Educated, Designed and Practice – Understanding skills in a Complex World

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Engaging Tools

• Author(s) Name:
Eric Zeigler; Brian Carpenter

• University or Company Affiliation:
University of Toledo

• Abstract (300 words):
Tools are extensions of organisms, and therefore are entangled with the development of the human species. Humans began with simple levers and inclined planes, and then by the Industrial Revolution, machinery was increasingly aesthetically designed, wherein individual parts were shrouded and access to a visual understanding was obscured.

To add to this shrouding of parts, more recently there has been an implementation of new and complex coded languages, programs, systems, and invisible infrastructures to order the movements and components of twenty-first century tools. Consequently, it is becoming increasingly difficult for students in art and design studies to engage with the tools they encounter in both practical and creative capacities, even though they are positioned to be the first end-users of state-of-the-art technologies. Students who are unable to fully utilize twenty-first century tools are no longer able to develop reflective appreciation, not only for their roles as tool-users, but also the ability to understand more deeply the connection between tool, hand, and mind.
This session discusses an approach for cultivating such informed flexibility. In a course called Foundations of Art Studio Technology (FAST), we demystify forms of technology for students. We dissect tools down to their basic components while asking students to determine each tool’s limitations through manual engagement, play and observation. Additionally, students begin to coalesce an understanding of the physical structure and philosophical purpose of tools through readings by Heidegger, Crawford, and Noë. FAST culminates with abilities to understand and use tools not yet encountered. Students engage, master, even subvert, the ways in which tools organize them, while employing these skills in upper level courses for conceptual and interdisciplinary artworks and design, as well as for innovative prototyping methods.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

ERIC ZEIGLER

Eric Zeigler is an artist, designer, and researcher whose current work involves photography and unconventional transformation of images. He received an MFA in Photography from the San Francisco Art Institute, and exhibits his work nationally. Zeigler is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Art at the University of Toledo. He created and runs the Art Print Center which serves as a hub for all digital artwork production by university students, faculty, and local artists.

BRIAN CARPENTER

Brian Carpenter is an artist, curator and Assistant Professor based in Toledo, Ohio. Utilizing a range of media through 2D and 3D methods, his work explores the pathological constructs of affliction and its relationship to history and cultural identity. His current research involves inquiries into tools as extensions of organisms and their role in the organization of a species.

Carpenter attended the University of Toledo where he received a BA through the University College individualized program concentrating in sculpture, photography, and architecture. Later he earned his MFA at Cranbrook Academy of Art and was the recipient of the Cranbrook Merit Award in photography. Carpenter is the Co-founder and Director of Curation of Contemporary Art Toledo, a non-profit organization dedicated to the production, presentation, and promotion of ideas from visual artists from around the Great Lake regions and the world.