

## Written Interview Questionnaire

Please review and answer the following questions and **return via email attachment to [jveeder@sfsu.edu](mailto:jveeder@sfsu.edu)** by Monday 2/12 at 9am. If you answered any of these questions explicitly in your application, please just write “statement” or “CV” or “letter” after the question. **Please keep your answers concise.**

**Candidate Name :** PINO TROGU

1. **San Francisco State University and the Design and Industry Department in particular has a culturally and ethnically diverse student population with varying skills, skill levels, and career objectives. How would you describe your ability or past experience in working with such a student body?**

I am myself a part of that cultural and ethnical diversity that shapes the United States which, as Jean Baudrillard said, is “a concept, not just a country.” I first came to the US from Sardinia speaking zero English, but quickly adapted to the new environment by keeping an open mind and a flexible outlook towards the new people around me. In my university teaching I have worked with students at all levels of skills and I have proved through my class assignments and the resulting completed projects, that almost all students in a class can be brought to a high level of competency in a specific design domain.

I have offered classes that cover a wide range of applied and theoretical subjects, including exhibit design, web design, publication design, as well as color theory, criticism, and design fundamentals.

All students, no matter what their career objectives, will be enriched by the broadness of my teaching topics and the specificity of my practical knowledge.

2. **As a tenure-track Assistant Professor, you will be required to teach a three-course load, conduct student advising, participate in department committees, as well as coordinate a facility. How do you see yourself managing and succeeding in these tasks?**

I consider teaching an ongoing learning experience, and view every new class as an opportunity for personal growth. For this reason, and to satisfy my appetite for fresh and challenging material, I customize each class based on the variables and needs at hand. My classes will not be cookie-cutter templates to be repeated year in and year out in order to minimize “load”.

As a father of two young children, having taught before, and also having worked for many years both in my own and other design firms, I can transmit to my students the values of my design experience.

As in any design project that requires team work, running an academic department is a multi-person endeavor. As a member of that effort I will contribute my opinions and work towards a common vision for the school.

I take great care and pride in keeping a functional environment around me. I can also inspire others to maintain a working facility where tools and machinery are an organic extension of our senses. If something is broken, I always fix it.

**3. In addition to the responsibilities mentioned in the last question, you will be expected to pursue ongoing creative professional development that can take a variety of forms from personal creative work to involvement in professional societies. How do you see yourself balancing and/or integrating the two sets of activities?**

There is some truth to the apparent dichotomy between school work and “real world” work. Most students feel this distinction even more than I. I feel that creativity and professionalism are indispensable ingredients in both school work and outside-of-school work. As an educator, I am interested in pursuing research projects that bridge the high visual-education needs of post-industrial societies with the basic visual needs of developing societies, using the tools and research infrastructure that a university can offer. As a first interpreter and messenger of verbal and visual content, I view the aims of my classroom work as being not much different from the aims of my “real world” work. Both strive to achieve a sound “morality of visual communication.”

**4. Characterize each of the undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate (if applicable) educational programs you attended and identify what you obtained from each.**

4a.

Istituto Statale d'Arte (ISDA). Oristano, Sardinia, Italy. 1979

Originally established as a trade school to provide formal training in the local established crafts, woodworking and ceramics, it evolved into a multi-faceted design school inspired by the Bauhaus. This was my public high school education which included five years of rigorous training in the fundamentals of drawing, both still-life and architectural. It included in-depth history of art and design, and finally industrial design: drawing, design, model-making. Many related subjects were explored, which would be valuable to me in later years: symmetry groups, topology, bionics. See: trogu.com – keyword: Oristano.

4b.

Istituto Superiore Industrie Artistiche (ISIA). Urbino, Italy. 1983

This is where my undergraduate education took place, one of only four such design schools in Italy. The Istituto offered the benefits of a low enrollment (100 students) as well as free tuition. The four years I spent in Urbino were characterized by rigorous and practical training in the fundamentals of typography and graphic design. I was also immersed in and benefited from a long tradition of aesthetic principles going back to the Renaissance, in particular to the humanistic traditions of the printed book.

The culture of graphic design as a product of that long tradition was coupled with strict practical knowledge of the related aspects of design. If a book were put in our hands, we learned to calculate the exact cost of its production. If we were given a photograph, we learned to create a

similar one in the darkroom and know the formulas of the chemicals used. Craftsmanship and humanism, qualities that once lived together in the persona of the “printer”, were transmitted to this new professional called “Graphic Designer”. See: trogu.com – keyword: Urbino.

4c.

Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). Providence. 1985

After nine years of design education and formal training I wanted to devote my energies to more theoretical work. RISD has a long and strong tradition in the crafts, but offered at the same time a fertile ground for the more specialized work that I was seeking. The aim of my study there was to search for some applicable “rules” to the practice of design, loosely framed under the topic of “design criticism”. My final thesis on this topic took the unusual form of a documentary film, produced with the collaboration of RISD teachers and of Brown University, where I took my filmmaking classes. See: trogu.com – keyword: Providence.

**5. Describe your activities in conjunction with professional societies and/or not-for-profit organizations related to your field?**

5.

I am a past member of the Graphic Artists Guild, and helped in the redesign of the local chapter’s website.

I am on the advisory board of the Center for Typographic Research. Founded by the printer Jack Stauffacher, the center will focus on issues related to the philosophy of typography and the tradition of the book.

**6. What is your experience with grant writing and proposals for funding support?**

I am a past recipient of an American Field Service (AFS) scholarship which covered a full year of study in an American high school.

I am also a past recipient of a Fulbright scholarship to the US, which allowed me to complete my graduate studies in graphic design.

**7. Please give a brief example of one each of your beginning, intermediate, and advanced graphic design class projects. Additionally, you may wish to provide existing or proposed syllabi and project assignment sheets that relate.**

7a.

Beginning graphic design. Introduction to typography. Current semester, SJSU. Spring 2007  
First exercise in “digital” typography.

Unless it is done in a separate letterpress workshop, there is no practical way to conduct a beginning class on typography using the real “beginning”, the composition in metal type. Therefore, I decided to focus immediately on “setting type”, using the tool every student has: the computer. I did introduce type by showing a metal type case and outlining typeface styles.

Students were then asked to collect type specimens and group them according to style. They were asked to make a further grouping involving “relations of contrast”: i.e. weight, rhythm, scale, etc. The project consisted in illustrating one contrast by comparing two blocks of type, one on the left page and one on the right page of a double page format (11x17 flat).

By “setting type” and printing it, the student is immediately confronted with the difficulty of controlling the characteristics of the medium: the computer. These characteristics are transparent but they are also “hidden”. The resulting printed page forces the student to look and see what he has just “typeset”. See attached PDF: syllabus and project assignment sheet.

7b.

Intermediate graphic design. Digital applications methodology. SJSU, Fall 2006.

Digital-analog design punch cards. An inventory of objects and concepts. Format 8.5x11 printed both sides.

In considering the progression from analog to digital modes of design, I presented a case study of sound reproduction, showing the progression from vinyl record, to Sony Walkman, to iPod, and related objects. I traced a progression not only between the objects but also within the history of the individual objects. Each student researched a topic and produced a “card”. Cards were commercially printed and each student received three complete sets. See attached PDF: syllabus, project assignment, and samples of finished product. More samples can be found at trogu.com – keyword: digital.

7c.

Advanced graphic design. Systems in design. Virginia Commonwealth University. VCU, Spring 2001.

In this class I encouraged my students to look beyond the immediate problems of design toward a more comprehensive definition of system. Borrowing mainly from biology for the terminology, I invited the students to research specific systems as they relate to the topic of the environment. They looked up keywords such as: cooperation, competition, cycle, entropy, games, hierarchy, evolution, selection, chance, organization.

For their first assignment, the students produced simple booklets on the topic of the environment. In the second assignment they developed their own system and a presentation format for topics that related specifically to the relation between humans and the environment, both natural and man-made. Some of the final projects included books and other media that presented the exploration of systems in music, golden section, architecture, and sports. See attached PDF: Bartok book, sample project.

**8. Describe your abilities to teach graphic design via traditional graphic design methods and materials as well as via new media technologies. How do you differentiate the two? How do you bridge the two?**

I am part of that group of designers that was trained traditionally (analog) and that later had to “re-train” (digital). Traditionally, I can draw, cut, assemble, print, bind books and “make”

objects. In this process everything is visible and tangible, not only the end result, but each individual step.

I use the new technologies every day and I have taught web design recently.

In print and CMYK I make the students “see” the invisible steps that are inherently hidden in the technology, but which always produce a “visible” object. In CMYK I remind them constantly that the real frame of reference is not the computer screen, whose scale shifts constantly, but the human being (eye, hand, viewing distance) interacting with the final printed piece, whose scale does not change once it’s produced.

In RGB and the web, the same detached relationship to the final web page can be made “real” only by directly writing the HTML code. Therefore for the first steps of web design I insist on simple hand coding, where every action produces a precise and identifiable result.

I differentiate between traditional media and new media in a very simple way. The former lives in the realm of print defined by the subtractive color system of light: CMYK and the printed page. The latter belongs to the world of “non-print” defined by the additive color system of light: RGB and the luminous screen.

Just as the two color systems are part of the same “color set”, we can define the old and the new media as being part of the same “graphic design set”.

In general, I bridge the two media by applying in much the same way to both the rules of typography and good design. But I differentiate the two by pointing out strong contrasts in the end results. While printed matter is generally a finite physical object (Its references of course are infinite.) a non-print product is usually a constantly moving object, its elasticity an intrinsic property. When designing for the screen, great attention has to be paid to the extreme varying conditions that will constantly modify its appearance and therefore its communication value. See also: Technology, RGB & CMYK, and Identity and Diversity in my Statement of Philosophy.

**9. Where do you see visual communication design (incorporating graphic design and digital media design) going over the next decade and what opportunities will that present to designers? What direction should design programs take to respond?**

The internet has made it possible for anyone to write, design, publish and otherwise manipulate the visual elements in ways that were once the province of a small group of people. The next ten years will still be strongly influenced by the major changes that technology has produced in the design profession during the last twenty years. While concepts such as identity and branding continue to drive in large part anything that relates to the visual, the “profession of graphic design” is a concept in need of a center.

The challenge is to acknowledge that the technological shift has occurred, and to move forward in a way that balances the new technologies with a clear historical perspective. A vision that values past history is indispensable for understanding how design continues to evolve.

Inculcating that historical perspective is one direction design programs should take.

Another, and one that is especially needed in the technological revolution, is a continued emphasis that whatever the design or the technology, graphic design values are human values, not machine values. The relationship between eye, ear, hand, mind and heart, is still the best frame of reference. We must use machines, but strive to make the machines as simple to use as the pencil.

**10. Describe how your professional and/or academic experiences have prepared you for the role of Coordinator of the Visual Communication Concentration?**

My cultural and academic backgrounds as well as my European perspectives are a good fit for the diverse environment at San Francisco State. I have previously demonstrated the flexibility and expertise to teach a wide range of design classes at all levels – vertically, from freshman foundation to graduate seminars, and horizontally, over a broad spectrum of design disciplines: print, environmental graphics, web design.

I am dedicated to teaching and I believe in the power and influence that I can have on the single class and on the individual student. Finally, I believe that in teaching, the student is the most important piece of the puzzle. Dedication to teaching means dedication to the student. I know that I am a good teacher when I can sometimes take pleasure in a simple thank you note from a student:

I really appreciate you always taking the extra time to help us out beyond the classroom with problems and taking the time to make sure we understand why they are problems. I am really grateful with all of your help with this website, and all of this semester. I have really enjoyed simply coming to class and doing the assignments, but what makes it different is that you really take the time to show us how things work by teaching and showing, versus how others just expect you to know everything – that's why we are students right? [...] The range that you have covered has been more than I have learned in many other classes.

J.G.

I wanna thank you for your teaching and helping in these four months. Your passion has made the course be the best class that I ever had.

T.F.

## **11. Do you have any questions for us?**

I have a few wishes.

a.

A state-of-the-art digital graphics lab next to a lab with traditional printing technology for the purpose of “bridging the gap”.

b.

A design library full of books, including the classics of typography written by typographers and printers.

c.

Studios with large tables for each individual student, with adjustable inclined planes and adjustable height for writing, typing, drawing and working either seated or standing up.

P.T.

San Francisco

7 February 2007