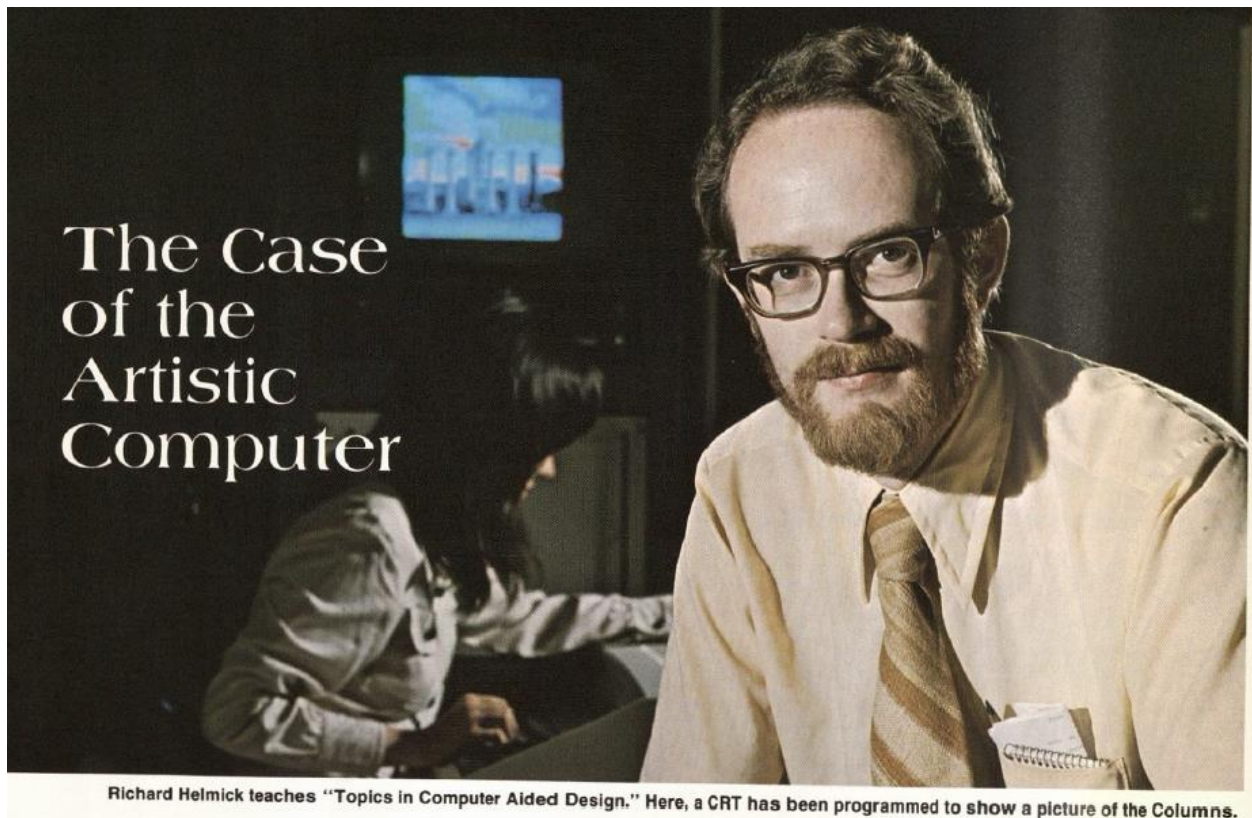


Richard Helmick Creates Legacy in Design with Digital Media

Artist Dick Helmick was initially a wood sculptor who began working with computers in 1972 as a faculty member in the Department. He taught design courses and managed the wood shop then located in 146 Stanley, the current location of our computer room.

Richard was a pioneer in digital art and used computer punch cards on the main frame. It was unusual for an artist to utilize computers. As a result, an article was published in the July/August 1974 issue of the *Missouri Alumnus* magazine sparking a fuss among engineers that an artist would use this technology. The mid-70's article chronicles the heavy lifting of his early efforts along with color pictures of early student work. Questions posed to him in the discussion were: "Is it cheating for an artist to use a computer?" "Why is a design school concerned with computer aided design at all?" Richard responded, "We should make an effort to predict how our field will change as our students reach mid-career in 2001."



The below timeline provides the progression of Professor Helmick's work in design with digital media benefiting the Department:

1972: As background, Ken Knowlton and Jeff Bangart were luminaries in the area of computers and the arts. Knowlton was an engineer and artist at Bell Labs in NJ and Bangart was a computer professional at KU. They gave presentations at the National Sculpture Conference, Lawrence, Kansas on the use of computers to create art and were brought to MU to give presentations.

Helmick secured software they wrote for artists. It was installed on MU's main frame computer. No commercial graphic software was available at the time. He spent many lunch times learning to program in FORTRAN from a video tape series produced by MU's Department of Engineering, Rolla. At this time, he also used graphical mapping programs written at Harvard to generate art and design.

1973: Helmick began creating art by combining main frame line printer output and Calcomp plotter output with silk screen printing techniques mainly on fabric. The first course Helmick teaches in the department was a 318 Topics course titled "Topics in Computer-aided Design", summer 1973. The studio course was so popular it was offered regularly by the department.

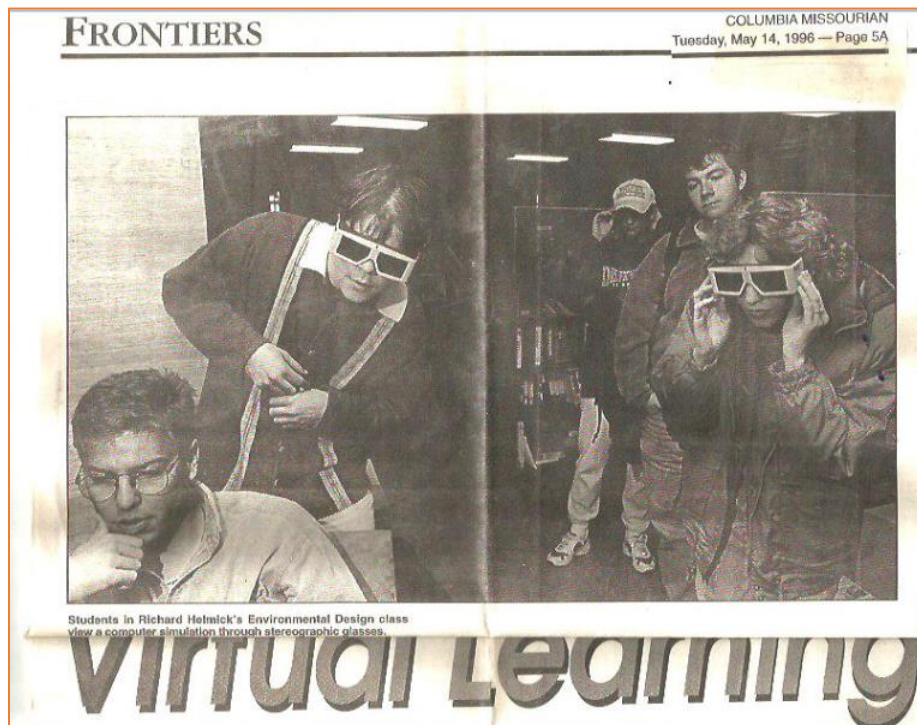
1974: Helmick writes article for the *Journal of Home Economics* (March) recounting early events in developing interest in computer graphics for art and design. For example, the early floorplan drawing program, called STRUCTURES, was written in 1973 by Computer Science graduate student Chris Korschgen under the direction of Paul Blackwell, Chair of the Computer Science Dept. Computer Science was separate from engineering at that time.

Helmick with color images of student work was published in the *Mizzou Alumnus* magazine displayed above (July/August, 1974).



Columbia Daily Tribune, December 15, 1977

- 1977: Helmick writes an account of his early efforts in a publication titled *ROM* (October 1977). Graduate student Joann Thompson exhibits work in the Gallery demonstrating computers aiding design—as described in *Columbia Daily Tribune*, December 15, 1977.
- Late 1970's: when desk top computers began to enter our world, the department was proud to have two Apple computers securely locked in the closet of 232 Stanley.
- 1985: The department donated a 146 Stanley to Central Scheduling to establish a public computing lab.
- 1990: Our student Greg Franzen, who was paralyzed from neck down, utilizes desktop computers to complete our undergraduate program.
- 1990-1992: Helmick has a two year leave of absence to serve as visiting professor in the College of Architecture at Texas A&M. He learned advanced computer graphics software while teaching other courses for A&M.
- 1992: Helmick designed a graduate program in design communication with digital media. In a bit of “mission drift,” he honored student interests in computer graphic character animation. (Note: Graduate students Chun Lu and Ken Feldman cobbled together distinguished careers in the gaming industry from this fledgling program. Feldman worked many years at Sony Pictures and Lu worked at Microsoft. Chun started her own gaming company. Graduate student So-Yeon Yoon designed a distinguished academic career at MU (and later at Cornell).
- 1995: Niche Plan identifies Design Communication as a niche and graduate emphasis area.
- 1996: Article in the *Columbia Missourian*, (Tuesday, May 14, 1996-page 5A) illustrates Helmick's students experiencing immersive virtual reality.



Columbia Missourian. May 14, 1996.

1999: AutoCAD is taught as a required class

2000: Helmick retired and the Richard Helmick Design with Digital Media Scholarship began. Professor Emeritus Richard Helmick matched gifts tendered by alumni and friends to honor his retirement. The Scholarship provides one or more annual awards to entering graduate student enrolling in the Design with Digital Media program.

Early graduates of the design with digital media program in this time period included Ken Feldman (BS HES '93; MA '96), Chun Lu (BS HES '94; MA '97), Brian Ingersoll (BS HES '95; MA '98), and So-Yeon Yoon (MA '98). All were devoted students of Richard Helmick because they knew they were on the forefront in working with him. Despite a constant offer to get her to sit on a chair, Chun always chose to sit "at the feet of her teacher" – an ongoing tale.



Photo of Richard Helmick and graduate student Chun Lu, 1992

The legacy of Professor Emeritus Richard Helmick continues today in both our undergraduate and graduate program. Our students are the great benefactors of his forward thinking and personal investment.