

Graphic artist, Roller Girl concocts Design Week

AMANDA SIERADZKI
COUNCIL ON CULTURE & ARTS

Stephanie Irigoyen diligently works at her desktop with headphones in place—a fairly traditional image to conjure up when imagining the life of a graphic designer. However, coming through her earbuds is a slightly uncommon soundscape: spooky podcasts. Irigoyen loves listening to the hair-raising folkloric histories of “Lore,” reports from a fantastical desert town in “Welcome to Night Vale,” and serialized docudramas, “The Black Tapes.”

This aural practice intersects with her visual creations, sometimes influencing the work if she’s listening to Halloween music when completing a holiday graphic, or providing a welcome contrast if she is working on something light and happy. Regardless of if it’s a podcast or music, Irigoyen says she cannot work in silence and she finds she is able to complete projects much faster with an audio backdrop.

“I enjoy feeling like I’m listening the radio from another supernatural world,” muses Irigoyen. “Sometimes people walk by my office and see me laughing, and it’s because the podcast got funny for a second before it transports you somewhere creepier. There’s a nice balance there.”

At the age of 15, Irigoyen was very much into the paranormal as a fan of the “Twilight” series. Thanks to that particular fandom, she earned \$11,000 producing designs for an online T-shirt shop that promoted the characters from the books. Her mother often reminded her how art and design seemed to be a perfect fit for Irigoyen, who from the age of 10 was perpetually doodling on the computer.

Though she was always coloring and experimenting with different mediums, Irigoyen aspired to become a film director when she first stepped onto Florida State University’s campus. Her dream quickly shifted to communications, and finally to studio art where she settled into her calling for graphic design and digital art. While she still dabbles in sculpture and painting, she much prefers digital work and illustrating, and notes how her winding career trajectory still fits communications into her art making.

“There’s a cross between communications and art because you have to understand how to communicate what



WHITNEY BAUER

Graphic designer Stephanie Irigoyen has put together Design Week, which begins today.

your art is saying,” says Irigoyen. “People are attracted to good aesthetics. Well designed things not only look better but they function better and make life easier.”

Though she’s long outgrown her obsessions with teenage vampire romance, Irigoyen, 25, still finds inspiration in popular culture and considers her art and design to be colorful and playful. “Harry Potter,” “Friends,” “Parks and Recreation,” and “Gilmore Girls” rank high on her list of movies and television shows, and lately she’s noticed her work trending towards ‘90s nostalgia. She enjoys working with purples and yellows, but often finds that her feelings dictate the color palette she utilizes.

Her creative process begins with web searches to incite inspiration. Next she builds her mood board, a collection of images, typography, and keywords that give off the vibe or feeling of the ultimate end-product. Irigoyen uses this collage of sorts as her springboard for sketches on paper until she turns to Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator to begin the trial and error process. She reveres the magic of the undo button, and tests her ideas in a variety of ways until they take shape.

“There’s a joke among designers when you’re working on the computer that you’re just moving your design over one pixel,” smiles Irigoyen, much like hanging a picture just right. “I’ve definitely stood around in a circle with



If you go

What: Design Week Tallahassee

When: Oct. 16-21 (times vary)

Where: Domi Station, 914 Railroad Ave

Cost: Free to \$30

Contact: For more information, call 850-803-6490 or visit <http://designweektlh.com>.

my coworkers moving a design back and forth one pixel at a time until it’s perfect. It’s so precise that I don’t think anyone else would notice.”

For her position at the Florida Center for Interactive Media, Irigoyen relies on her perfectionism to create functioning designs for web courses for state grant departments. Her day-to-day work encompasses designing logos and webpages, as well as branding and working with code like CSS and HTML. Off the clock, she freelances and is specifically seeking more opportunities to work with restaurants and help with their branding.

A burgeoning adventurer, Irigoyen makes it a goal to introduce something new into her routine every so often. She enjoys traveling nationally, and has most recently been to Nashville and Boston, as well as internationally to Peru, which she loves for its diversity and cuisine. She’s participated locally, for the past five years as a part of the Tallahassee Roller Girls. She names the rebranding of the team last year as one of her favorite projects, and worked with a local photographer to design advertisements.

“I was never an athlete since I was always the kid in the corner reading or drawing in my sketchbook,” says Irigoyen. “With roller derby I figured out a lot of ways to push myself mentally and physically. That was what started me on my personal journey to try new things.”

While she revels in the rough around the edges sport, she was sidelined in March with a concussion and put under doctor’s orders that she would heal faster by sitting in a dark room without working on the computer, watching TV

or reading. This left Irigoyen with a chunk of time to sit with her thoughts, which eventually wandered to a networking event she had attended in town. She realized she didn’t know very many fellow designers in Tallahassee, being one of the few in her BFA class to stay in town.

Thus, the first annual Design Week was born. After healing and headache-free, Irigoyen got to work for the past six months, intoxicated with momentum and wearing many hats like one of her favorite TV character Leslie Knope. She pulled together a weeklong event that unites presenters, sponsors, and artists together into a stronger design community. Kicking off today, designers will share their expertise and stories in free talks and ticketed workshops ranging from programming fundamentals to unique blends like cartography and design.

“I’ve learned a lot in this process, and I just want this to be a foundation for a community,” says Irigoyen. “I also want to showcase Tallahassee’s talent and make everyone feel welcomed and appreciated. Even if you’re not a designer and just want to learn something new, all of our talks are free and open to the public if you want to hear someone tell their story.”

Traveling to a Weapons of Mass Creation conference last August opened the door for Irigoyen to meet and bond with other designers. She’s hoping for similar results with Design Week as she is continually inspired by the work of fellow peers on social media sites like Twitter and Dribbble, a sharing site for designers.

She also hopes it will boost Tallahassee’s ambitions to become a tech hub. For her own objectives, Irigoyen hopes to make more designs that will have an effect on society and help populations gain greater visibility. She’s taken up rugby and dancing, and is adamant that keeping your life fresh and full of new skills helps to further your art.

“They say write what you know but unless you’re constantly learning, your writing is going to get stale and the same goes for art,” states Irigoyen. “We have the freedom to do just about anything, so if you’ve always wanted to dance, try a new class, or drive somewhere new. I think it’s important to get out of your comfort zone and experience new things to make better things.”