daily life

I co-founded and direct the USC Creative Media & Behavioral Health Center (est. 2010) — an organized research unit between the USC School of Cinematic Arts and the Keck School of Medicine.

I work with many departments and schools at my university, nationally, and internationally.

If you think that being a researcher is glamorous, you are very romantic 🙂

My research lab is named The Garden (after Epicurus' school) and is located on the USC University Park Campus at 3470 McClintock Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90089, Room 308. You can drop by or set up an appointment.

How I spend my time + some fun facts about the work

I develop research and collaborations for my division and

[school](#), and I perform various duties as a consultant in my areas of interest (health, behavior & interactive media). As the founder and director the USC Games For Health Initiative (est. 2007), my mission is to translate interactive media innovations to the health research and practitioner community, and develop new areas of investigation at the intersection of medicine, neuroscience, and public health. Toward that goal, I have been part of many interesting working groups including the [USC mHealth Collaboratory](#), USC Neuroplasticity & Repair in Degenerative Disorders Collaborative, the [Bridge Art + Science Alliance](#), and more.

Life involves a lot of lecturing and outreach at professional conferences and workshops (a.k.a. lots of traveling economy class and living out of a suitcase for weeks). I lecture primarily to people outside of the arts about how interactive entertainment can be used in education, public health, and medicine and synthesize the relevant evidence from basic to clinical science. At times, I get to lecture to people close to my area of training about applications of design in science and medicine, but in general, I prefer to find myself wherever I feel I am an outsider so I can learn something new.

I am fluent in "science" and can meet people more than halfway conceptually (except in molecular biology unless it is at a translational level). The past decade, I have also gained a lot of experience with mixed methods research, study design, management, and data analysis. What I don't know, I have wonderful collaborators who can take the lead, but it always helps to know what to ask for…

I get interviewed from time to time (see [press)](#). A favorite audio interview that is about virtual reality, art, and health is here: [CG Garage Podcast.](#) I also get interviewed about [virtual reality and safety,](#) and [children, addiction, and games](#) (Games for Change [lecture](#)). These topics were not necessarily my favorite topics to discuss, but the public seems to want to know more and more about them and my

activities have been strongly focused on design and technology ethics.

My students have a lot more awards than I do and my last award was for mentoring. I think that is a good thing! I teach a lifespan approach to developing interactive entertainment applications and experiences.

The most successful project I can brag about to date is The Brain Architecture Game, which promotes the science of early childhood and lifelong resilience. Someone is playing this game almost every day around the world. There is nothing more humbling and motivating for a designer than to know that something they made touches the lives of thousands of people. This feeling creates a sense of urgency for everything that we make.

FMX 2016 — Germany

I love writing (most of the time) and have maintained a semi-private/semi-public website since 1995. Lots of the old stuff

has vanished from the web and lives only on CD backups. I am sure it will come back to haunt me one day, as will my worst and best poetry…

I have co-developed, co-authored and contributed to 120+ proposals since 2007 for intramural, foundation, corporate and federal funding. A percentage of these have been successful and some are listed [here](#).

I [publish](#) in peer-reviewed and invited journals and proceedings, although not as regularly as faculty from the sciences and engineering. Scholarly output for MFA degree holders in the form of peer-reviewed publications is not as common in my field. Nothing I do is common in my field, but I aim to change that. If you want to change anything in the world, start doing more things you are not good at and go to places where you think you have little to offer. You will be surprised how much you can learn and how much you can teach others.

I have contributed to research development across all of our division's priority areas: game design, mobile, and environmental media and immersive technologies by working with faculty from my school and other units. It is more fun to work with other people. Collaborative work isn't easier, but it is better and more fun. Did I write 'fun' twice? Yes, I did…

I love teaching and supervise some awesome students from multiple disciplines across the USC campus on research projects, theses or dissertations. I designed the curriculum for [two new degrees at USC](#). I currently teach [CTIN 503](#) in the spring, and [IML 543](#) in the fall (theme changes annually). It has taken me many years to stop being uptight about teaching. Students, however, seem to be more and more stressed by life. I was too at their age, so maybe nothing really changes except you?

Fun facts beyond work

Other silly things you should know about me? It is not unusual that I am photographed cross-legged on tables or floors. Also, you never know what my next [hairstyle](#) will be. It is more boredom than vanity at this point. I hate salons and spas typically, but I have a deep emotional connection to Liberated salon in Glendale. They are good people and anyone who touches my head needs to feel like family. Aging needs way more grooming effort than I care to admit to…

Games for Change 2016 — Paris

My last remaining cat passed away in the spring of 2018 at the age of 14. Nini is still [quite popular](#) on YouTube. My previous cat (Damien) lived to be 19 and he took all my secrets with him when he passed. I have an astonishing number of cat pictures, and I am <u>not</u> ashamed to post [them](#). I also like dogs, birds, horses, sheep, and most four-legged creatures, but I am too busy with the aforementioned activities to maintain a petting zoo, or attain my dream farm at the moment

My favorite activity is staring into the blue sea for hours at a time (the perfect antidote to hours of staring at my computer screen even if you think it is cheesy) and spending time at my father's village in the Messinia region of Greece. I am a practical romantic and take full responsibility for what that means. Messinia is where I find peace. Crete, however, is where I feel alive. Greece is a place of many hidden wonders for everyone. Find yours and visit it often!

The drive on the way to my father's village in Messinia, Greece

A most favorite recent quote was uttered by my (also practical romantic) godfather:

> *"If you are going to take on a lover, you better eat your sandwich!"*

> *This quote that is often misattributed to Thomas Jefferson is also a good mantra:*

"If you want something you have never had, you must be willing to do something you have never done."

On a more serious note, I am a big fan of philosophy and one of my favorites is [Epicurus](). Among his many principal doctrines, a designer who is an amateur scientist should always remember this:

"If you fight against all your sensations, you will have no standard to which to refer, and thus no means of judging even those judgments which you pronounce false."