



Pixels & Possibilities

Crafting new worlds in art and design often requires equal parts, creativity and technical skill. During the Amphitheater session, Whitney Pollett, Founder & CEO of Pixelle Studios, shared her insights into the dynamic process of character and world creation. From working with Disney and Nickelodeon to running her own studio, Pollett's experience bridges storytelling and toy design, offering a holistic perspective on these creative disciplines.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Early concept work involves balancing creativity with the pragmatic needs of production, such as toy scalability and material selection.
- Maintaining a “toyetic” focus ensures characters are aspirational, playable, and inspiring.
- Evolution in design tools, like 3D modeling and rapid prototyping, has transformed the creative process, making it more accessible.
- Curiosity and inspiration drawn from life experiences fuel lasting, impactful designs.
- Thoughtful integration of technology, like AI, hinges on user intent to amplify creativity rather than replace it.

Art Meets Playability

When designing for a dual world of animation and toys, Pollett emphasized that every detail must serve both narrative and play. “How is it playable? How is it fun? How is it aspirational and inspirational?” shared Pollett, echoing her guiding principles for creating works with depth and utility.

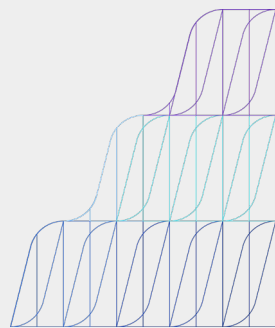
Walking through an example of underwater character design, Pollett quickly sketched a new figure, showing how form and pose are decided with animation and sculpting practicality in mind. Her intuitive, deliberate process combined loose sketches with technical inquiries, like, “How would this be sculpted? How would it be manufactured? How would it be output for 3D?”

Impact of Emerging Tools

The evolution of design software and prototyping technology has opened new possibilities. “Because of the tech we use, which is so accessible now, it’s amazing seeing technology evolve so quickly over the years,” Pollett said. She highlighted her use of Photoshop, Wacom Cintiq, and other tools, explaining that they enhance workflows and collaboration with clients.

3D modeling has significantly enhanced her studio's capabilities, enabling her team to bring characters to life with remarkable precision. Pollett highlighted how these tools allow them to visualize designs in real-time, seamlessly transition from concept to rapid prototyping, and even produce tangible models through 3D printing—revolutionizing their creative workflow.

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Drawing Inspiration

Pollett's creative work is rooted in personal experience and vigilant curiosity. "I love traveling. I love being here with you guys today. I get inspired by all of you, all of this," Pollett shared. "I just try to stay aware of the things that give me joy and then I make a little mental note. I might write it out, take photos, I might sketch something in my notebook."

Her answers underscored the importance of blending formal skill with the natural curiosity that propels creativity forward, a sentiment that resonated strongly with the audience.

Navigating AI in Creative Work

On the topic of integrating artificial intelligence into creative workflows, Pollett struck a thoughtful balance. AI is about how people use it; it's just a tool. While it can amplify workflows, ethical concerns around creativity stealing or bypassing effort remain key. "It depends on what the person's intent is," said Pollett. If you're using it to inspire artists, that's wonderful. But using it to replace their work, that is not ethical.

A Technical and Creative Collaboration

Pollett closed her session by naming her newly illustrated character "Dell-arina," combining wit and audience participation to cap an inspiring and informative session.

For IT and creative leaders looking to bridge storytelling and technical scalability in their industries, Pollett's message was clear. Blending craftsmanship with adaptable technology produces not only optimized systems but maximized joy through design.

