



**Vanessa
Cruz**

Professor Graphic Design + Digital Media

Fulbright Scholar and Specialist, Media Arts and Education

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Artist Statement

The mythical and allegorical world of storytelling is at the heart of Vanessa B. Cruz's animated films. Her subject matter is one of ancient stories, told through a very modern sense of the visual. The aesthetic in her films, like that of the story, are shown through many layers of film photographed together to make a visual pastiche. Her films start with a raw primal emotion that builds upon itself as the film progresses, climaxing in a character's self-awareness. The treatment of her films is very similar to that of painting with its many textures and layers of visual meaning. Her inspirations for the stories come from life experiences that change us to a new sense of awareness. For example, the first time you leave home and the thrill and fear that comes along with that experience. Becoming a parent for the first time is another experience many people can relate to. She takes these experiences and distills them to their very core, as the base of the story. Using images from nature and of her life around her, usually people very close to her, she places them in these situations, where she can control every facet of the aesthetic, where she can explore and find a visual solution.

Biography

Vanessa B. Cruz is a three-time Fulbright Award recipient: first as a Scholar Award in 2012 in Media Arts, where she lived in Dublin, Ireland working with the National College of Art and Design and gathering research for her projects. Second, as a Specialist Award in 2014, teaching MFA and BFA students at the Fachhochschule St. Pölten, in St. Pölten Austria. And most recently, as a Specialist Award in 2022, working with the non-profit GerHub in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, developing course curriculum and analyzing outreach and internet presence. Ms. Cruz completed a collaborated video projection project for the Jacksonville Symphony and the Museum of Contemporary Arts, Jacksonville. She attended The California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, CA, where she earned her MFA and holds a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design. In 2005, she joined the University of North Florida faculty after working in the animation industry for over ten years. She has worked for such studios as 20th Century Fox Television Animation, Film Roman, as well as created her own independent films. Her films have been shown internationally and she's won awards at the Ottawa International Film Festival and Oslo Animation Festival. Ms. Cruz was also curator for screenings at the REDCAT in Los Angeles, Santa Monica Museum of Art, as well as the Japanese American National Museum. She has also received the 2008 Individual Artist Fellowship Award from the State of Florida, and in 2009 the UNF Summer Scholarship grant, which helped fund two films: "Icarus" and "Eve as a Young Child". Ms. Cruz served as a panelist on the 2010 Individual Artist Fellowship Award from the State of Florida for Media Arts, and in 2016 received the UNF COAS Dean Leadership Council Faculty Fellowship.