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Self Reflection on my Senior Multimedia Arts Capstone Project: From Dali to Dowling: Mapping out the Tufts University Permanent Art Collection on Campus

When I set out to create a website that showed viewers where art was on the Tufts campus, I thought it would be a breeze. After all, didn't I already know how to use Photoshop, Flash and Dreamweaver? These would be the program's I would use and I'd just throw something together and have the rest of the semester to just relax and enjoy my last semester at Tufts.

I was very, very wrong. After meeting with Laura McCarthy and Doug Bell in early February, I knew a set direction my project would go in. I would make an interactive map, inspired by the map from the University of Tennessee's website <http://www.ewing-gallery.utk.edu/permanent/permanent.php>, a “highlights” section that would display art that is not open to the public (including the art in the Gifford House) and a walking tour.

The interactive map seemed the most straightforward to me so I started working on that section first. I easily made a map of the campus (including adding a building for the Granoff Music Center) and sliced it in ImageReady. Now, to do the individual buildings. I started by making Flash movies for the Tisch library and Aidekman Arts Center. I tested color schemes and fonts and decided to make all the buttons look the same but change colors when rolled over. No two building pages have the same colors involved in the rollover scheme. I really liked this element of my project because although it is very simple and straightforward, the changing colors add an element of surprise and a playfulness that I like to include in my work. I also think that it is fitting for such a site because its for displaying art after all; it should be colorful!

I was happy with my individual Flash movies that correlated to all the buildings once the names of all the art were typed up and the hours added. To me, this allowed viewers to click on a building and know what art existed there. There were no pictures. I thought this to be a good plan because it would

force people to go see what the art looked like. After meeting with Chris Cavalier, she made me realize that people are very visual and would, in all likelihood, not even read the text. However, if there were pictures, they would be more likely to stay on the site and see what art is where. Furthermore, since the images would be small, it would make them want to go see everything in person to get a better look at the art.

So after that meeting, I set out to add images. This process took up the vast majority of the total time it took me to do my project. It was worth it though, because I think that it looks much nicer now that the user can rollover the names of the artworks and see a picture of it pop up.

The highlights section was the second aspect of the project that I tackled. It was more the gallery members' idea to have such a section and this was my first (of hopefully many) experience in dealing with a "client" and creating something that they want and making it to their specifications. I was not allowed to say where any of the artwork in the highlights section is located because many of the pieces are in the Gifford House. To protect these fine works, they are interspersed with other artworks on campus that are considered highlights so as not to seem all located in private places.

I liked doing the highlights section because it forced me to do everything very critically. I wanted the left and right arrows to be perfectly centered and I wanted the pieces to have a uniform size. To accomplish this, I had to use rulers and carefully line everything up. It was a tedious task but ultimately, I am very happy with the outcome.

The walking tour was important to me because as a gallery attendant, a question I often get asked is "where is the permanent art collection?" Before doing this project, I would simply say "in storage," or "dispersed around campus." With the walking tour, I can now tell them exactly where art is on campus and even explicitly tell them how to get there.

I think this project is important and I am happy that I get to give back to Tufts, if even in such a small way. I have polled friends and fellow classmates to see if they were aware of art on campus. The majority said no and when I specifically asked if they knew of any art in the library, the only piece that

most could recall was the bronze sculpture of a woman sitting on a bench in the hallway towards Tower Cafe called “Sophia.” Since I have started the project, the people I have told about art in the library have all told me how they seek out the art and how shocked they were that they did not notice it before. It was easy to tell them where art was in the library and with a webpage devoted to it, it will be even simpler. This could enlighten all the students at Tufts and make them more aware of art in their midst.

I learned a great deal about myself and about Photoshop, Dreamweaver and Flash while doing this project. I learned how to pace myself and to start very early in order not to be completely stressed out. I also learned that I have very little patience for creating buttons; this was remedied by making a handful a day in order to finish and not lose my sanity. I learned how to work as an employee for a group with a goal in mind; I am doing this for Tufts and for the art gallery and thus need to tailor my ideas to fit their needs. I learned how to make sacrifices for the good of the project; I sacrificed every weekend from mid-February onwards, including the days when it was gorgeous outside. I learned how to persevere; I spent long hours in the windowless Mac lab in Halligan 105 and worked hard until the project was finished. I also learned how to look up answers to my questions online and thus learn a great deal more about the workings of Photoshop, Dreamweaver and Flash.

I'd like to thank my readers who have all contributed greatly to this project. Laura and Doug: thanks for helping me brainstorm in the beginning and thanks for giving me lists of art in every building. It was a great starting point and it really gave me a direction to go with this project. Amy, thanks for being so organized with figuring out when we could go over this and for ok-ing my project ideas. Chris: where do I start? Thanks for answering all of my nit-picky questions ranging from fixing broken links to dynamic text. Your sound advice was always superb and you were always there when I started having doubts about what to do. Your feedback was so helpful and I really owe the success of this project to you.