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Profile, Spring 2007

Columbia College Chicago

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PROFILE

interactive arts + media newsletter

SPRING 07



FACULTY
Patrick Lichty

ALUMNI
Andrew Hicks

STUDENT
Brendan Metzger

create...
change

Columbia 
COLLEGE CHICAGO

Visiting Artists Lecture Series

Sarah Robbins**March 12, 7 p.m.****623 S. Wabash Ave., Room 405**

Second Life is one of the most rapidly growing on-line environments at the moment. With so many institutions and corporations investing in social media and on-line environments, what opportunities do they offer, and how do we use them? Sarah Robbins is one of the administrators of the Ball State Second Life Campus in SL and in Muncie, Ind. and is a researcher in digital course development and assessment, online identity development, rhetoric of tagging and folksonomy, collective knowledge, hypertext, and hypermediated writing environments.

Lincoln Schatz**April 12, 7 p.m.****623 S. Wabash Ave., Room 405**

Lincoln Schatz is a Chicago-based artist working in New Media and sculpture. Since 2000, he has focused on the experience of place and the meanings produced by the collisions of nonlinear sections of time. Through his custom software, Schatz selectively records and displays video images culled from specific environments. Most recently Schatz has created generative video works that collect, store and display more than eight years of video memory.

John Craig Freeman**April 5, 7 p.m.****623 S. Wabash Ave., Room 405**

Artist and educator John Craig Freeman's work has been exhibited internationally, including at the Zacheta Narodowa Galeria Sztuki (the National Gallery of Warsaw), Kalingrad Branch of the National Center for Contemporary Arts in Russia, Art Basel Miami, Ciberart Bilbao and the Girona Video and Digital Arts Festival in Spain, the Westside Gallery in New York City, La Biblioteca Nacional in Havana and the Centro de

la Imagen in Mexico City. In 1992 he was awarded an Individual Artist Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. His work has been reviewed in *Wired News*, *Artforum*, *Ten-8*, *Z Magazine*, *Afterimage*, *Photo Metro*, *New Art Examiner*, *Time*, *Harper's* and *Der Spiegel*. He is currently an Associate Professor of New Media at Emerson College in Boston.

Christiane Paul**Date to be announced****623 S. Wabash Ave., Room 405**

Christiane Paul is a New Media artist and curator in New York. She is the Adjunct Curator of New Media Arts at the Whitney Museum of American Art and the director of *Intelligent Agent*, a service organization and information resource dedicated to digital art. She has written extensively on new media arts and her book *Digital Art* will be published in 2003. She teaches at the School of Visual Arts in New York and at the Center for New Design at the Parsons School and has lectured internationally on art and technology.

Tim Jaeger**Date to be announced****623 S. Wabash Ave., Room 405**

Timothy Jaeger is a contemporary artist and VJ whose work spans from live cinema performances and video installations to traditional prints, drawings and objects. He completed an M.F.A. at University of California, San Diego, studying under Jordan Crandall (chair), Lev Manovich and Miller Puckette. His works are intended as provocative responses to overlooked and under-investigated aspects of contemporary culture, such as the use of spam e-mail in performance settings, RESPAM or capabilities of citizen response to mechanisms and symbols of control and surveillance (FUZZBUSTER). His work has been exhibited and performed at galleries and festivals such as PixelACHE, ISEA, Estacion Tijuana, the Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid and the 4th Annual Biennale in Seoul, South Korea.



Sarah Robbins



Lincoln Schatz



John Craig Freeman



Christiane Paul



Tim Jaeger

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PROFILE featured student Brendan Metzger

**on the
cover**Featured student
Brendan Metzger
Looking, 2006
Pages 10-11



Photo courtesy of Annette Barbier

Annette Barbier, Department Chair

Welcome to a new year and the first issue of many newsletters to come. Since Academic Computing and Interactive Multimedia became one department in the fall of 2005, Interactive Arts and Media has seen a number of positive changes. Last year saw the introduction of the new Game Design Major, which has a healthy enrollment already. Starting in the fall of 2007, IAM will see the merging of two of its majors: Digital Media Technology and Interactive Multimedia — into a single major — Interactive Arts and Media. This new major combines the best aspects of both departments and course offerings have been designed to avoid redundancy and streamline requirements for all students.

Last fall, two new professors joined the faculty. **Tom Dowd** comes to academia from the game design industry. His many credits include lead designer on *MechAssault*, the best-selling inaugural product for Xbox Live. **Patrick Lichty's** background spans engineering, interactive art and research, and he is editor-in-chief of *Intelligent Agent*, an on-line journal of New Media art criticism.

Our newsletter is edited by **Tracy Marie Taylor**, our new External Relations Coordinator and the newsletter is one of her many efforts to help us reach out to our colleagues, associates, and former and current students. She has taught for us as a part-time instructor for several years and has brilliantly directed our contribution to Manifest, Columbia's end-of-the-year exhibition. **Jeff Meyers**, a long-time staff person and part-time faculty, has

been promoted to Operations Manager and has done a wonderful job streamlining our operations. His innovative contributions have improved connectivity, services to students, faculty and communications.

Changes coming to our Web site will make it easier to navigate and more user-friendly. We also have a new, flexible, exhibition and installation space where student and faculty work will be displayed on a regular basis.

Our new game study lab will support work done in our classes and give students a broad range of game experiences and research opportunities. Columbia's library has enlarged its collection of books on games and interactive media and has begun purchasing game hardware and software to supplement its media studies area. We plan to add networking events for alums to our calendar this year and hope to see many of you in the near future. Let us know what you'd like to see happening in the department and how we can help you.

It's an exciting time to be a part of this field and this department, both of which are growing and changing so rapidly. We hope you enjoy our first newsletter and will visit our Web site, <http://iam.colum.edu>. Send us your reactions and ideas!

Best wishes,
Annette Barbier
 Chair, IAM

Gallery 416 Exhibition Schedule

Faculty Show Part 1

Featuring Janell Baxter, Erik Brown, Andrew Hicks, Niki Nolin, Darby Photos, Helene Smith-Romer, Tracy Marie Taylor and Weston Morris

Reception: Feb. 1, 5 to 7 p. m.
 Exhibition runs Feb. 1 to Feb. 23

Faculty Show Part 2

Featuring Annette Barbier, Patrick Lichty and Andrew Hicks

Reception: March 1, 5 to 7 p.m.
 Exhibition runs March 1 to March 23

2-D Imaging Exhibition

Featuring the work of Darby Photos*
 2-D Imaging students
 Exhibition runs April 18 to April 25

Manifest 2007

This exhibition will take place in both the IAM Gallery and the Hokin Gallery (623 S. Wabash, 1st Floor)

Featuring the work of IAM seniors
 Reception: May 11, 5 to 7 p.m.
 Exhibition runs May 4 to June 11

Gallery 416 is located at 623 S. Wabash, Room 416

Interactive Arts and Media Community Update

The Interactive Arts and Media staff and faculty have been busy this year. **Annette Barbier's** piece *Site Unseen* was exhibited at the Chicago Cultural Center. The installation *You Are Here* was shown at Gosia Koscielak Studio and Gallery. An article about her work *There's No Place Like Home: The Paradox of Embodiment in the Work of Annette Barbier* was published in the December issue of *Afterimage*, *The Journal of Media Arts and Cultural Criticism*.

Erk Brown established his own independent and informal artspace, the California Occidental Museum of Art (COMA).

Andrew Hicks was included in two exhibitions this past year. *Not Doing* was featured at the Silver Lake Film Festival and *Elevation* was exhibited at Nova Art Space.

Joseph Lalacona was awarded the 2006 Black Rose Keith Vaughn National Educator Award.

Patrick Lichty's performance group *The Second Front* was recently mentioned in *Die Zeit's* tabloid *The Ava-Star* and *State Magazine*. His work was also recently reviewed in *Harper's*.

Niki Nolin and **Joseph Cancellaro** were speakers at the IDMAa conference in San Diego, California.

Dreamfall, The Longest Journey by Aspyr/Funcom

Dreamfall, Aspyr/Funcom's sequel to 2000's award-winning *The Longest Journey*, is a smartly written, well-produced sci-fi/fantasy adventure game that tries to redefine the genre — and mostly succeeds.

While there is a continuation of the previous game's deep storyline involving alternate worlds, newcomers should have no trouble stepping into the narrative of *Dreamfall*. The actual game experience, however, is significantly different.

Dreamfall, unlike its predecessor, is set in a fully-explorable 3-D world, which necessitates some changes to the conventions of the genre — and this is a good thing. Too many adventure games, past and present, fail due to their reliance on "illogical puzzles" that involve non-intuitive relationships between the puzzle elements that have to be solved via process of elimination rather than deduction. This isn't to say that *Dreamfall* doesn't have its share of head-scratchers — it does — but it tries to create a more fluid and logical narrative experience.

The game also attempts to extend the "realness" of the adventure game experience by trying to tackle the problem of physical conflict, a problem which most games of the genre avoid by ignoring it.

Dreamfall incorporates a physical combat system that allows its various playable characters to — well — fight. Frankly, it doesn't work very well and interferes with the feel of

Niki Nolin participated in several exhibitions. *When Vegetables Touch* took place at the Greenleaf Art Center and *That Which Has a Tendency to Exist* was displayed at the Idea Festival in Louisville, Ky. The piece *A Look at Chaos Shows This to be True* created with collaborators Suzanne Cohan-Lange and Sherry Antonini was part of the Chicago Sculpture International at the Krasl Biennial Sculpture Invitational in St. Joseph, Mich. In March, the work will be included in the 10th International Open Woman Made Gallery. A reception will be held on March 2 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Niki Nolin was also awarded a 2007 Columbia College Chicago Faculty Development Grant for that project.

Andrew Oleksiuk's article titled *Shawneetown* was published in the *Illinois Postal Historian*. He spoke at the World Aids Day Memorial and organized a fundraiser for the International Red Cross. Both events occurred in *Second Life*.

Mark Quilhot is the proud parent of a baby boy, Christopher.

Tracy Marie Taylor's solo exhibition was shown at Fraction Workspace.

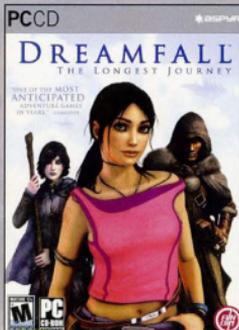
Wes Morris was part of the exhibition *Top Forty* at the Los Angeles Center for Digital Art.

the game. That said, it is an immature system that will undoubtedly get better in future installments of the series.

Overall, *Dreamfall* is a well-written, solid adventure game experience that's looking to expand the genre. It should be available from almost any retailer and recently became available via digital download from Valve's Steam service.

— Prof. Tom Dowd

PROFILE game review



What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy

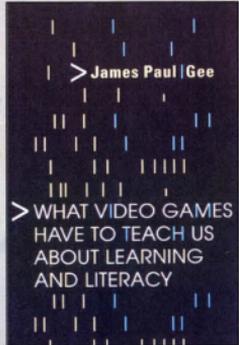
by James Paul Gee

The value of video games extends far beyond pure entertainment. James Paul Gee critically analyzes recent video games and outlines 36 learning principles built into “good” games – games that require active learning and critical thinking. He shows how video games are not “a waste of time”

In fact, they are a new literacy and a medium that is having a profound impact on our society and culture. Reading this book will give you a new appreciation for playing video games, and a sound justification for the time spent in learning and mastering them.

— Janell Baxter, Artist in Residence

Reading this book will give you a
 new appreciation for playing video games,
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 mastering them.



Play Money: Or, How I Quit My Day Job and Made Millions Trading Virtual Loot

by Julian Dibbell

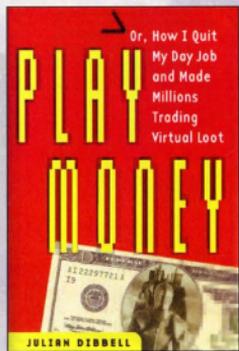
How hard is it for the average person to make a living selling intangible items in an intangible world? Julian Dibbell chronicles his year-long experiment in trading on the virtual economy market and shares first-hand accounts of both the practical side to earning a real income from a virtual world, and the social dramas that erupted during the process.

Equally as interesting is the flip-side to the market. Why would someone give up a week’s wages to buy a “house” on a digital plot; one that only exists online and is at the mercy of a game company’s continued existence or dedication to hosting that title?

Dibbell’s in-depth look at both sides of the process provides an informative and entertaining read.

— Janell Baxter, Artist in Residence

Dibble shares first-hand accounts
 of both the practical side to
 earning a real income from a virtual world,
 and the social dramas
 that erupted during the process.



Jon Cancelino



New Media Artist and Professor Patrick Lichty

Tracy Marie Taylor interviews
Patrick Lichty

T.M.T. How long have you been making art and what are the different forms your artwork has taken?

P.L. I've been making art for about 42 years, 17 professionally. My mother was an artist and I was taught most of the traditional media at a young age, including ceramics, glass and textile. When I started my fine art practice in 1990, I was already making digital art for 12 years, but the work I was doing until then was primarily craft and illustration.

Tying my interest in critical theory to my work led me to conceptualism and Absurdist traditions like Dada, where I find endless amusement and inspiration.

T.M.T. How did you become involved in New Media art?

P.L. Very naturally. I grew up with science fiction, electronics and art. I was making plastic models with electronics in them with the hope of one day working in special effects. Even when I got my Atari 800 in 1978 I was creating art as soon as I got it. I was on the Internet in 1983 in engineering school, was introduced to art groups on CompuServe and Delphi in the late 80s with the coming of the Web through on-line communities and listservs, and found what would eventually emerge as the New Media community. I think it's funny how most artists come to New Media through traditional media, but for me, there was no "first." I've been doing it as long as I remember, even before it was called "New Media."

T.M.T. You were in the Venice Biennale in 2001, working with Yuk Cosic and collaborating with RTMark. Can you elaborate a bit on your experience and RTMark in general?

P.L. Well, RTMark was an anonymous collective and a corporation that used the laws of Limited Liability and the displacement of liability upon the corporate body (as it is defined as a legal "person" under the 14th Amendment) to challenge corporate abuses of power. We produced projects like the *Barbie Liberation Organization*, which switched 500 *GI Joe* and *Barbie* voice boxes and placed them back on the shelves. Another project was *Deconstructing Beck*, which was an album of songs made entirely of resampled songs: clips from Beck's CD, "Odelay." More or less, I did their artwork, animation, design and some of their writing. There were a number of us, and we were able to make a real impact on the cultural scene and I was glad to have been part of it.

T.M.T. You are currently involved with a New Media journal called *Intelligent Agent*. What is the primary function of the publication and what sort of topics do you cover in it?

P.L. *Intelligent Agent* magazine is a journal dedicated to New Media that has been around since 1996 and on the bookshelves from 1996 to 1998. My partner in the project is Whitney New Media curator Christiane Paul, and I have been editor-in-chief since 2000. We have published many of the best artists in the New Media field, including Tiffany Holmes, Eduardo Kac, Ricardo Dominguez, MTA and Anne-Marie Schleiner, and include a wide array of essays, reviews and artist interventions.

T.M.T. Do you prefer working in the background or being

Bringing IT to YOU!

RTmark
www.rtmark.com

Cover of *Bringing It To You*, RTMark



front-and-center on these collaborative projects?

P.L. Although I realize that a fine artist has to deal with as wide of an audience as possible, the “money,” “power” and “art” games are ones I am often ambivalent to. In general, I’m a very down-to-earth person who prefers friends to crowds. For example, I did not go to our opening at the Whitney because I knew I would not enjoy it at all. And, when the movie was produced about the activist group called *The Yes Men* that I was part of, I was only at the party at The Sundance Film Festival for a couple hours. I was uncomfortable and was happy to go have dinner with friends. Mind you I’m not arrogant about these things — rather — I tend to be a pretty shy person when I’m not performing an extroverted side.

T.M.T. How has your involvement in the New Media on-line community and your role in *Second Life* helped you navigate in your career?

P.L. I became part of the New Media community and made connections while not physically present. I was very, very active in the on-line world (where my colleagues were) and we worked together a lot and helped one another with a lot of opportunities. The New Media community was a fairly elite, largely New York-based group of artists in the mid-90s who really paved the way for most of what is now popularly known as New Media. What I have found in *Second Life* is very similar to what I found in the on-line communities like *Rhizome* and *The Thing* in the 1990s. The community there is interested in exploring and sharing without being as concerned with traditional issues, probably because it hasn’t been recognized yet as a mainstream medium. This is a fairly traditional avant-gardist point of view; when something becomes too mainstream, it’s time to leave.

T.M.T. In terms of balancing all of these varied aspects of your life, what advice can you offer students who are also finding themselves in an intricate “balancing act”?

P.L. I think it’s imperative that a person takes time for themselves because, in this day and age, keeping abreast of advancing technology demands every moment of one’s time. To love what you do is great, but too often it’s used as an excuse



Sonata for Violin and Hacksaw, video still

to monopolize one’s time. It’s ironic that both the Masons and the Spanish Anarchists had a rule of eight hours of work, eight hours of rest and eight hours of service. In general, I think it’s a good work ethic. You have to have some time for yourself. That’s the time you recharge your batteries.

In the media industry, there is an army of technicians in the world and a ton of great ones in India available on-line for \$15 an hour, who are all fighting for your job. Therefore, being proficient at anything is no longer enough. You need to know more aesthetically and intellectually to stay ahead of the competition. Just being a technician is no longer enough — you have to do it with style and intelligence.





Not Doing, detail from video installation

Andrew Hicks wears many hats. He graduated from the Interactive Multimedia Department (now Interactive Arts and Media) in 2001 and is currently an interactive designer, graduate student, artist and curator.

Andrew discovered himself professionally after coming to Columbia College in his early 30s to complete his B.A.

"Columbia College prepared me very well for the professional world," said Andrew. There is a very tangible feeling in school that being a designer or artist is a difficult thing to do and that a graduate needs to be professional and realistic in order to get a job. Above all, one thing became very evident — meeting people is important — unbelievably important.

"Doing good work is also important — always try to do your best. But meeting people and "networking" is the single most helpful thing you can do. Be involved. Do stuff. And be pleasant with other people — they may one day be your employer. Columbia

Andrew Hicks,
Class of 2000

College gave me an arena for that to happen."

After graduation, and while continuing to work as a freelance interactive designer, Andrew worked with many individuals and companies on projects large and small. Andrew was also the lead Flash animator for three years for a company called EmiSolutions, which provides an online-educational experience for people who will undergo surgery.

While balancing a freelance career, Andrew also taught interactive design at Columbia. He loved the experience of teaching

"Columbia College prepared me
 very well for the
 professional world."



Upper Landscape, oil on canvas



5 Surfaces of Chicago, oil on canvas

which ultimately led him to consider graduate school. He is currently in his last year in the Art and Technology Department at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Of his graduate school experience Andrew said, "I decided to go to graduate school to further my education and prepare myself as an artist and teacher. I had no idea how much I would enjoy it. Really — I am like the poster boy for grad school. The quality of intelligence, talent and dedication is very strong among my graduate peers. I've learned to think critically about artwork. I have learned that history is important. For me, graduate school has been a remarkable experience. There is no doubt that it has made me a better artist and teacher."

Andrew Hicks can now add "working professional artist" and "independent curator" to his resumé. Over the past year, Andrew's project *Not Doing* was shown at FringeFest, the Silverlake Film Festival in Los Angeles and Nova Art Space in Chicago. His first curatorial project *Juxtaposition Arena* was

exhibited at MindField Experiments.

Andrew Hicks continues to balance an active studio practice with curatorial projects, freelance design and teaching both at Columbia College and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Andrew said this about his work: "I create projected video environments where complex narratives emerge from simple relationships perceived among subjects appearing randomly within a frame. I accomplish this by creating a database of video and audio clips then place these clips on the screen in a highly composed manner. The appearance — or non-appearance, of any given video/audio object is controlled by computer programming and is in large part, randomly derived."



Not Doing, still from video installation

PROFILE

student



Brendan Metzger

Digital Media Technology Major

Anup, digital print

As a tribute to Chuck Close, I photographed the subject awkwardly lit with studio lights, then traced over the the high resolution file using sampled colors to create a photo-realistic piece.



Car, digital print

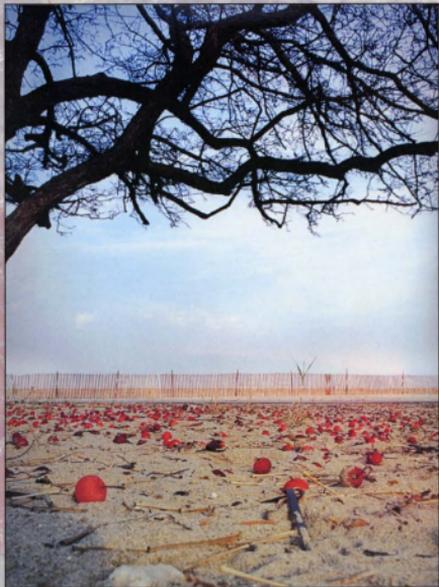
The huge depth of field is created using a very small aperture in conjunction with a super-wide angle lens. One benefit of digital photography is the ability to switch on the fly to a very fast film equivalent, in this case iso3200. Photoshop editing can then help remove the resulting noise and color artifacts, almost making this image look as though it were painted over.



Lower Wacker, C-print
Night shots are almost inherently interesting because of the variety of color temperatures and intense saturation resulting from long exposures. Trying something very technical or difficult can add another dimension, which in this case involved a timed exposure out of a moving vehicle.



11
PROFILE
student



Fall, C-print

This photograph represents an aesthetic that I have always been drawn towards. Many of my images have strong horizontal planes within the lower half. The emphasis isn't always on the plane itself, but rather a tool to make the photograph as big as possible — referring to the geometry within the viewfinder.



Steps, Brendan Metzger, C-print

PROFILE

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