

Interactive: Foundations

Project: Interview

Interviewee: H. C. Dunaway Smith

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Transcript: (D: Dunaway; Y: Yuming)

Y: Hi, it is very nice to meet you. Please allow me to introduce myself first, my name is Yuming Tseng, and I am currently studying in California College of the Arts, major in Interactive Design. This interview is one of our academic projects, aiming to help student get closer to the art and design field. I will try to keep this interview short and well-organized. There will mainly be six questions for you. Please feel free to answer them. Shall we get started?

D: Sure.

Y: First question. Why do you choose extended reality as your media for the art creation? Is there any feature that others don't obtain?

D: So, I've been an active artist for a while. It was originally a playwright and then moved to um sort of web-based stuff because I want to coauthor with audiences, I want to extend the story telling in a meaningful way. And then couple years ago, basically the software for XR may creation more possible so I decided to just dive in and really go for it. And the reason that I'm interested in sort of the extension of storytelling that can happen with the addition of context, like the physical world, as well as it just offers a lot of opportunities like coauthor with audience members. So, for example, face filters, people can wear your art on their face. There are a few things that are as intimate as that. And it just sort of offers new opportunity to create connection between art and audiences.

Y: Sounds pretty interesting. The second question is: As we all known, interactive design is a very hot topic at the moment. And as an interactive student, I am curious about the relationship between interactive design and extended reality. Do you think there's any connection between them?

D: Definitely, in fact, I think that way because I am an interactive designer

and happen for a long time, so I've designed like UI and UX for mobile games as well as apps and stuff like that. And all of that knowledge and experience influence like my art stuff. So, I'm always thinking about onboarding for audience members, what their first impression, what signals within the environment that I could use to sort of trigger interactions, to sort of allow for discoverability. Because part of what I'm trying to do is to create an experience that is discoverable for audiences and doesn't necessarily have like a ton of flashing signs and stuff like that. But you can use, and for the right project, that's great. But for the stuff I'm doing, it's more subtle than that. If you can integrate those little signals and sort of focus in using extension throughout experience, it creates more immersive experience. It feels more alive, like the world is real. That's what I am trying to do.

Y: The next question is about your work. What is your workflow for creating a piece of extended reality work?

D: I'm a drawer and illustrator. That's like where my ideas come from and how I wrap my head around things. I always start with thumbnail and I try to push myself. I try to do like 40 thumbnails of various ideas. And then from those, I'll try to pick a top five typically. And then I'll sketch them out. And as I'm sketching, I kind of develop the idea a little bit more. And eventually, it will become clear like what the full runner is. So, once I choose the actual project, then I actually moved the storyboards. There's a lot of prep work. And I storyboard out what I want the experience to be like, because the stuff I'm doing typically has I think of it as like acts kind of like a play. So, you want to think about how the users can experience each little sections. And then from storyboards, moves on to illustration, which I typically do on my iPad these days in procreate. If I need 3D elements, I typically make them in Blender. And I try to keep my hand-drawn textures, like that look of my illustrations. Again, I sort of create materials on my iPad and bring them into Blender. And then if I do 2D animation, I typically use After Effects. And then I'll bring everything into whatever the AR software I am using. I've been using Adobe AR primarily like for the last year. I'll bring those assets in, set up the scene and then test it because you have to test in order to really figure out it is working in scale and stuff like that. Um, so yeah, just test, tweak, repeat, until you like it, and then give it to somebody who's never seen it and don't prep them on anything as much as possible. Just sort of like watch them experiences. You can do that forever but eventually you have to say this is done and deliver it. That's the

basic flow.

Y: Cool. Here's another question. Do you think XR art creation is difficult for ordinary people? What are the most basic things that we need to learn if we want to create something totally by ourselves?

D: Where will be the best place to start. I think concept is always the most important thing, which anyone can do despite their background. So, trying to think of a really good project ideas that places to start. But then from there, the skills you really need are, I think interaction design is going to be hugely important. Studying usability patterns, maybe just reading some articles about trying to put your mind into the audience so that you can anticipate how they'll respond to something and then create an experience that's gonna be better suited for them. I think that's kind of the foundation of all the stuff I've made in. Other people using AR in different ways like this filmmakers and photographers and people that are using it as like a lab compositing tool. I think there's a lot of different approaches. But for me, I like the interaction design and just having a solid. Something like a Photoshop or Procreate or some sort of like image editing program is probably necessary for any sort of experience that you have. And that's the bare bones stuff. And if you want to add 3D elements. You're going to need a 3D program, Blender, stuff like that.

Y: I have discussed the topic of augmented reality and virtual reality with my friends and classmates. Many of them talked about the idea of immersion. Do you think immersion is a very important factor for the extended reality?

D: I do. Yeah. I think that buying into the world is what's going to make the experiences more meaningful because it's gonna put you in the mindset to really respond to whatever you experience. So, if it doesn't feel immersive, it's just taking all of its cues from a flat media like a webpage or something like that. Then I feel like that's kind of missing the ball what could be done within a fully spatial experience. And that's actually what the challenge is. We are moving from the media of 2D, often, to something fully immersive, involves people's bodies. Therefore, I think the immersive part of it is like the most exciting bit because it is new.

Y: Last question. Let's go fast forward future. Can you describe the future you imagine, especially for the part incorporating extended reality technology?

D: There's a lot of differing opinions within the industry, right? Some people say it's going to be five years, some say twenty-five years. I think it's probably going to be in the middle like somewhere around like 10 to 12 years. All of it really depends on the hardware. Having a phone, this is not a great user experience to experience something fully immersive. So, we really need to have glasses of some sort or contact lenses. There's like a few different options but I think once we can get over that hardware hurdle, then it's going to become ubiquitous, it's going to be everywhere like the idea that reality would be purely physical. It's going to see some strangers some point you know because we are such a digital society already. Once we have the ability to kind of overlay that, and integrate in a smart way, like internet of things. That's just gonna be everywhere because why wouldn't you. You would have more information, more connections, and all of the opportunities that like XR provides us, we're going to be able to utilize. I think that it is going to be ubiquitous, it is going to be everywhere. I think AR is going to come a little bit first, as far as like total user adoption, but I think eventually VR is going to be like a huge, a very huge thing where virtual spaces happens. We are going to hang out with people in there. We already have Zoom meetings and stuff like that, but I think if we have a fully immersive like VR worlds that feels comfortable and like there's fun stuff to do. And people are just naturally get a congregated there with people that they can't physically be close to. Our remote living lifestyle is going to extend more and more, and VR seemingly gives us an opportunity. And AR too, frankly. Because there's probably going to be all sorts of cool conferencing software in AR where we can just do what you like. Projection of your mom or whatever and part of your living room. I just think it's gonna be everywhere. That's the long and short of it. And you know we should be really smart and think about all of the ethical concerns and that the technology can bring out right now and starts talking about it and get a game plan for some of these things we've known that are going to be an issue like Privacy and get in front of that. Because it's a very powerful technology, like any sort of powerful tool that can be used for good and bad, and probably will for both. but we should just try to be as smart about it as possible.