

During the COVID-19 lockdown in Shanghai, I proudly introduced an Arduino device, which allowed users to interact with a virtual plant by touching a real plant or blowing air into a reused can to activate light sensors, to my Interaction Lab classmates via Zoom. Blowing into the can moved a paper flap, triggering a light sensor that causes the virtual plant to sway as if caught in the wind. A gentle touch on a physical plant could activate a separate sensor, prompting the virtual plant to bloom. In a time of uncertainty and separation, this simple yet meaningful installation provided a tangible connection to nature, enhancing personal well-being through media interactions. With pandemic restrictions to stay indoors, I managed to fully release my potential in creativity with simple daily life materials like a Coke-Cola can.

The story is just a typical scene from my university life. During my first two years at New York University Shanghai, I spent countless hours in the lab with classmates, building sensory installations and designing interactive visualizations such as interstellar journeys using p5.js. My peers and professors consistently praised my ability to create diverse and innovative projects, ranging from dynamic web interfaces to autonomous robots. This immersive environment fueled my obsession with the creative possibilities of interactive media, solidifying my desire to apply for the Interactive Telecommunications Program.

My passion for programming was fully ignited during my time at the course ABC Browser Circus, under the mentorship of Professor Leon Eckert. In his class, I developed innovative projects such as a Google Chrome extension that playfully "devours" hyperlinks and a multiplayer web-based hide-and-seek game. Professor Eckert's high standards pushed me to refine and iterate my work continuously. Through his guidance, I recognized the importance of advanced programming skills

in our increasingly digital world. This realization motivated me to switch my major to computer science, driven by a desire to gain comprehensive and systematic programming expertise. My goal is to attain end-to-end control over project design and development, enabling me to create human-centered solutions that significantly boost and enlighten people's lives.

With this in mind, I knew I needed to acquire a robust and versatile set of technical skills. Consequently, I dedicated the rest of my undergraduate career to studying computer science, broadening my capabilities ranging from full-stack development in the web space to data management and back-end programming combining artificial intelligence. This diverse and comprehensive academic foundation has equipped me with the ability to approach complete digital systems with both technical skills and creativity.

As I gained more practical experience from project development to real-life product development, I gradually came to realize that products are not merely items or concepts but ecosystems shaped by their contexts, stories, and long-term purposes. Holding this belief, I made my next step. Considering the world's largest fanfiction site, Archive of Our Own was permanently blocked in China, I grasped a pressing demand for tailored platforms for Chinese female-oriented fanfiction. Thus, I launched an online fan forum for female anime fandom enthusiasts driven to address this need. Before starting, I researched similar platforms and recognized that while forum communities might seem outdated, they hold unique value if they resonate with the users. Digital spaces should evolve alongside their users; products aren't discarded for lack of value but because they fail to grow with user needs. My forum's advantage lies in its well-defined user base and a tailored experience that aligns with

their interests. I incorporated modern tools like tagging and recommendation algorithms to enhance user experience. At first, the website only had users from China. After collaborating with several overseas fandom creators, I was able to attract a global audience of international fandom creators who also share a passion for Chinese culture. As a result, my forum now has active users from over ten different countries.

Beyond my technical and project experiences, I had the invaluable opportunity to study away in New York for an entire year. During this time, I enrolled in the ITP Machine Learning for the Web course. This course not only expanded my technical repertoire but also allowed me to experience the free-spirited and exploratory atmosphere that defines ITP from a first-person perspective. Conversations with senior students and alumni from ITP further inspired me, revealing the breadth of projects and innovative ideas being explored within ITP.

In ITP, I am eager to my solid foundation in p5.js and ml5.js to excel in courses such as Nature of Code and Contributing to ml5.js. I have long admired Professor Daniel Sheffman's work, dedicating hour after hours to his Coding Train creative coding tutorials on YouTube. The prospect of taking one of his classes excites me. Additionally, I am eager to explore motion capture technologies, as I have numerous ideas that can be realized through this medium. I conducted a Dean's Undergraduate Research project focused on generating music using motion capture. While the project faced challenges due to the unpredictable nature of body movements and the necessity for stringent rules in music generation, it provided valuable insights into the complexities of integrating motion data with creative processes. I have discussed these concepts with professor Lisa Jamhoury at her weekend motion capture mini course last year, but time constraints have so far limited further development. Moving

forward, I am excited to learn more about motion capture, where I can refine these ideas and collaborate with other co-creators to overcome existing challenges.

At ITP, I seek to join a community that values unique perspectives and aims to create impactful, creative work. Whether through interactive installations, web-based platforms, or machine learning applications, I am driven by the desire to explore and express my creativity in ways that make a tangible difference in people's lives. I aspire to become a product manager or web programmer, or even more ambitiously, a freelance web designer and programmer in the future. I am confident that ITP would both challenge and encourage me in my creative and technical abilities while contributing my ideas to the field of interactive product design.