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Pratt Institute: Cultivating Creative Fluency Through Technology | Case Study



A global company providing best-in-class digital drawing solutions, enabling creative professionals expanded creativity, and enhanced productivity.

Founded in 2019 by professionals with experience that spans varied disciplines in industrial design, animation, VFX, illustration, software engineering, IT, sales, marketing, government, and education. We're dedicated to designing digital drawing tools that facilitate artistic expression. Our goal is to build community and collaborate with other industry leaders. We aim to create tools that are intuitive and a natural extension of the creative process.



At Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, creativity and diversity are more than cultural traits—they are embedded into the curriculum and classroom experience. It's no mistake that Pratt takes on the melting pot persona of the city in which it makes its home. Within the Department of Digital Arts and Animation (DDA), faculty and students collaborate in a studio-driven environment that blends foundational artistic training with evolving digital tools. This intersection of place, pedagogy, and technology creates a learning environment that mirrors the creative industries themselves—fluid, collaborative, and constantly evolving. From the moment students enter the program, they are immersed in a culture where experimentation is encouraged and where tools are not just learned but internalized as part of the creative process.

Curriculum Built for Creative Careers

"Pratt's curriculum is intentionally designed to develop both artistic voice and technical fluency," says Douglas Easterly, Chair of the Department of Digital Arts at Pratt. "Faculty emphasize a generalist approach, ensuring students understand every stage of the creative pipeline—from concept development to post-production." This philosophy ensures that students are not boxed into narrow roles but instead graduate with a holistic understanding of their craft.

As industries continue to shift, this breadth allows them to pivot, collaborate across disciplines, and contribute meaningfully to creative teams from day one.

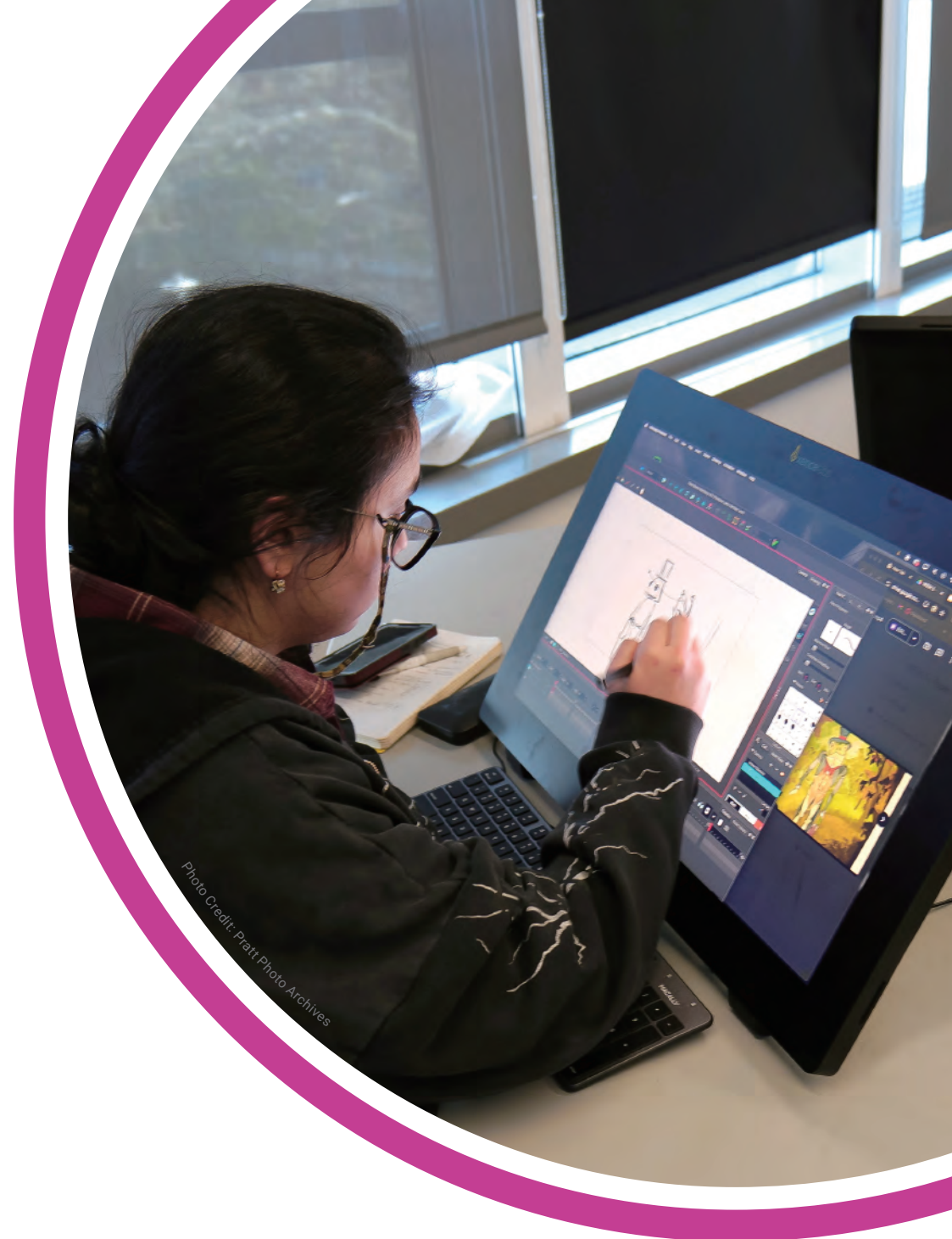
"Another key differentiator is our focus on critique, revision, and presentation," states Aaron Augenblick, instructor of animation within DDA. "Students learn how to take feedback, refine their work, and communicate ideas clearly — all essential skills in the professional space.

Whether focused on a career in animation, game development, 3D modeling, or motion design, graduates leave equipped not only with professional skills but also with the judgment and adaptability needed to build meaningful creative careers.

"I wanted to be in New York and attend a school with strong industry connections—Pratt stood out."

Ariel MacIntosh-Rawls

Second-year 2D Animation student



Digital Pen Technology in the Classroom

Faculty at Pratt view technology as an extension of artistic expression rather than a barrier. The department actively evaluates emerging tools while maintaining a strong foundation in traditional practices. This mindset shapes how technology is introduced in the classroom—not as an end point, but as a way to unlock creativity. By grounding students in core principles first, faculty ensure that new tools enhance rather than overshadow artistic output.

Central to this approach is the integration of digital pen technology and pressure-sensitive software applications, enabling a seamless transition between traditional drawing practices and production-ready digital workflows. Digital pen displays, like those from Xencelabs, have transformed how instructors teach and interact with students.



Students hone their figure drawing skills during DDA-230 Drawing for Animation I in one of the two new Digital Drawing Studios.

Students from Pratt's Department of Digital Arts Animation program working on their final project in Character Animation I.



Top Photo Credit: Aditiri Bhattacharjee,
MS, Packaging, Identities and Systems Design Major '27
Instagram: @aditri_bhatt
Photo Left Credit Pratt Photo Archives



Students from Pratt's Department of Digital Arts Animation program working on their final project in Character Animation I.

This year, Pratt opened two brand new life drawing studios. At first glance, the studios appear to be quite traditional; however, a closer look reveals Xencelabs 16" pen displays on Ergotron articulating arms, rather than easels and pen and paper. "Our newly designed life drawing studios allow students to create from live models using pen displays connected directly to animation software, like Toon Boom," says Easterly. "By drawing directly on screen in real time on a pen display, faculty can guide students instantly for enhanced collaboration." Because digital pen input bridges a gap between classroom exercises and professional workflows, today's students at Pratt are more marketable thanks to the in-class experience of creating directly with the tools they will use in their careers, reinforcing both efficiency and confidence as they develop their craft.



Photo Credit: Aditiri Bhattacharjee, MS, Packaging, Identities and Systems Design Major '27
Instagram: @aditri_bhatt



Students hone their figure drawing skills during DDA-230 Drawing for Animation I in one of the two new Digital Drawing Studios.

In addition to the new life drawing studios, Pratt's Department of Digital Arts has four reimaged classrooms designed with Xencelabs flagship 24" pen displays in mind. Each classroom features 13 stations: 12 for students and one for faculty. "We found the Xencelabs pen displays to deliver better precision, color accuracy, and latency numbers than competitive products," says Augenblick. "From a teaching standpoint, what matters most is that the tool gets out of the way. We want our students to focus on storytelling and movement, and the immediacy of drawing directly on the Xencelabs pen display encourages experimentation, making iteration a natural and continuous part of the creative process."



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Instructor Aaron Augenblick, founder of Augenblick Studios, discusses techniques with Character Animation I students.

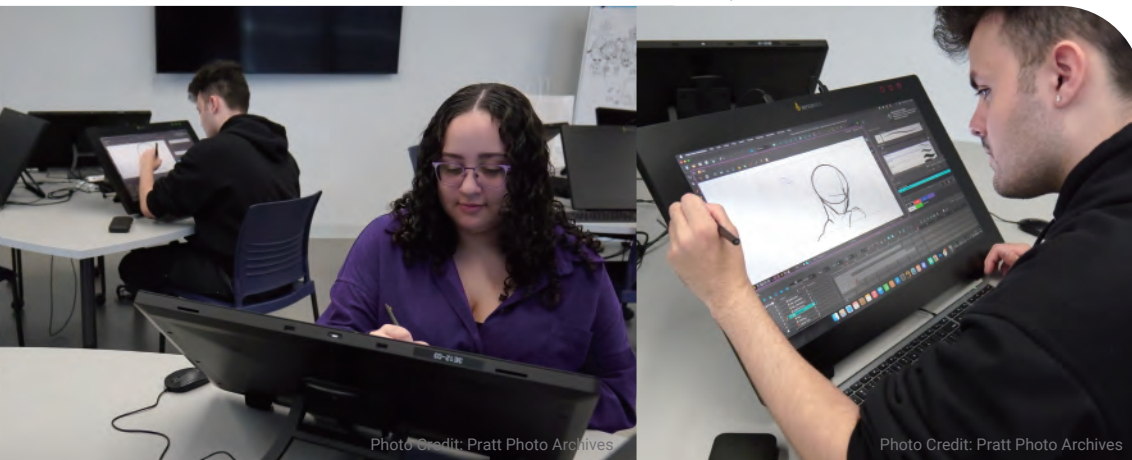


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Second-year 2D Animation students Ariel Macintosh-Rawls and Sebastian Castrillo, using the Xencelabs Pen Display 24 for a Character Animation I assignment.

"We found the Xencelabs pen displays to deliver better precision, color accuracy, and latency numbers than competitive products..."

Aaron Augenblick

Founder of Augenblick Studios



A Great Place to Learn and Thrive

Pratt Institute demonstrates how a forward-thinking curriculum, combined with thoughtfully integrated technology, can elevate both teaching and learning. Faculty with real-world professional experience help students define their own creative paths. Additionally, Pratt offers internship courses and an internship coordinator who liaises between the students and companies on behalf of the Institute. The result is a cohesive educational model where faculty guidance, student creativity, community outreach, and technology converge—preparing the next generation of artists to thrive in an evolving digital landscape. DDA graduates have gone on to work for some renowned companies such as Signe Baumann Studio, Titmouse, Warner Bros. Animation, Rockstar Games, The Mill, and many more.

Xencelabs Products

Our priority is to offer quality products at an affordable price, giving teachers and students access to the tools they need for success in subjects including math, science, and the creative arts.

- (30) Pen Display 24 (Includes the Quick Keys) (XMPD24US)
- (16) Pen Display 16 EDU Essentials (Includes Mobile Easel) (XEPD16EFSEDU)
- (28) Pen Display 16 Essentials (XEPDS16EFS)
- (28) Desktop Easels (XEMES)

*All our products include the Kensington® Security Slots 🔒

To learn more about the Department of Digital Arts program at Pratt Institute, please visit their web page:

<https://www.pratt.edu/art/digital-arts-and-animation/>.



Pen Display 24



Pen Display 16



Desktop Easel



Mobile Easel

Designed in USA | Made in China

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