

Holly Murdock Interview:

How would you describe your area of study to a novice?

Design thinking is a method of creative problem solving, which uses the design process as a framework. It focuses on empathy and the user experience, and is built on collaboration between people of different backgrounds to come up with innovative solutions to the world's most difficult problems.

What is your primary motivation for persevering through graduate school?

I loved my previous career as a commercial interior designer, but I've always felt that my true calling is to teach. Earning an MFA will provide me with that opportunity, and a degree in design thinking allows me to approach design from a research-based perspective that design sometimes lacks.

Do you think there is any value in social networking with other graduate students in non-related fields?

The beauty of design thinking is that it thrives on the collaboration of people from different backgrounds to solve difficult problems. The unique experiences and perspectives of students in non-related fields are essential to innovation and success in my field.

What is your favorite stress-reduction technique?

Drawing has been a stress reliever for me since I was a child, and I recently picked up watercolors. No matter how busy I am I make sure I set aside a little time each day to draw or paint.

What is the last book you read strictly for pleasure and how long ago was it?

I am reading *Emma* by Jane Austen right now, for the third time. I could read and reread any Austen novel and always want to read it again.

Please describe your most meaningful academic relationship.

My most meaningful academic relationship is with my thesis advisor, Lori Anthony. My thesis topic grew out of a group project I completed in one of her classes my first semester in the program, and she has mentored me through each semester since.

What surprised you the most about graduate school?

I am an online student, living in Utah. I've never been to Radford, at least not yet. I thought an online experience would be a lonely one but I've been able to get to know my faculty and fellow students almost as well as if I were on campus with them.

If travel to Mars happens in your lifetime, would you want to be one of the scientists on board? If yes, what would you contribute to the mission?

As a child I loved space and dreamed of growing up to be an astronaut, so I would jump at the opportunity to travel to Mars. I also love gardening so I would want to help establish a gardening system to grow food on the new planet that would become an essential part of a long-term community.

What is your favorite comfort food and why? How often do you consume it?

My favorite food is tomato pie, made from fresh garden tomatoes. The perfect tomatoes are essential to the recipe so I only bake it in September when I am able to harvest my own tomatoes.

If you hadn't been admitted to graduate school, what do you think you would be doing right now?

If I weren't in graduate school I would be working for an architecture firm as an interior designer, working on education and religious buildings.

When do you expect to complete your degree?

Spring 2016