

# Alumni **Links**

## APRIL 2010

### Spring is in the Air!

Hello to all of The Art Institute of Vancouver Alumni, join me in welcoming the first class of 2010! My name is Kevan O'Brien and I am the Alumni Coordinator at The Art Institute of Vancouver. I look forward to meeting you at future alumni and networking events, around campus, and through social media sites.

In this issue, there is a wrap up of our first event of 2010, Alumni: GOLDEN. You will also find two new success stories, Saba Kazemian and Nick Bakalos. We also have a short feature on LinkedIn, and have some great reasons to sign up and register. There will be a new Alumni Lounge at the next portfolio show, RSVP me for details! We also have some new Career Service Advisors, and they each have a short introduction on the back page.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Alumni Links and good luck in 2010!

-Kevan O'Brien, BCom. | Alumni Coordinator

Questions/Comments/Announcements? Reach me at:  
 T: 778.373.8936 | E: keobrien@aiv.edu  
 Join our Alumni Community!  
[www.alumniconnections.com/artinstitutes](http://www.alumniconnections.com/artinstitutes)

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# W WESTERN

hen a mix of creativity and inspiration collide, the outcome can be amazing. One look at Saba Kazemian's work and you'll understand what I mean. Saba is a 2009 graduate from the Graphic Design program at The Art Institute of Vancouver. Her portfolio illustrates her amazing use of colour and typography to create unique displays, websites and materials. Saba has a consistency and uniqueness throughout her designs that is visually appealing and effective at garnering attention.

She chose her program at Ai because of its focus on the graphic design industry and well known appeal to potential employers. To Saba, The Art Institute of Vancouver was her only consideration.

"My experience at Ai was a very good one because not only was I studying in a field I loved but I was with great classmates and instructors," she says. "My favorite thing about the program would have to be the constant pushing from the instructors to think more creatively; I wouldn't be the designer I am today if they didn't do that."

After graduation when it was time for Saba to research jobs within the industry she found it a fairly easy process and says, "The job hunt was not a hard one because when I graduated I had everything I needed in order to apply for the job. A resume, cover letter and my portfolio." She is currently working as an intern at Western Living Magazine where she researches images for editorials, does page layouts and assists the art department with creative input. The publishing courses that Saba took at The Art Institute of Vancouver prepared her for the methods that are used in the industry today. "My favourite experience with the internship at Western Living has been catching a glimpse of how the publishing industry really is; learning the tricks of the industry," Saba explains. She is excited about Vancouver hosting ICOGRADA in 2010 and is always looking for networking events within her field.

Saba mentions that junior designers should understand the value of their work at an early phase. "Many designers tend to charge less than what they are actually worth," Saba says. "Just let your creativity go wild because it's the only place that you can." When asked about her inspiration for her projects Saba simply states that, "Everything inspires me." Her future goals are to become a well rounded designer by expanding her knowledge in different types of design mediums. We wish her the best of luck at Western Living and her future endeavours. Her portfolio can be viewed online at [www.s-kdesign.com](http://www.s-kdesign.com).



Saba Kazemian  
Alumni, Class of 2009

# C E A T I V E

# Alumni!

Thanks for making the first alumni event of 2010 a success! The evening was full of mingling, some great food, fun prizes and more than a few laughs. I would like to thank everyone that came out and supported our Alumni community, especially those of you that had to travel quite far to attend.

I hope everyone enjoyed themselves and I look forward to seeing you all - and more - at future events!

All the best from your Alumni Coordinator,  
Kevan O'Brien

## GOLDEN

### EVENT WRAP UP

A special thanks to:

- Marcos Armstrong (Marcos Armstrong Photography)
- Mariam and the staff at The Black Frog Eatery
- Taryn Beauvals for helping at the event



## Our Next Event

What: Culinary Mix-n-Mingle

Where: Culinaria Restaurant @ 609 Granville Street

Who: All Alumni and Faculty of The Art Institute of Vancouver

When: June 3rd from 6:00 - 10:00 pm, Guest speaker at 8:30

Why: Have some great food, listen to a special keynote speaker (to be announced), network with fellow Alumni, great gift draws, have fun!

Please RSVP to Kevan O'Brien - keobrien@all.edu | 778.373.8936

# Leveling Up

**N**ick Bakalos, a class of 2009 Alumni from the Game Art & Design program is originally from Kelowna, BC. He made the decision to attend The Art Institute of Vancouver after they did a presentation to his high school class showcasing the courses offered and a taste of what to expect. It interested him, so he applied when he got home. The Art Institute quickly realized Nick's talent and ambition, and he made his mind up to move to Vancouver and get involved in the gaming industry shortly after he was accepted.

Nick enjoyed his time at The Art Institute of Vancouver because it taught him all of what is required to make it in the industry from hands-on experience alongside professional instructors to the professionalism required to apply for jobs at gaming companies. After two weeks of being unemployed post-graduation and applying to over 20 different companies, Nick was informed of a Level Designer position at Next Level Games. He began writing his cover letter immediately, had it sent out within the hour, and the next day he was contacted by HR at NLG asking him to come in for an interview two days later. By standing out from the rest of the crowd in his interview and by telling his potential employer why he would be the best candidate, it was a no-brainer for Next Level Games and they promptly got Nick on board.

At Next Level Games Nick works in a team of talented Level Designers. Some of his daily duties include creating grey blocks, enemy encounters, making detailed scripts to create interesting and unique game play, and reporting to team members to discuss designs and how to make them function within the game environment. Team meetings are essential, and every day they meet to discuss what they will be working on. Nick says "It's a streamlined process that helps us stay on the same page."

Nick is also a member of several networking groups that include Vancouver Gaming Professionals, International Game Developers Association (IGDA), and various other groups through LinkedIn. During his time at school, Nick was recognized for his outstanding work with the "Best Student Production" award for the game TikiWiki, made by Infinity+1 where he worked as a Level Designer. Nick also won "Best of Show" at his graduating classes Portfolio Show.



**Nick Bakalos | Alumni, Class of 2009**

By recognizing challenges within his industry, Nick has prepared himself for the future of gaming and level design. He states that "Layoffs will become a reality for everyone in the gaming industry at some point. Contracts ending or projects finishing, these are all common things that every company has to undergo. The industry is still young and isn't as streamlined as other industries where there is always work." Nick plans on working within the gaming design field in the foreseeable future with plans to become a Game Director where he can have full design over a game. He ultimately plans to own a video game studio in Vancouver.

Inspiration for Nick comes from knowing that he is working in a young, developing and unique industry. "There is so much room for [the gaming industry] to grow and be shaped in to the ultimate entertainment medium," Nick continues, "Knowing that I was part of shaping this industry gives me inspiration. A competitive personality is also what inspires me, always wanting to be the best drives me to do great things."

The best advice Nick has for anyone looking to get into the gaming industry is to "Make lots of contacts!" The best way Nick feels to find a job is by creating connections with people in the industry, attending industry events and joining networks online. "You need to be yourself and be able to prove to companies why you're the best person they could possibly have." The Art Institute of Vancouver and the entire Alumni Community wishes Nick all the best in the future and encourages him to keep 'Leveling Up'.

Have you registered on LinkedIn? If not, here's the...

## Top 4 Reasons to Join LinkedIn



1. Establish your professional profile
  - LinkedIn creates a digital CV and references
  - Quickly rises to the top of search results, letting you control your online 'first impression'
2. Stay in touch with colleagues and friends
  - Keep your address book up to date
  - Use communication tools to network
3. Find industry experts and ideas
  - Use search tools to find professionals
  - Get answers through polls & forums
4. Explore opportunities
  - Find jobs, sales leads & business partners
  - Search for groups, research tools and networking events online through LinkedIn

Connect with your Alumni Coordinator on LinkedIn - [www.linkedin.com/in/kevanobrien](http://www.linkedin.com/in/kevanobrien)

## Alumni Lounge to be introduced at the Next Portfolio Show

The new Alumni Lounge will be an area that Alumnus of The Art Institute of Vancouver has exclusive access to. There will be special snacks, refreshments and it will create a unique networking opportunity for our graduates. RSVP to Kevan at [keobrien@aii.edu](mailto:keobrien@aii.edu) to confirm your attendance!  
Details: Thursday, June 24th, Renfrew Campus

Do you have an upcoming performance, exhibit, show, concert or event?

Share it with The Art Institute of Vancouver Alumni Community!

Email Kevan O'Brien at [keobrien@aii.edu](mailto:keobrien@aii.edu) for more information.

## Meet the newest members of the Career Services Team!

Sarah Mount - DFV, GAD, VGP

"I'm originally from England and love Canada, my two 4 month old puppies, ridiculously spicy food, snowboarding and being able to work on a campus among so many creative individuals.

Having a background in recruitment, one of the biggest tips I would give anyone seeking employment is to apply with quantity and quality - get those applications out there and make each one count!"

Teresa Vaccaro - PRAX, GD, Web, ID

"My work experience includes classroom teaching, not for profit experience, career counseling, as well as executive business management.

Get out there and mingle! Every event you attend, from a networking event to a happy hour, has the opportunity to bring you opportunities for a great job lead. I've found leads in the weirdest of places - the line of a movie theatre, the airport, the dog park!"

Tanya Mueller - MAG, Anim. Art & Design, VFX

"My experience is recruitment, and prior to this position I had been working in Vancouver and Whistler as a recruiter for the past 6 years.

On the weekends, you will usually find me snowboarding with my friends or trying to spend as much time outdoors as possible. I also really enjoy photography, and traveling.

The biggest piece of advice I can offer to new job seekers is to follow up on your applications. Get on the phone and call companies - emails are not enough. Don't give up!"

## Career Services

Shannon Svingen-Jones - [ssvingenjones@aii.edu](mailto:ssvingenjones@aii.edu)  
Dean of Student Affairs & Director of Career Services

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Sarah Mount - [smount@aii.edu](mailto:smount@aii.edu)  
Career Services Advisor: Digital Film & Video, Game Art  
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Tanya Mueller - [tmueller@aii.edu](mailto:tmueller@aii.edu)  
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Graphic Design, Web Design & Interactive Media,  
Interior Design

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