as an active Facebook page for parents and students to learn more about online safety.

An additional major accomplishment that came out of Tim's Graduate work this year, was his authorship of a book, "The Evolution of Vegas Style: Typography and Signage from 1940-2013." In this 100-page volume, Tim reviews and analyzes the typographic movements and treatments applied in Las Vegas signage throughout roughly the past 70 years. Being born and raised in Las Vegas, he has a unique perspective and interest in this topic. In this retrospective he provides an analysis of the movements, styles, and treatments unique to three stylistic and historical periods in Las Vegas. He explores the consistencies in each period in the way of typeface selections, lighting applications and overall style imposed. Additionally, a historical background of each period is provided and the stylistic movements are discussed in context with the political, business, and marketing influences taking place at that time.

As Tim is working to finish his MFA over the next two years, he will continue to be an Adjunct Instructor at IADT Las Vegas, mentoring and guiding his students, holding them to a high level of professional excellence, and encouraging them to invest their whole heart into the industry to become the best designers that they can be.

