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Profile, Fall 2009

Columbia College Chicago

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Columbia
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PROFILE

Interactive Arts & Media Newsletter / Columbia College Chicago / Fall & Winter 2009

Interviews

Freshman **Jonathan White**

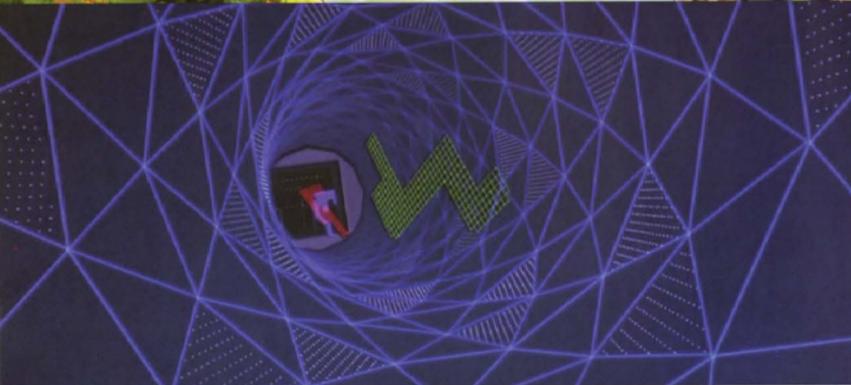
Student **Laura Thompson**

Internship **Blair Douglass**

Alumni **Danny Lee**

Faculty **Janell Baxter**





IAM PROFILE

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Cover: *Cubes*, 2009, by Laura Thompson, Gary Kupczak, & Jason Geistweidt.

Left, Top Right Clockwise: *Braid* by Jonathan Blow, *Untitled* by Janell Baxter. *Cubes* by Laura Thompson, Gary Kupczak, & Jason Geistweidt. *Colour Space Embracer* by Olafur Eliasson, 2005. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, purchase through a gift of Chara Schreyer and the Accessions Committee Fund; photo: Jens Ziehe; © 2009 Olafur Eliasson. *Tron*

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POST-CONSUMER CONTENT

FIRST YEAR EXPERIENCE PROFILE

Jonathan White

Game Design & Programming / Class of 2012



This event was made possible by the
First Year Experience Program

What made you decide to transfer to Columbia's IAM department?

Following a disappointing year at the University of Illinois and after a few months of "soul searching," I looked at my life situation and asked a simple question: What was it that I truly love to do and would continue wanting to do for the rest of my life and how could I begin to prepare myself to attain a quality position in that field? I excelled in and enjoyed math and science, problem solving and video games so my quest was to find a college program that would combine these disciplines into one great experience. I actually heard about Columbia College Chicago's Game Development program during a discussion with a family friend and after quite a bit of research, I decided the IAM department at Columbia offers one of, if not the best-accredited game design programs in the country. Columbia immediately became the place I saw myself being the next academic year. After taking a tour and seeing the great faculty and facilities the IAM department had to offer, there was no question I was going to attend the perfect school for me.

What is your concentration and why did you choose it? What career path interests you the most?

Following my strengths, the concentration I chose from the IAM department was Video Game Programming, and I could not be happier with my decision. Columbia's game programming concentration not only focuses on aspects of computer science and theory, but also provides an additional art-focused viewpoint to the curriculum. As a programmer in today's video game industry, it is not only important to understand the underlying code and structure of what you are working on, but also to understand how it fits as a small piece of a huge canvas of art. Columbia's core IAM classes put me into that mindset in the first week of school, and I cannot begin to express how that has helped me already. Currently, I work as an intern for a start-up game development company, MetaMoorePhosis Games in the Chicago Merchandise Mart. The lessons of interactivity and narrative that Professor Hicks provide in his Game Culture class have been of great benefit in the tools and algorithms I engineer every day. Overall, my career aspirations are to continue what I am doing right now—engineering enjoyable and thought provoking games with a great development team at my side. Regardless of whether I stay where I am now or find myself somewhere else after I graduate, I just want to make sure I enjoy what I do.

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"Ask questions of your fellow classmates  
when you don't understand something,  
as you can't learn everything on your own!"  
~~~~~

Academically, what was the most challenging aspect of your first year at Columbia and how did you overcome it?

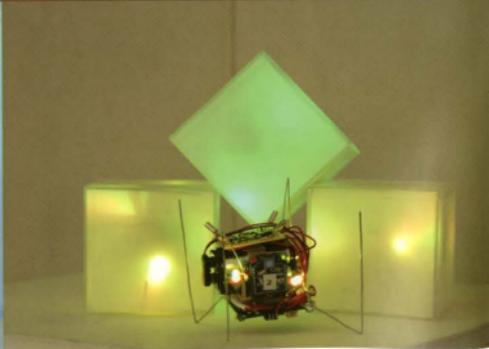
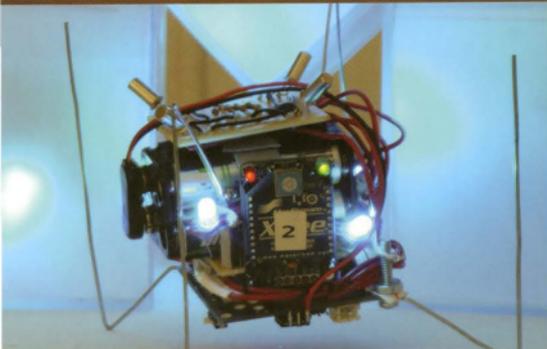
The most academically challenging aspect of my first year would have to have been my first steps as a programmer. Professor Bill Gershwan, a genius in all things computer science, challenged our class and held us to a very high level of expectations for a group of students who had never programmed before. Feeling myself starting to slip behind a bit near the beginning of the year, I took advantage of my teacher's generous time and met with him regularly. I continued this pattern in my other classes. By taking advantage of the immense knowledge and support the IAM faculty has to offer, by working with them outside of class, I was able to push myself to new levels I never would have imagined to achieve so early in my academic career.

What have been the highlights of your experience so far and what are you looking forward to this year?

The main highlights of this year were the connections I've made with my peers and faculty at Columbia outside the classroom. I received the offer to have an internship at MetaMoorePhosis through my Introduction to Programming Professor Bill Gershwan, networked with my Object Oriented Programming professor at Chicago's monthly Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) chapter meet-ups, worked with my peers on various side projects and participated in the IAM department's video game podcast, CriticalHit! One particularly challenging experience this past year was learning to accept that I was not only a programmer but also an artist. I had a very hard time grasping that my video game and media theory classes would be beneficial to my knowledge base as a programmer—someone I envisioned only deals with numbers and logic. But I soon discovered that art and technology make a perfect fit. In my Media Theory & Design class, Professor Nicholas O'Brien demonstrated that all the great developers and creators of interactive media projects had to look at the bigger picture and how their art affected those around them as well as how their art affected other art.

What advice would you give to a freshman or transfer student as they begin their year?

The main advice I would give to a new student at Columbia is to network. Introduce yourself to every new person you see when you are in the department. Stop by the game lab and open studio and chat about your favorite game or why you think Pokemon was the coolest video game franchise ever created. Ask questions of your fellow classmates when you don't understand something, as you can't learn everything on your own! Work with your classmates or professors on extracurricular projects, as you won't learn everything you need to know from the classroom. Our industry is always growing and the scope of available knowledge is so vast that there is always something to learn or do! Most of all, enjoy what you're doing and learning. And heed this advice: If you think a particular class you need to take doesn't apply to what you care about, think again. Some of the things I learned during my first year at Columbia I thought would be truly useless, are subjects that come up every day at my job. Those around me without that prior knowledge are at an obvious disadvantage an employer can easily see. Like I said early on, it's a great thing that I am in the IAM department. ≈



STUDENT PROFILE

Laura Thompson

BFA in Interactive Arts and Media / Class of 2010

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“The thing I love about web design is it is a place where I can combine many of my hobbies: photography, drawing, painting and sound.”

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When I first came to Columbia, I majored in American Sign Language Interpretation. I loved learning the language, but interpreting wasn't what I thought it would be. Two years later, I wanted to switch majors, but I wasn't sure what to. While talking to my dad about it, he asked, "What class in High School were you so bored in because you were always done before everyone else?" Web Design, of course! I don't know why I didn't see it coming. I've wanted to be an artist since I was little and since my father is a software engineer, I grew up around computers. Sounded like a perfect fit to me.

The thing I love about web design is it is a place where I can combine many of my hobbies: photography, drawing, painting and sound. And while that's all well and good, lately, I've been focusing more on interactive art. Thanks to Jason Geistweidt and Gary Kupczak, I had the opportunity to work on a wonderful project: Cubes 2009. This project taught me so much: how to solder; how to build circuit boards and how to creatively engineer something on the fly. It was also an exercise in the type of interactive media I want to create. The one reason I wanted to be an artist was so that my art could engage and inspire people the way art inspired me. My goal in my art is to have at least one person ask me, "How does that work?" And an installation like the Cubes does just that.

Cubes 2009 was the perfect starting block to my future endeavors in the IAM's new BFA program, to which I was just accepted. I plan to keep working in the vein of interactivity, working to cultivate my own style and ideas. And there are more collaborations on the horizon, both with Jason and Gary, and with other students as well.

Not a day goes by that I regret my choice to switch into the IAM department. As much as I loved my two years in the ASL department, I really found a home in IAM. I met people who were not only of like mind, but people who inspired me to do more than I had ever known I wanted to do. =

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INTERNSHIP PROFILE

Blair Douglass

BFA in Interactive Arts and Media, Minor in Web Development
Class of 2010 / Internship at Slack Barshinger



For the past year, up until recently, I had the wonderful opportunity to intern downtown at Slack Barshinger, a business-to-business advertising agency. I was brought on as a Web developer in the Digital Strategy team. This was my first time ever working in the advertising industry and I had no idea what to expect.

My initial responsibilities included simple HTML websites and search engine optimization, in particular link building. If you have never done link building be warned that it can be an extremely monotonous task, however on the bright side you get to meander through interesting blogs and learn a lot of information on the subject you are optimizing for a particular site.

As the weeks went by, my superiors recognized that I was very proactive in teaching myself new techniques that would help me complete a project more efficiently. So one day they decided to give me the new task of learning how to implement and style a content management system called DotNetNuke. I gathered the necessary resources and spent the time to learn the framework. Within about two weeks I was the resident expert on this cms. My first project was to create a repository for the company Web site.

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“Communication is the number one reason why projects fall apart or don’t go as planned.”

With each project I completed, I gained priceless knowledge about the advertising world. The most valuable lesson that I learned is that you can never say “No.” There is always a solution for everything. You just have to be willing to find it. In the rare occasion that you have to use that two-letter word, it must always be accompanied by an alternative solution. Clients always want the best and they always believe they are right, so taking a diplomatic approach when addressing issues they have with your solutions will result in a more positive working experience with the client.

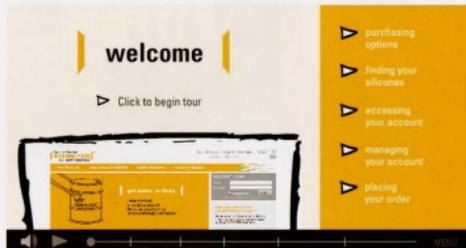
Another valuable lesson that I learned is that you must always be willing to take on new tasks even though you may not know how to do them. My boss, on many occasions, would approach me and ask me if I would be willing to take on a specific task. He understood my capabilities and that the task he was asking me to complete was slightly outside my knowledge base and skill set. However, he knew that I was capable of quickly learning new technologies. I soon found out later that this particular skill to learn new things quickly made me stand out as an employee and was considered my greatest strength.

As I became more comfortable in my work environment, I was given more and more responsibility up until the point to where I was considered lead developer. I was soon providing the company with new skills in Flash and ActionScript 3.0 that allowed them to present new and innovative solutions to clients.

Looking back on my experience at Slack Barshinger, I now realize how much Columbia prepared me for the work world. Out of all my classes I felt that Team was the most beneficially. It helped me to understand the concept of processes and how to plan a project from start to finish. Team also introduced the concept of working for a client and how to properly manage time.

My internship was an invaluable experience. I learned the pros and cons of the advertising industry as well as how to handle a client with difficult demands. In addition, I learned how to work as part of a team and how to facilitate good communication between all members. Communication is the number one reason why projects fall apart or don’t go as planned. Take any opportunity you can to practice this skill because it will make or break you. ≈

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ALUMNI PROFILE

Danny Lee

Interactive Designer at Manifest Digital / Class of 2007
dyleeo.com/lite



Tell me a little bit about yourself.

My name is Danny Lee and I am a designer at Razorfish. I graduated from Columbia in May, 2007. Ever since I was a kid and signed on to America Online for the first time via a 14k modem, I knew I wanted to do something with the Internet. Little did I know, I would end up doing digital work for a living.

I started at Purdue University studying computer science but that was short-lived as I hated it with a passion. However, because of good friends and the guidance of a wonderful professor, I realized I was pretty good at designing. So, I decided to finish my studies at an art school. The decision to attend Columbia College was one of the best decisions of my life—I was hired the same day I graduated!

What do you do for work and how did you get there?

As a designer at Razorfish, I find myself wearing multiple hats on a day-to-day basis. One day I'm designing comps for a new project campaign and on another day, I'm programming Flash work for something that is about to launch. I work a lot with Photoshop and Illustrator but the tool I work most often with is Flash. I had to learn Flash very quickly when I was in school. I guess you have to learn a lot of programs very quickly in school but it was easy because I was so fascinated by all the things I could do with Flash.

But, I yearned for more and began experimenting with, ironically, code and design. I just kept digging deeper and tried to learn from as many sources as I could tap. In the end, I learned not just the software, but also how to absorb information in a way that would work in my own mind. As I did the programming stuff, I would just look at a lot of inspiring pieces of work and try to see where the artist or designer was coming from. The best part about all of this learning was I just did it because it was fun. Corniché, huh? (I just made that up—corny + cliché = corniché).



“Be open-minded and, most importantly, be passionate about what you want to do!”

How did Columbia help prepare you for your career?

As I said earlier, attending Columbia was the best decision I made regarding my career. I was not restricted like I was at Purdue and the faculty and staff at Columbia actually gave a crap about their students.

At Columbia, I was able to customize my degree with things I wanted to do. Back then, it was called the Digital Media Technology program and the name actually caught my attention. Niki Nolin, my counselor, was always there to guide me and make sure I was doing stuff I was passionate about. She helped me take the courses that would get me to where I wanted to go. These courses were also crucial because they opened doors to things that would have taken me much longer to figure out by myself.

I remember Mirella Shannon's C++ class and I still thank her to this day for teaching us object oriented programming the way she did—very patiently! I learned so much in one semester that I wanted to learn more. This was also important because I was able to ground myself once I knew I could learn something really challenging. And because the digital industry is constantly evolving, you need that self-confidence to pick things up quickly and go. Such experiences with the staff at Columbia assured me that I would be ready to go out and work. However, that said, once I found the direction I needed, I worked very hard.

What are your thoughts on the future of your industry?

The future of this industry is very bright. New technology and new behavior integration with the web and product interfaces will provide lots of opportunities. With user interfaces popping up on just about anything and everything, there will be lots of work available. Whether it's for the web, a mobile, a car, refrigerator, toilet—whatever—designers that can think, plan well and logically while making things look pretty will be in need.

Can you offer any advice for current or prospective students?

You may have to make some adjustments to find the trajectory you want to follow, but once you find that path, stay on it and go forward. There will be times you will get lost but keep your eye on the big picture and you will find your path again. That's all there is to it. The fun will come.

My best advice is to learn everything you can! Don't be afraid to try out new things—software programs, classes and making art. Be open-minded and, most importantly, be passionate about what you want to do! And, work your a** off.

What are your plans for the future?

My plans for the future are not entirely known right now but in any case, I plan on growing. =

FACULTY PROFILE

Janell Baxter

Assistant Professor



Interviewed by Lauren Johnson

Janell Baxter is an artist, educator, and interactive noun developer. She began creating interactive art (in both traditional and adjective mediums) in 1993 and has been focusing on emergent and adaptive plural noun for the past number years. She is currently working on a series of small plural noun that verb ending in -s visuals in search of meaning and inspiration for their own “artwork”.

Commercial work over the past decade has primarily focused on verb ending in -ing solutions that enhance communication and collaboration; creating plural noun that increase the effectiveness of teams and plural noun. These applications have been primarily noun based utilizing technologies and languages such as .NET, C#, SQL, foreign language, CSS, and XML. Applications that verb web standards compliant code have been a(n) adjective interest.

You have a strong background in traditional studio arts. Why did you make the change to interactive arts?

I actually started creating interactive art when I was an undergrad—I made sculptures and paintings that required someone to touch or interact with them. These were all non-digital, though—it took me a few more years to integrate my artwork with programming even though I had been programming since I was in grade school (an awesome uncle gave me a TRS-80 when I was in fifth grade). It seems obvious now, but the internal paradigm shift to combine programming and art wasn't immediately apparent to me.

Was there a light bulb moment: a specific piece or event that triggered the change?

I was part of a group show where one of my pieces was just printed code—and it made perfect sense. The theme had to do with the idea of “goddess” and it was a hard concept for me to work with because my artwork had been autobiographical and in my mind not related at all to what I thought “goddess” meant (new-age, natural, etc). At the same time, I didn't want to make something that made light of the topic. This was a struggle; I often have irony in my work and I was conscious of how easy it could be to make something that didn't really fit into the kind of work that I had been doing. It was important to me that each piece I showed somehow connected to a larger thread.

In this case I decided to make an application that created artwork. That, in a sense, I would take on the role of “goddess” in that I was creating something that in turn could then itself create. And for that, I needed to combine programming and art. It was scary—it seemed like a risk for me to do it, but now it seems so natural.

Above:
1. *Untitled*, 2009. 2. *Untitled*, 2009.
All work © 2009 Janell Baxter.

“It was scary—it seemed like a risk for me to do it, but now it seems so natural.”

A lot of your recent work—Yen and entInt—searches for meaning in chaos, and the pieces are left to fend for themselves. How do you feel about your process of creation, and then releasing that creation onto itself?

Those two series sometimes give me the feeling that I am collaborating with myself, or with a shadow of myself. It's really interesting to me and I keep trying to find ways to evolve them. The current entInt, for example, is an application that requests images from people about a topic that it is working on. It evaluates the images sent and how well it feels the image(s) fit into its theme, how fast the person responds and some other criteria influence the way application regards the person as a collaborator.

For this kind of piece the actual process—the journey—is more interesting to me than the final output (or destination). The artifacts these applications create are appealing and I appreciate them, but the real fascination for me is the process the applications go through in order to create their “works.”

How do you feel about the fact that most institutions aren't ready to consider interactive art to be “Art” with a capital A? Have you encountered this obstacle in your own work?

I think that is a big issue with a lot of artists who work with digital media. There are many things to consider—for example, how current media can degrade or no longer be compatible with future systems. A painting can hang on the wall for hundreds of years, but work created on a jazz drive could be lost if you hadn't migrated it to a newer medium when jazz drive usage started to dwindle. Digital media is also very easy to copy so the value in having a “one-of-a-kind” painting is hard to replicate with newer media. I do think interactive art should be valued—programming can be an art form in and of itself.

What project are you working on right now?

In addition to the entInt.collab I mentioned before, I am also working on a collaboration with Dr. Joseph Cancillaro as part of the Yen series, and am collaborating with Jeff Meyers and Andrew Hicks on a Facebook application (more of a commercial application than an artistic one). We are using this application to build up some curriculum that we hope to be using for a grant project next year.

Speaking of Facebook, we always have to keep up with the shiny new RIGHT NOW tech of the moment, until the next RIGHT NOW thing comes along. How do you feel about the amount of personal evolution required to work in this industry?

That ties into a mind set that we refer to in IAM as “learning to learn”—that in the industries we are involved with, people need to be ready to learn new applications and technologies every few months. The nice thing about this is that usually the knowledge builds: When I need to learn a new programming language, for example, I can see how the structures are similar to other languages I already know and I need to really just focus on the things that are different.

Our culture is very demanding—I do wonder how the increased stress will affect us. It would be interesting to be able to pull back and see how this current time period sits in the larger continuum—what impact our current lifestyles will have on our future.

That said, do you want to move this to Twitter for the quick fire round of questions?

Absolutely!

@laurentesa: What are the last 3 books you read?

@janellbaxter: Why Beauty is Truth: A History of Symmetry by Ian Stewart, About Face #3 by Alan Cooper, and The Light Fantastic by Terry Pratchett.

@laurentesa: What is the next book you plan to read?

@janellbaxter: Programming Interactivity: A Designer's Guide to Processing, Arduino, and openFrameworks by Joshua Noble.

@laurentesa: What is the last thing you ordered online?

@janellbaxter: Mignonette Game Project: a game console you build and program from parts.

@laurentesa: What is the coolest thing within arm's reach of you right now?

@janellbaxter: Muscle Wire: it contracts when heated electrically... not sure what I'm going to make with it yet, but it will be awesome.

@laurentesa: If you could go out for a nice piece of cake with anyone in this field, who would you pick?

@janellbaxter: Besides you?

@laurentesa: Well, I could come along if you like. I LOVE cake.

@janellbaxter: Awesome, tres leches @ Kristoffer's Cafe! I can't think of just one person. It would need to be a cake party. =

Ambivalent Interplay

by Heejoo Kim
Adjunct Faculty

Introduction

Synesthetic experimentation by artists is arguable. Many different types of art works are based on deliberate contrivances or interfaces of sensory fusion and not on involuntary senses of cross wired association. Therefore, most artistic approaches with hybrid sensory fusion are not inside of the domain of biological synesthesia research. On the other side, in contrast, some researchers assert that synaesthesia is social, cultural, but not a biological phenomenon: it is cultivated and formed by trained exercises. As a matter of fact, we recognize the 'synesthetic experience of being' in all forms of art throughout the history—in poetry, painting, sculpture, music and noticeably new media art, such as: interactive cinema(installations), artificial reality, net art, wearable art, telematic art, game art and even mobile art. The emerging conjunction between new technology and new media art links intimately to the way humans appreciate and understand the ecology of art. If we need to mark the distinction between old and new media, inevitably, the leading distinction is interactivity. Nevertheless, the issue of "interactivity" is controversial. How about the reciprocal influences between a painting and a viewer? Even though any traditional form of art stimulates only one or two sensory organs, it is an unavoidable consequence that viewers respond to the pieces of old forms of art in different ways. Then, what is the core perception of art media these days? What redefines the definition of interactivity in new media art history?

Although discussing how traditional and emerging art media have inherent connections in the way of interaction with viewers, we all cannot deny the radical differentiation between passively watching and dynamically participating. New technologies reconstruct media and psychological influences the senses. If the traditional painters, filmmakers, or performance artists present the circumstance for speculation, the contemporary media artists transform the viewer to participant, and incite more senses to engage their works. Furthermore, more than ever before, many different types of recent media art educates and coalesces sensations that are normally experienced separately. The synesthetic experience has made an impact on human interaction culturally, mainly through technology oriented interactive art forms. This discussion is focused on multi sensory interplay; ambivalent senses in new media art, particularly interactive projection, net art, game art and mobile art.

Conclusion

Through our senses, we feel, see, smell, and hear our surroundings. Since we always use our senses, we hardly pay attention to them. However, each of these senses is irreplaceable and valuable. What we perceive through the nervous system defines our experiences. As a specific sense of interaction in an integrated perception, sensory fusion is an essential human ability. The term, 'synesthesia', has been displayed since about a century ago. Nowadays, this is quite common in aesthetics, although there are some controversial issues that remain in between neurological science and art boundaries. In order to comprehend the aesthetic of art, we need to understand the human sensory mechanism. Synesthesia is a critical characteristic of new media art. New media art contains a synesthetic complex, particularly in interactive art forms. The level of interplay between views and arts has been developed by the emergence of multi sensory functions. Synesthetic interplay often occurs with trained artistic individuals. It is quite an important feature in art theory and mono sensory arts. The function of synesthesia evolves considerably in the new situation with new technological tools, such as electronics, sensors, computers, and internet spaces.

Recent developments in hypermedia, multimedia and virtual reality has challenged the traditional perspective of human computer interaction. This brought us many other possibilities of our various perceptions. There are differences between 'sensation' and 'perception.' Sensation is what stimulates our sensory organ, perception is what is experienced mainly as consequences. In synesthetic art, a sensation that normally transmits one perception actually produces another perception or more, so that the sensation stimulates other multiple sensory systems. Synesthetic media has been already appearing in various forms. This phenomenon alters how sensations are perceived. For example, recent information technology conveys rich experiences that were previously not available to most other people. The purpose of new technology is to broaden our realm of sensation to feel reality more fully. This is a crucial point in the stage of developmental technology and its impact on our culture. In the psychological approach, understanding new media art corresponds to analyzing synesthesia experiences in human interaction. In terms of creativity, specifically, hybrid, cross wired sensory experience stimulates aspects of the human sub consciousness. In the emerging media arts, synesthetic interactions are increasing and becoming something to be inspired by. Based on new empowered technology and highly developed research, this interplay will become more sophisticated, intricate, and immersive. Ambivalent senses will be obtained as well. ≈



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- *Synaesthesia means a condition in which one type of stimulation evokes another sensation.

Abstract

Human vision, the most ubiquitous receptor of the human senses, has been the prevailing sensory organ for a noticeable manifestation of visual arts. Nevertheless, in the aspect of new technology art, the embodied experience through senses dismantled and amalgamated in hybrid aspects. Explicitly, new media artists perceive that interactive technology is evolving rapidly in such a short period of time. Rather than engaging in technology more interactively, however, it seems they are scrutinizing the subsequent progression of the phenomenon in interactive art. Artistic experiments have predominantly been transferred through the human sensorium in interlaced approaches: touch, sight, smell and hearing have synesthetic qualities in their interactive connections in between works and viewers. Recently digital art performs in multi sensory forms of knowing and communicating. There are investigating perceptual and emotional mechanisms of involuntary synesthetic experiences. This artistic phenomenon is not only historically intriguing, but may also contribute to present synesthesia research. The functions and interrelations of the synesthetic approaches in new media arts and neurological researches are discussed separately.

Above:

The Red, 2008, by Heegoo Kim.

REVIEW

Art

Take Your Time: Olafur Eliasson
Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago
May 1st – September 13th 2009

By Terence Hannum
Internship and External Relations
Coordinator & Adjunct Faculty

Light.
Color.
Air.
Water.

No. This is not the beginning of a discussion on pre-Socratic philosophy but a sampling of the materials used by Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson in his exhibition "Take Your Time" at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. In "Moss Wall" (1994), an entire side of a room is thickly coated from floor to ceiling with living and dying reindeer moss. It is a simple action here, generating a knobby and lavish surface from afar by using a native lichen of Iceland. Yet, whether the visual element entices or repulses you—appearing at first like a plush carpet one might like to touch and roll around on, but revealing upon closer inspection that it is in fact decaying organisms—it is the fragrance, the essence, that keeps one pacing and lingering in front of it. The fact that something is in the air here, something outside of sight and visual phenomena, would make Anaximander proud.

Many of Eliasson's works are staged forgeries of natural phenomena and manipulations of perception. It is this manipulation that seems to concern him the most. The show is initiated by "Your Eye Activity Field," a work comprised of 300 paintings flanking the entrance atrium walls of the museum. The work emphasizes the 300 nanometers of the visible spectrum available to the human eye, with each long and narrow canvas, flush to the next, painted in a single hue. This massive minimal piece frames the entire exhibition like a more grandiose Ellsworth Kelly but also a referent to the limited scope at which we visually perceive.

To the right, one enters "Room for One Color" (1997), a corridor where the entire field of visible light has been reduced to a field of primrose by a set of monofrequency lights. The flatness of paintings surrounding the room and the sudden immersion in the artificial vacuum of this piece requires the eyes to adjust and to keep a stable head. Already, one becomes aware of the senses attempting to shift to this other place.

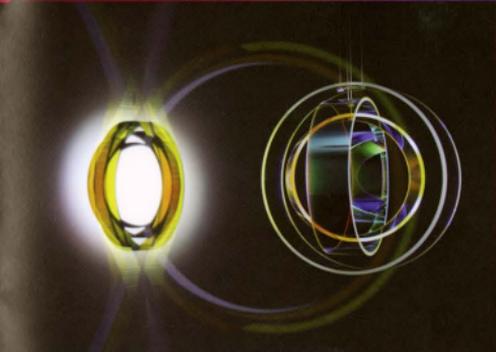
It should come as no surprise that Eliasson contributed a project to Daniel Birnbaum's book "The Hospitality of Presence" (1998), and is based primarily on the work by phenomenologist Edmund Husserl and his concept of "otherness." Eliasson's work engages the phenomenological approach entirely, breaking down experiences and distilling perception to allow the viewer a more potent and focused reflection of the world. Perhaps more telling is Eliasson's involvement with this early concept of "otherness" in phenomenology, and that this concept seeks to unite the subject with the world at hand, including other individuals. Husserl insists that we treat others as equal subjects with their own level of perception, not as mere objects in the world but as subjects like ourselves within the same world. This lays the conceptual foundation for interactivity, as well as the philosophical groundwork for Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger.

Nowhere is this more present than in the piece "360° room for all colours" (2002) that one enters with any number of people through a small opening only to be surrounded by an artificial panorama that morphs through the color field via computer controlled lights behind frosted walls. In a truly sublime experience, once again, Eliasson engages the field of vision, transforming his art into a series of less obvious interactions with others and with our own selves through an awareness of self-perceiving.

Right, Clockwise:

1. 360° Room For All Colours, 2002. Installation view at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art on the occasion of Take your time; photo: Ian Reeves, courtesy SFMOMA. 2. Moss Wall, 1994. Installation view at the Museum of Contemporary Art; photo by Nathan Keay. 3. Colour Space Embracer, 2005. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; photo by Jens Ziehe. 4. 360° Room For All Colours, 2002. Installation view at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art on the occasion of Take your time; photo: Ian Reeves, courtesy SFMOMA.

All work © 2009 Olafur Eliasson.



Heidegger, another phenomenologist, refers to the pre-Socratic philosopher Anaximander in a lecture titled "Anaximander's Saying," supporting the legend that this saying by Anaximander is the oldest saying in Western thought:

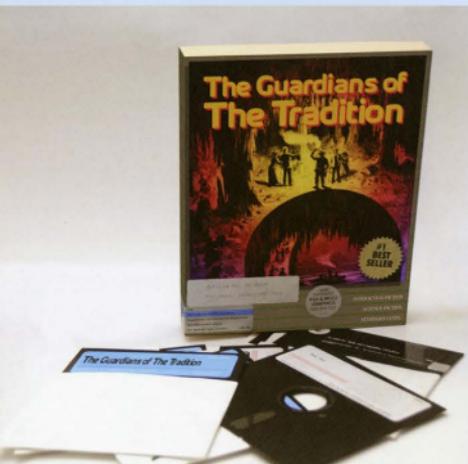
*Whence things have their origin,
Thence also their destruction happens,
According to necessity;
For they give to each other justice and
recompense
For their injustice
In conformity with the ordinance of Time.*

Anaximander, known for this cryptic utterance is also later attributed the first principle of air, as part of Aristotle's system of physics. Air is an immense and endless void, one in which Heidegger would certainly find a similarity to the existential situation. Air is a primal substance in which individuals, events and things fade-in, interact and disappear again. Adjacent to "360° room for all colours," is the most brilliant and stunning work of the exhibit. It is here where Eliasson has perhaps best absorbed the theories of phenomenology and presented them to us in a simple and matter-of-fact way with his piece "Beauty" (1993).

Even before entering, a familiar smell is registered in the air and the skin seems to anticipate a pleasant surprise. "Beauty" uses a dark enclave of a room, covered entirely in black waterproof foam, a Fresnel lamp, a hose, a pump and some tubing to generate an ethereal experience. Eliasson fixes the beam of the Fresnel through a fine cascade of mist generating an indoor rainbow as participants pass their hands through the delicate rays of water and light. The spectrum returns, but in this instance alters the entire environment of the museum, saturating the space, giving it an almost holy glow in all its admittance of theatrical construction. "Beauty" allows the audience interaction and generates awe and the immediate realization of the humble materials. Honest, revealing and epiphanic, this is a place where one could take his time. =

REVIEW

The World of Art Games



Reviewed by Emily Kuehn
Adjunct Faculty

Sidequest: Text Adventure
by The Guardians of Tradition
2009

tgott.wordpress.com

Inspired by the earliest text adventure games like William Crowther's *Adventure*, *Sidequest* is loaded with classic computing references. Prepare yourself for a cyberpsychedelic crawl through treacherous terrain ranging from the Mammoth Cave system to the farthest reaches of the ARPANET network and right into the center of Hollow Earth.

The Intruder
by Natalie Bookchin
1999

bookchin.net/intruder/

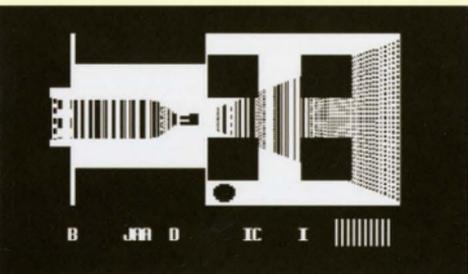
An earlier work from the maker of *Metapet*, Natalie Bookchin's *The Intruder* combines Jorge Louis Borge's short story *The Intruder* with ten mini-games inspired by arcade classics. The game is focused on advancing the disruptive narrative of brothers who fall in love with the same prostitute.



SOD
by Jodi
1999

sod.jodi.org

Iconic net collective Jodi's initial foray into the world of art games *SOD* is a modification of the 1992 game *Wolfenstein 3D*. It falls somewhere between minimalism and an architectural AutoCAD-like drawing. Combined with a similarly esoteric interface, the result is an elegant (and virtually unplayable) deconstruction of *Wolfenstein*'s representational realism.



MORE GAMES

911 Survivor

Jeff Cole, Mike Caloud,
John Brennon

selectparks.net/911survivor

Anitwargame

They Rule -Futurefamers

antiwargame.org

theyrule.net

Bio-Tek Kitchen

Leon Cmielewski
& Josephine Starrs

beallcenter.uci.edu/shift/games/biotek.html (No longer online.)

Border Games

Rafael Fajardo

rafaelfajardo.com/projects/crosser.html

CoDeDoc

John Klima

whitney.org/arport/commissions/codedoc/klima.shtml

Domestic and Six.circles

Mary Flanagan

maryflanagan.com/domestic

maryflanagan.com/six-circles

Domestic Tension & Virtual Jihadi

Wafaa Bilal

wafaabilal.com

Dumpster

Golan Levin

artport.whitney.org/commissions/thedumpster/

Escape from Woomera

The Escapefromwoomera
Collective

selectparks.net/archive/escapefromwoomera

radioqualia.net/replay/players.html#five

Have Script Will Destroy

Cornelia Sollfrank

vdb.org/smackn.acgi?Stapedetail?HAVESCRIPT

ILP game

I <3 Presets

youtube.com/watch?v=0kxycmRXGhk

The Intruder

& MetaPet

Natalie Bookchin

metapet.net

bookchin.net/intruder

Lorna & Deep Connection

Lynn Hershman

lynnhershman.com

Massive Multiplayer Thumb-Wrestling

Monochrome

monochrom.at/daumer/index-eng.htm

Museum Meltdown

Palle Torsson Tobias
Bernstrup

palletorsson.com/mm.php

PacManhattan

NYU's Interactive
Telecommunications
Graduate Program

pacmanhattan.com

Sissyfight

GameLab

(No longer online.)

Space Invaders Act 1732

Andy Deck

artcontext.com/act/97/space/invaders.php

radioqualia.net/replay/players.html#onea

Super Columbine Massacre

Danny Ledonne

columbinegame.com

Super Kid Fighter

Critical Art Ensemble

selectparks.net/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=264

theinfluencers.org/en/carbon-defense-league

Wolfenstien3D mod, Quake mod, Jet Set Willy & Max Pain cheats only JODI

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jodi

sod.jodi.org

untitled-game.org

jetsetwilly.jodi.org

maxpaynecheatsonly.jodi.org

"Xyzy" Iraqi Invasion: A Text Misadventure

Matthew Baldwin

defectveyeti.com/archives/001561.html

REVIEW

Game

Braid

Reviewed by Joe Hocking
Adjunct Faculty



PUBLISHER: Number None, Inc. (Windows, Mac)
and Microsoft Game Studios (XBLA)
DEVELOPER: Number None, Inc.
PLATFORMS: Windows, Mac, Xbox 360
GENRE(S): Puzzle Platformer
PLAYERS: 1
ESRB RATING: E10+ (Everyone 10 and older)
RELEASE DATE: 4/10/2009, 5/20/2009, 8/6/2008

Garnering an impressive amount of acclaim upon release, this self-financed title by renowned game designer Jonathan Blow fascinates on many levels. It features highly innovative gameplay, expertly designed puzzles and lush graphics by artist David Hellman. Meanwhile, the backstory behind how this game was created serves as an instructive lesson and inspiration for indie game developers of all levels.

At first blush Braid seems very similar to a host of side-scrolling platform games—a lineage tracing back to the original Super Mario Brothers. Controlling the main character Tim, you run back and forth, jump up onto different platforms and stomp on enemies to defeat them. On this level the game is already well designed and showcases polished gameplay. The controls are responsive and the jumping movements feel as agile as the best of the genre. Very quickly, however, you discover that Braid features a powerful time rewind ability. That is, by holding down a button you are able to rewind everything that's happened. Death becomes irrelevant as you can rewind from every missed jump.



This time shifting mechanic forms the core of many of Braid's innovative puzzles and has been compared to Prince of Persia: Sands of Time. However, that comparison really doesn't do justice to the importance of time rewinding in Braid. Whereas Prince of Persia merely used time rewinding as a way of sparing the player some tedium in an otherwise straightforward run-and-jump game, Braid employs this device in deft and constantly surprising ways, gradually introducing new twists on the time rewinding gameplay with each successive section of the game. Plenty of puzzles involve moving forward and then rewinding in strategic ways. In fact, without giving away too much about the game's ending, the time rewinding mechanic becomes an integral part of one of the most surprising and delightful game endings in memory.



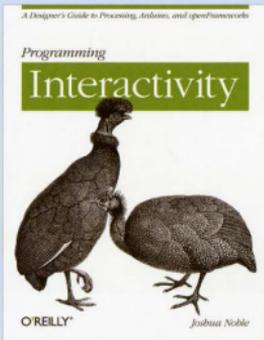
Every bit as impressive as the well-crafted gameplay is the delightful graphical look of the game. Blow decided to hire Hellman, the artist behind the popular web comic, *A Lesson is Learned* but the *Damage is Irreversible*, to imbue the game with a unique and captivating aesthetic. The graphics have a painterly look unusual to video games. Meanwhile, many subtle touches help bring the game to life. For example, the background images shift into the distance when you rewind. That's a subtle visual effect to be sure, but one that has a great impact in making your rewind ability feel magical.

Somewhat confusingly to many unacquainted with experimental game design, the "art game" designation that Braid sometimes wears is not related to the visuals of the game. Rather, Braid is an art game due to artistically ambitious themes, story line and game design. Other art games that include such riveting experiments are *Passage* and *Rom Check Fail*. However not every gamer finds those sorts of games appealing, so to reassure players who are turned off by pretentious game design and the tendency for "art games" to be heavy on the art and light on the game, you should know that in Braid you can literally run past the story exposition. Even though I happen to appreciate experimentation in game design that isn't necessarily concerned with being fun, I freely acknowledge that art games aren't always enjoyable to play. Braid manages to expand one's notion of how artistically ambitious games can be while still being a straightforward fun video game.

In addition to the fascinating experience it delivers to players, Braid bucks many trends in game development through its development process. Blow funded the project with his own money, spending 3 years and \$200,000 developing the game (most of the money going towards hiring of David Hellman for artwork and the salary that Blow lived on.) This was a risky investment but one that has proven immensely successful and that further points out viable paths for game developers outside of working with funding (and thus control) from large publishers.

Braid definitely pushes the boundaries in game design innovation, and is certainly a gaming experience not to be missed. With versions available for many different gaming platforms, including both Windows and Macintosh computers, there really is no excuse for anyone with more than a passing interest in video games not to have played this game. ≈

REVIEW Book



ISBN-13: 978-0596154141

Programming Interactivity: A Designer's Guide to Processing, Arduino, and openFrameworks by Joshua Noble

Reviewed by Janell Baxter

This text is a must read for interactive artists, and is an excellent introduction to creating physical interaction systems. It covers three popular and free tools: Processing, Arduino, and openFrameworks, and explains how to design hardware and programming without assuming any previous knowledge on the part of the reader—even those who have never programmed before will find the basics of programming addressed in the second chapter. Although the text is broad and covers the basics of the tools and interaction concepts, once readers grasp the foundational knowledge, they should be able to complete more advanced projects.

Physical computing examples in the second part of the text walk the reader through building relatively simple interactive components. The text then moves on to some more slightly advanced topics such as a Piezo sensor to detect touch and a PIR Motion Sensor to detect motion. The author provides a lot of support with comprehensive descriptions, code and schematics so that even those who have never worked with electronics before should be able to build interactive components after working through the chapters. The third part of the book covers 3D, visual detection (such as gestures and faces), GPS data and other advanced concepts.



ISBN-13: 978-0596514372

Fashioning Technology: A DIY Intro to Smart Crafting by Syuzi Pakhchyan

Reviewed by Janell Baxter

This text (like Programming Interactivity) also shows how to build simple circuits, work with LEDs and build things with Piezo sensors. However this book does not cover programming, and instead explains how to use cool materials like polymorph plastic, shape memory alloy (muscle wire), solar cells, thermo-chromic inks and electroluminescent Ink/Film/Wire. These two books are excellent companions for those wanting to explore wearable electronics and "smart" accessories.

The tutorial based approach makes this book an easy read; step by step instructions and lots of pictures make it simple to understand the concepts. There are also some informative chapters on fundamental skills such as "The Art of Soldering" which shows images of correct and incorrect joints and provides helpful tips on how to choose a good soldering iron, and how to maintain your equipment. The helpful guides throughout such as "Your Toolbox" that lists all the equipment you should have (multimeter, wire strippers, etc.), and the visual indexes like the "Components Index" that have pictures of items (capacitors, fixed-value resistors, etc.) are excellent for those new to electronics.

If you are interested in learning more about interactive physical computing, sign up for the IAM course "Computer Controlled Installation Environments" (36-3630). Students in the IAM department may also be granted access to the Fabrication Laboratory (Fab Lab) which has much of the fundamental equipment needed for building projects outlined in these texts. For more information about how to get access to the Fab Lab, contact Jeff Meyers, IAM Operations Manager.

REVIEW

Web

Mobile Nation

Reviewed by Mindy Faber
Academic Manager

vozmob.net

If you were to type the phrase "day laborers" into your Google Search engine, the first site that will pop up is one operated by an extreme anti-immigrant hate group spewing propaganda and misinformation about Mexican workers. Vozmob is trying to change all that. By providing day laborers with cell phones and training, Vozmob is helping Mexican border workers use cell phones for digital storytelling. The workers collect audio/video interviews from each other and upload their media directly to a highly customized Drupal-based web site. The project is a collaboration between the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California (ASC) and the Institute of Popular Education of Southern California

textually.org

An intersection of three blogs devoted completely to text messaging and cell phone usage around the world. An eclectic list of categories peaks the curiosity such as Citizens as Informants, Inmates and Cell Phones and Mobile Phone Projects of the Third World. The latter category outlines fascinating stories of how cell phones are being used to further global development. Check out the one about phones triggering irrigation systems in remote areas of India. If you want the latest global information on cell phones and SMS, look no further than textually.org.

wiffiti.com

Wiffiti 4.0 by LocaModa is a new media application designed for viewing content streams online. A combination of wi-fi and graffiti, Wiffiti 4.0 publishes real time messages to screens in thousands of locations from jumbotrons to jukeboxes, bars to bowling alleys and cafes to colleges. It also allows for incorporation of real time messages from the web, Twitter and Flickr as well as data tracking. LocaModa, the company that makes Wiffiti was recently named an Official Honoree of The 13th Annual Webby Awards for their Obama Minute Wiffiti campaign. The campaign ran for a two-month span during the 2008 presidential election, displaying real-time text messages on a gigantic digital billboard on Broadway and 49th Street. It played an integral role in the fundraising efforts for ObamaMinute.com.

