



BLIND SPOT

UC SANTA CRUZ
DIGITAL ARTS AND NEW MEDIA
2016 MFA EXHIBITION



BLIND SP

Thursday, April 28–Sunday, May 1, 2016

Digital Arts Research Center (DARC)

University of California, Santa Cruz
1156 High Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95064

<http://danmmfa.ucsc.edu>

UCSC DIGITAL ARTS AND NEW MEDIA
2016 MFA EXHIBITION



O T

Mónica Andrade

Zach Corse

Timothy Furstnau

David Harris

Hope Hutman

Sarah Fay Krom

Sean Pace

Adrian Phillips

Ben Spalding

Andrea Steves

Michael Thomét

Steven Trimmer

Marcelo Viana Neto

The 2016 graduates from the Digital Arts and New Media (DANM) MFA Program are presenting their work in the exhibition, *Blind Spot*. Thirteen artists are creating and iterating within realms not easily decipherable and detected in the conventional art world. Each artist has worked in the critical spaces of game design, performance, post cinematic space, scientific theory, economic systems, or interactive media to resist and expand long-established, canonical meanings of art.

The title of the exhibition refers directly to the *punctum caecum* or blind spot. It is the area of the eye where photoreceptors do not exist, hence the inability to render or detect an image. In order to see what is in our blind spot, we must shift and alternate our positioning or gaze. But it certainly does not mean that which we cannot see does not exist. In a metaphorical sense, these artists create in such a space that requires the viewer to move and shift for the work to be seen and experienced.

In the works of Nick Andrade and Hope Hutman, the defining features commonly known to traditional theater are shifted into experimental performances. Andrade explores Narco culture through an interpretation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* while Hutman's participatory work defies the limits of theater and improvisation through the ecosystem of social media-based platform Twitch.tv.

Cultural critique is prevalent in the works of Timothy Furstnau and Andrea Steves as they collect, archive, and create a taxonomy of capitalism examining aspects of this global economic system that grows increasingly more complex with advancements in technology. The sculptural nature and visual aesthetics of David Harris's work look at alternative perceptions of color in our contemporary world and our limited field of vision by exploring such topics as unprintable color.

Artists Sarah Fay Krom, Marcelo Viana Neto, Adrian Phillips, Ben Spalding, and Michael Thomét approach game design in unorthodox and provocative ways. Krom's work

is influenced by the German Expressionist style and engages the viewer in a visual language that transforms the cinematic frame into a playable space. Viana Neto pulls inspiration from Augusto Boal's Theater of the Oppressed and participatory economics into a game design pedagogy that encourages the creator to go beyond the commodification of game development. In opposition to frontier fantasy games, which leave little room for dialogue, Phillips creates an experience where players directly engage with one another in a colonial dynamic to elicit conversation around a complicated issue. Critical software development and design play an integral role in Spalding's work as he explores how multi-player narrative design can be done through an art-making context. In Thomét's work, the player is confronted with alternative experiences and narratives based on his research of player psychology and playing styles.

Sean Pace's *C.R.A.W.L.E.R., the Community Roving Artists Workshop Lab for Educational Research*, serves as a platform for arts outreach, social justice, and field research. The converted military vehicle doubles as a critique of existing educational systems through the subversion and reimagining of older military technology that was once purposed as a defense mechanism and now aims to foster an "artist to artist" co-creating relationship.

In Steven Trimmer's *Vocal Landscaping*, the participant engages with a voice interactive sound installation based on his research of modal vocalization. The participant's musical voice is used to navigate the landscapes and unlock sound puzzles. Each voice then becomes a part of a larger vocal catalogue. Another sculptural work for the exhibition is Zach Corse's *Encodings in Space and Time*. Corse's work is an immersive large-scale installation influenced by physics, information theory, and the course of Japanese glass fishing floats known to cross the North Pacific gyre.

—Dorothy Santos, curator

MARQUÉS is a multimedia bilingual adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, set in the world of México's narcocartels and the US/Mexican war on drugs. "Shakespeare in Narcolandia" is an installation that replays and rebroadcasts a combination of performances of violence from the play projected alongside video and images of violence of the narcocartels in México, physically situating the work within the context of the material it critiques.

Mónica Andrade

Mónica Andrade is an award-winning Mexican filmmaker, projection designer and playwright based in Santa Cruz, CA. Her works are located at the intersection of classical drama and contemporary social issues. Recent projects include *Dos(e)*, an adaptation of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, *Maria a Telenovela for the Stage*, an adaptation of Euripides' *Medea*, and *Marqués a Narco Macbeth*, an adaptation of Shakespeare's Scottish play. She is part of MindFabrik Collective and is currently in development of *GO—a Guantanamo Othello*. Some of her other works include experimental films, hybrid/multimedia theater productions, interactive/identity drama (ID), photography, projection design, and documentary work.



Photo by Steve DiBartolomeo





ENCODINGS IN SPACE AND TIME is an immersive, large-scale installation influenced by gravitational physics, information theory, ice mechanics, and city street lamp design. It presents a post-minimalist reimagining of a nighttime boulevard punctuated by street lamps illuminating the path ahead. Poured into the installation's design are aesthetic forms distilled from the artist's study of gravitational lensing, a result of Einstein's theory of general relativity, and irreversible transformations on Earth wrought by human hands.

Zach Corse

Zach Corse is an artist and a physicist. He takes as much in pleasure in studying relativistic physics and quantum mechanics as he does designing sculptures and digital installations. He finds that his studies in physics inform his work as an artist, and his work as an artist motivates his study of physics. His mathematical investigations and creative practice are rooted in post-minimalism and conceptual art. Corse's work explores specific themes of gravitation, duality, discretization, and human perception. He is currently working towards his MFA at UC Santa Cruz and earned his master's degree in physics at the University of Texas at Austin. He also holds a bachelor's degree in physics from Duke University.

<http://wzcorse.com>

OBJECT REMOVED: FRAGMENTS OF A MUSEUM

AFTER CAPITALISM is a living archive that collects texts, images, and documents relating to the process of founding a museum which treats capitalism as a historical phenomenon. The archive represents the foundational documents and research behind a larger project, which uses the form of a museum from the perspective of an imaginary future in order to encourage recognition of the historical specificity, idiosyncrasy, and contingency of the present, arguing that the social and ecological implications of capitalism have already rendered it obsolete, and promoting a renewed sense of possibility, agency, and political imagination.

Andrea Steves and Timothy Furstnau

Andrea Steves and Timothy Furstnau have been collaborating since 2009. They work on a project basis, across many types of media and disciplines, including curating, interior and exhibit design, performance, and social practice. Their projects explore ongoing interests in materialism and waste flows, language, the process and politics of collecting, and links between social and environmental issues. Recent honors include a solo exhibition at the Corcoran School of the Arts and Design in Washington D.C., grants from the Puffin Foundation and Left Tilt Fund, and nomination for the COAL Art & Environment Prize in Paris, France.

**Object
Removed for
Conservation**



EDGES OF COLOR shows a series of individually programmed pieces on an 8' square, 16x16 grid of separately controlled and colored LEDs swatches. Reminiscent of the color swatch paintings of Gerhard Richter or the spot paintings of Damian Hirst, it treats light as the material for display instead of paint. The pieces shown in the color pixel array explore the boundaries of what is possible in a rule-bound, constrained system, reflecting and criticizing notions of creativity, innovation, and conformism as they exist in Silicon Valley culture and the processes of science and technology today.

David Harris

David Harris is an artist, designer, journalist, and physicist based in Silicon Valley, California. His work spans a variety of media from the digital screen to immersive sculptural installations, with interactive objects in between. His art speaks to the inherent conservatism of the scientific process. Pieces of his art have been shown at the California Academy of Sciences, Maker Faire Bay Area, Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History, and featured in *Make* magazine. His journalism has appeared in *Scientific American*, *Popular Science*, *Nature*, *New Scientist*, and many other international magazines.

<http://sciartica.net>

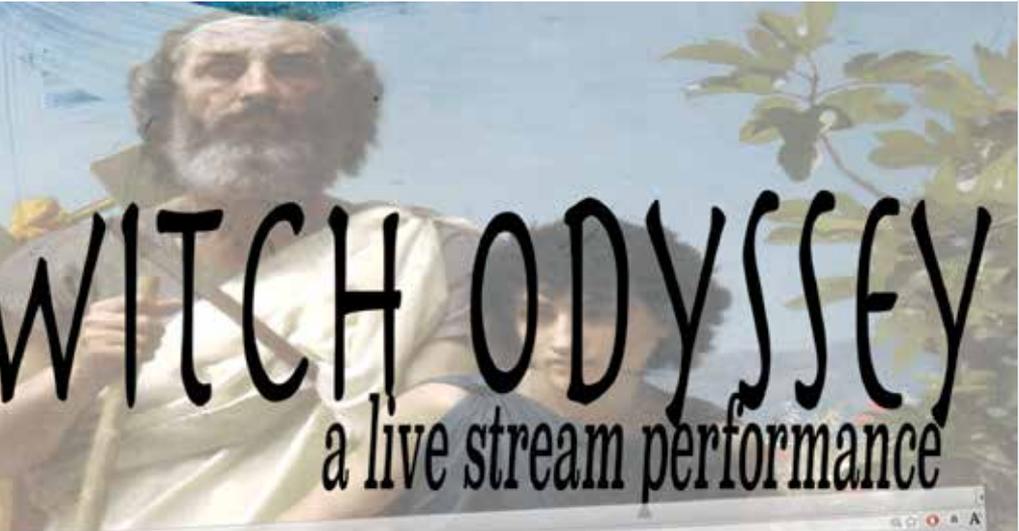
Homer is back in town. He's back to claim his place as the greatest storyteller in the West. But he's in for a surprise. **TWITCH ODYSSEY** is a performance that allows the audience, individually and collectively, to have a hand in creating and shaping the content and direction of the narrative and the storyworld. Presented as performance in physical space, an installation, and a live stream on Twitch.tv, this adaptation of Homer's *Odyssey* invites the audience to create moments of content that will be included in the streamed performance (both physical world and virtual world).

Hope Hutman

Hope Hutman is an MFA Candidate in Digital Art and New Media at UC Santa Cruz. She has worked with major movie studios and advertising agencies to create transmedia experiences mostly to sell stuff or to highlight cool technology which is what lead her back to school. Her work has been presented at the Williamstown Theater Festival, SF Fringe Festival, YBCA, and Digital Hollywood. She has a BA in English Literature from Grinnell College.

<http://hopehutman.com>





WITCH ODYSSEY

a live stream performance



tanz pau
danse pause
The probability that the player transitions from I to J under the DM intervention

temporal appetites?
rhomer joined
there are 5 participants

asdf hello
asdf hello

Type here...



[VERGE] explores the transformation of visual language in a computer-mediated storyworld. The visual storytelling frame teems with dramatic meaning, compressing physical, psychological, and interpersonal relationships into one. Through the computational processes at the heart of an interactive storyworld, the communicative role of visual language is fundamentally altered. The player now converses with the fictional world through the visual imagery of the screen, recasting the traditional cinematic view as a playable space. In *[Verge]*, visual language presents itself as an evocative conversation, making its expressive possibilities a tangible, dramatically meaningful interface between the player and the storyworld.

Sarah Fay Krom

Sarah Fay Krom is an artist, designer, and educator. Her work explores visually expressive interactive storyworlds and the underlying computational processes that expand and enrich their artistic palette. A graduate of Carnegie Mellon University, she is currently pursuing her MFA in the Digital Arts and New Media program at UC Santa Cruz. She has taught at Armstrong Institute for Interactive Media, Miami University, OH; National University of Singapore; Fachhochschule Kiel in Germany; and DeAnza College in CA. She has developed curriculum at Peking University in Beijing, and was the Founding Director of the GameLab at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

<http://sarahfaykrom.com>

Sean Pace

Sean Pace is an artist from Asheville, North Carolina with a background in kinetic sculpture and social activism. His interests have been in energy, social and cultural development, and personal exploration of mechanics with reappropriated found objects, often obscuring meaning with charged metaphors and playful forms of hearsay. He co-founded the Flood Fine Art Center in Asheville, NC and he started Blue Ridge Bio-Fuels in Asheville as well. At UC Santa Cruz he has worked to generate a social intervention practice that brings a mobile workshop into the public arena to create access to some of the newest technologies for sculptural fabrication and object exploration.

<http://artcrawler.org>



C.R.A.W.L.E.R., the Community Roving Artists Workshop Lab for Educational Research, is a platform for arts outreach, social justice, and field research. The motivation for this project involves the social integration of art as a practice for preserving human creativity and fostering its growth. Relationships forged through creative behavior expand the impact of the artist's practice from the "artist to audience" into an "artist to artist" co-creating relationship. The co-generative space is a uniquely inviting experience where the formal boundaries between art and observer are disrupted, manifesting a unique experience validating the art.



No Frontier



The frontier fantasy is a notion that has enabled the destruction and subjugation of native peoples, providing a romantic justification for colonial and imperial dogmas. **NO FRONTIER** addresses these notions of frontier fantasies through a digital game for two players in which one player takes the role of a native population, while the other takes the role of a newly-arrived foreigner. Throughout the course of play, both players must come to terms with the colonial situation in which they find themselves, and discuss and negotiate what is ultimately a complex, ever-changing issue.

Adrian Phillips

Adrian Phillips is a digital media artist and game designer whose work explores the use of procedural rhetoric and the creation of emergent gameplay narratives. He studies the ways in which these methods create meaning within playable media. He is currently pursuing an MFA in the Digital Arts and New Media program at UC Santa Cruz, with an emphasis in Playable Media. He completed his undergraduate education at UC San Diego with a major in Interdisciplinary Computing in the Arts and a minor in Computer Science.

<http://adrianmphillips.com>

HYDRAS LIKE STORIES investigates new methods for visualizing and understanding the unique qualities of multi-player narrative for improved multi-player narrative design in digital games. The work investigates how tool-making can operate as a non-prescriptive form of design research in an art-making context. Using the image of a many-headed, fantastic creature, the work makes the act of constructing multi-player narratives strange and open-ended. Each of the free-standing modules that comprise the tool encourages the user to explore an unknown, drawing on practices of critical design to unravel and investigate the assumptions of use embedded in the software object.

Ben Spalding

Ben Spalding is an MFA student studying multi-player games as sites of collaborative storytelling in UC Santa Cruz's Digital Arts and New Media program. He creates games and software tools as part of his design practice. Spalding is a UC Santa Cruz Arts Division and Plantronics Creativity and Innovation Scholar. Before coming to Santa Cruz, he studied Media, Culture, and Communications at New York University, taking additional minors in both Game Design and Creative Writing. In addition to his work as a designer, he has taught game design programs for middle and high school students in Santa Cruz and New York City.

<http://bnspalding.com>



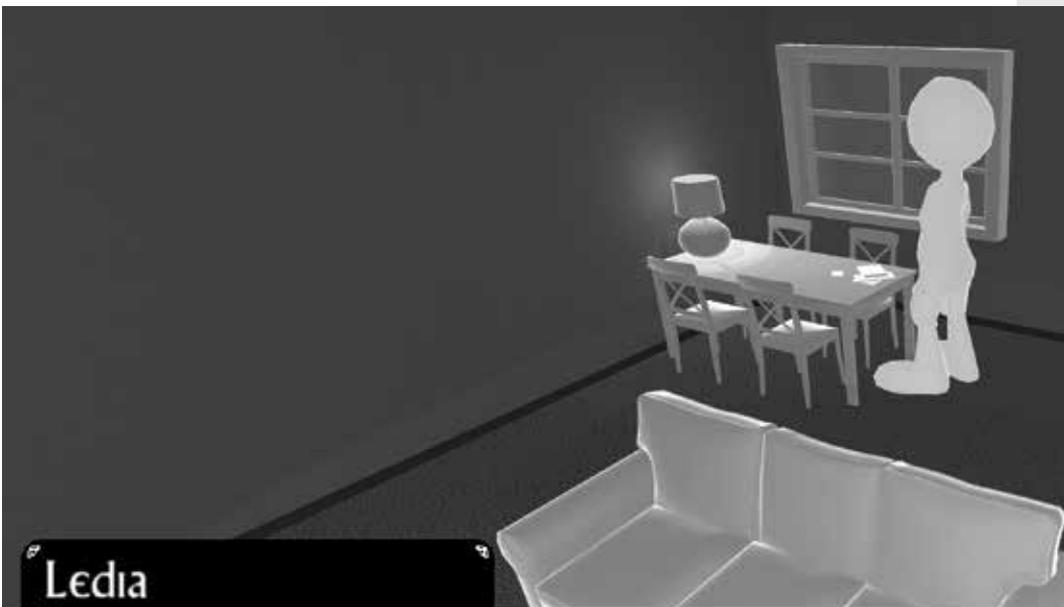


DIRT UNDER THE RUG is a game following the plight of a cleaning service worker who is in a difficult situation. You have a huge number of overdue bills. Your life partner can't help with the bills and has a demanding job that requires dedication and attention. Your boss knows your situation and is extorting you to do blackmail work. On top of that, the clients seem a little off. They have strange requests, pictures in their homes don't match who you meet. Then there's the nagging thought: why do you own a three-bedroom house that you can't afford?

Michael Thomét

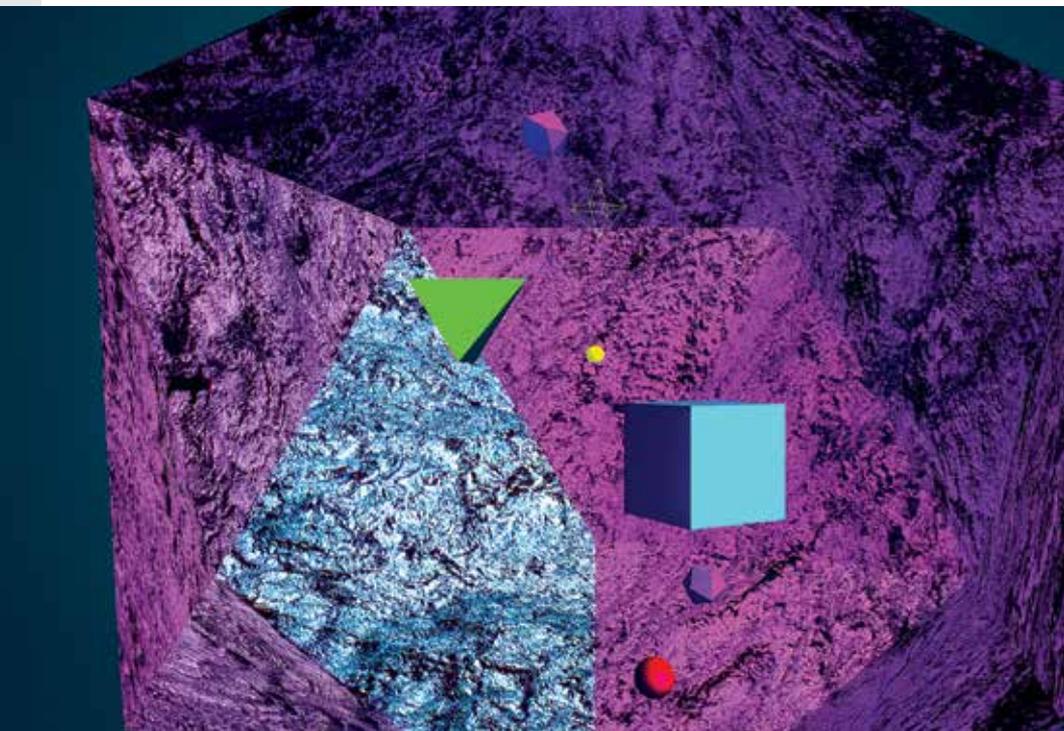
Michael Thomét is an MFA candidate studying experimental game design. He designs games that push the expectations of what games can do and what they can expect of their players. Many of his games offer alternative experiences and narratives, challenging the player to interact with the game in unusual ways. As a researcher, Thomét focuses on player psychology, play styles, and close readings of games. While studying for his previous master's degree, he developed a method of describing digital games and their players, as an alternative to genre. He has published on the subjects of play styles, player communication, and queer narratives in games.

<http://incobalt.me>



Ledia

The mail, always a nervous endeavor.



Use your voice to navigate the game while contributing to a community tapestry of voices.



VOCAL LANDSCAPING is a voice interactive sound installation modeled upon modal intoning paradigms common throughout the Renaissance. *Vocal Landscaping* explores how machine listening might be utilized to cultivate the uniquely embodied voice while challenging conventions of passive consumption and mimesis which have arisen alongside prevalent configurations of sound media. Visitors use their voices to complete puzzles dependent upon particular tones and durations. Matching tones activate a virtual landscape, are inscribed into audio buffers, and are rebroadcast into the installation space through a series of resonant objects affixed with transducers. Each round of the game explores a particular modal/elemental correspondence.

Steven Trimmer

Steven Trimmer is a sound and new media artist centered in Santa Cruz, CA. His work invites participation in expanded forms of expression and listening through the synesthetic coupling of embodied and technical systems. In considering historic sound methodologies throughout his creative process, Trimmer hopes to uncover new paradigms for interfacing the embodied with the virtual.

<http://theleapyear.com>

Game design is traditionally practiced and taught within pyramidal, top-down hierarchies. While they can efficiently produce market-ready products (and workers), they result in the empowerment of select individuals at the top of the hierarchy while wasting the creative potential of the majority. **RADICAL PLAY** demonstrates the development and application of a game design curriculum that embodies principles of critical pedagogy and direct democracy, in which all individuals are empowered to manage their own work and personal development, while also being directly involved in the overall direction of the practice. In doing so, it seeks to challenge designers and educators to stop replicating, within our own practices, the injustices we so openly condemn.

Marcelo Viana Neto

Marcelo Viana Neto is a multi-disciplinary artist and educator interested in how games can help explore socio-economic relations based on solidarity and mutual aid, reveal illegitimate forms of power, and enable creative expression. He was born in Sete Lagoas, Brazil and has been a resident of California since 2002. He holds a BFA in Graphic Design with high distinction from the California College of the Arts and is currently an MFA candidate in DANM at UC Santa Cruz. His current research focuses on applying non-hierarchical participatory modes of organization to game design pedagogy and practice.



RADICAL PLAY



HORIZONTAL
PARTICIPATORY
GAME
DESIGN

D A N M M F A P R O G R A M

About the DANM MFA Program at UC Santa Cruz

Founded in 2004, Digital Arts and New Media (DANM) at UC Santa Cruz is a Master of Fine Arts graduate program where faculty and students create and study digital media arts and their social impact. The DANM MFA Program brings together the arts, computational media, the humanities, and the sciences to produce artistic and scholarly research in the context of a broad inquiry into digital arts and cultures.

DARC 204, UC Santa Cruz
1156 High St., Santa Cruz, CA 95064
Contact: danm@ucsc.edu 831 459-1919

<http://danm.ucsc.edu>



BLINDSPOT TEST

Hold at arm's length. Turn catalog horizontally, so that the black dot is on your right. Close your left eye. Focus on the plus with your right eye. Slowly move the catalog toward you. When the circle reaches your blind spot, it will disappear.



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SANTA CRUZ

