1. Derek: Since the course began 15 years ago, we have been working with external clients who have set the briefs and defined the deliverables, giving students a taste of the outside world, working with a client to a professional brief and deadline. The students work in teams of 5 or 6, with each student assessed as an individual by us, yet in this module, it’s really the clients they aim to please. We seek out live briefs that are non-profit making and that will have impact in the real world, on communities or to educate people about particular issues.
2. Katharine: All the projects are challenging and all present problems, (we will highlight some of these), and all have human stories at their heart. We’ll present some case studies from this module and, as far as we can we’ll show them in their professional context, on the websites that host them some from before the pandemic and others from after and although we didn’t choose it, we have found ourselves in a position to observe the effect of remote working in this way on one particular cohort of students.
3. Katharine: Jubilee Pool Stories is a research project that captures memories of the Jubilee Pool in Penzance, which opened in 1935. The archive provides a historical resource for the local community. It is the UK's largest surviving open air tidal swimming pool and it stirs vivid memories for a wide cross-section of people. Students were asked to create animations to bring some of these memories to life. The client expected high standards. This put pressure on the students and at times needed some mediating from us. One student said: “Trying to create our very best work and present it outside our safe space gave a new perspective on how we should behave in a professional environment….learning to be flexible and understand and listen.”
4. Derek: Working with Devon and Cornwall Police now, this animation forms part of a series of films created to raise awareness and educate around types of Hate Crime.
5. Derek: Restorative justice brings those harmed by crime or conflict and those responsible for the harm into communication, enabling everyone affected by a particular incident to play a part in repairing the harm and finding a positive way forward. Derek now on the board of RJWorking. The Impact report here includes their work with our students, which like the Jubilee Pool project and Voices from Greenham Common, successfully helps build their case for future funding.
6. Derek: This film uses the voices of schoolchildren who are learning the benefits of restorative practice within teamwork.

ShelterBox is an international disaster relief charity that provides emergency shelter and other aid items to families around the world who have lost their homes to disaster or conflict.

This brief started well, students came up with good ideas and designs.

The clients were overjoyed and even went so far as to say that what they were seeing was better than what Aardman Animations had done for them in a paid commission.

During the process everything seemed to be going smoothly until the end when, having seen the nearly finished work and having shown it to others in the organisation, the client came up with a list of changes.

Although none of the changes were major, some students were shocked to be asked to change things that had been in the work all along, especially as they had been getting such rapturous feedback.

In the end, many of the students did some changes, but most didn’t, having already handed in the films for university marking and feeling little incentive to do more work.

Even the possible publicity benefit couldn’t induce them to continue, since they felt very let down.

1. Katharine: Greenham Women Everywhere is another archive research project that captures stories from the peace-seeking movement of the Greenham Common women, who protested against nuclear weapons over a 20 year period in the 1980’s and 90’s and whose actions influence the shape of protests and feminist campaigns today.

Although the women’s protest happened in their parents generation, none of the students had ever heard about the many thousands of women that camped and protested on Greenham Common.

Through research they discovered the influence these women had on the climate change protests of today, protests that many have taken part in.

The client for this project was particularly dynamic and her infectious enthusiasm charmed the students into working very hard.

1. Derek: The BBC’s Listening Project captures happy, sad, funny and touching conversations. This brief asked students to turn some of them into animated films.

The director of this one said: ‘As magic is to Chris and Tony, so animation is to me which is why this conversation immediately struck a chord.

1. Derek: Something a bit different here: these are films for NASA about the future of lunar exploration that were screened at the International Space Development Conference in Los Angeles.

The challenge here was to make the films scientifically accurate, as well as easily understandable for non-specialists.

Students had to grapple with the concept of a base in the Moon's Shackleton Crater, which has never seen sunlight but has stores of lunar ice that can be transformed into water and breathable air. They created robotic lunar rovers that can create 3D printed habitats using regolith (moon dust) based on NASA designs.

We had great feedback from the Space Development Steering Committee, who said:

"Love the animation; it fits perfectly into a lunar rover program we're calling for.

1. Katharine: And now we come to our final two case studies, from our new way of working, through the pandemic and beyond. Through our national lockdowns we worked with the Cornwall Faith Forum and local Jewish community group, Kehillat Kernow, to create animated films told, and in this example, narrated by one of its members, from her mother’s testimony.

“Cynthia’s Story”, portrays the remarkable story of survival of Blanka and her sister Klara during the Holocaust and the horrific nightmare of the Nazi concentration camps, including Auschwitz II (Birkenau).

The films will be the foundation for a new education pack aimed at teaching school children not only the historical facts about the Holocaust, but also the lessons that can be learned about compassion and resilience.

1. Katharine: The films were shown online to a large international audience at the Holocaust Memorial Service - but making them took its toll.

As you can imagine, researching the topic was upsetting and affected some of the students, who were already struggling with loneliness and the effects of the pandemic.

It was a difficult time, with a lot of support needed from staff. Groups fell apart and had to be rebuilt.

We’re running the project again this year and this time we’re factoring in support and have asked for help from the University chaplaincy.

1. Katharine: Our final example is an animated response to a poem by Matt Harvey, with a theme of lockdown.

Right at the  The video recived over 25 thousand views. end of term when many students had gone back to their respective homes across the UK, Europe and the world, students were commissioned by the BBC to portray an important piece of history.

They were only given 5 weeks to make it and had to leap into action. The student director made herself available online, using google drive to keep in touch with the team, to check, give feedback and approve animation, also for colour and compositing.

They said, “The main challenge we faced was social distancing while working together. We are used to our studio environment and working together in the same building.

1. Katharine:

Conclusions:

We know that making animated films online does work effectively in the industry.

In an educational context we observed no drop in quality of the final output, in fact our final lockdown film shows if anything, some of the best work we have seen as a course.

However, many students had not had enough experience of teamwork to thrive in that situation.

Most of them struggled with being alone and in some cases this negatively impacted their teamwork.

Now that we are mostly back on campus and into a new term, we have also noticed that none of the directors or producers that emerged from last year’s second year put themselves forward to create a film in their final year.

Perhaps they were exhausted? We don’t really know yet. But we very much hope this is a temporary situation because as you can see, they’re a talented bunch!