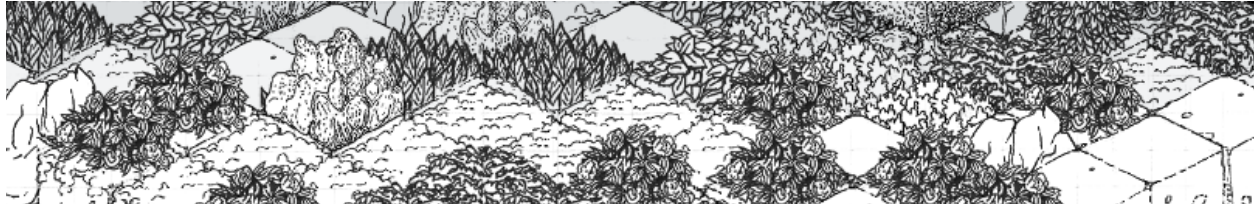


Everest Pipkin/ Withering Systems

“A City for Humans”

For The NCSU Libraries

Visualizing Digital Scholarship in Libraries and Learning Spaces Creative Residency



Statement of interest:

I'm **Everest Pipkin** (everest-pipkin.com); I produce printed material as books, chapbooks, and zines, as well as digital work in software, bots, and games. I also make drawings by hand, on paper. By using creative commons archives, big data repositories, and other online resources of human information, I make intimate work with large data sets. My work demands an internet with room for gentleness, one-to-one interactions unmediated by sorting algorithms, and a value for softness in digital spaces and with digital tools.

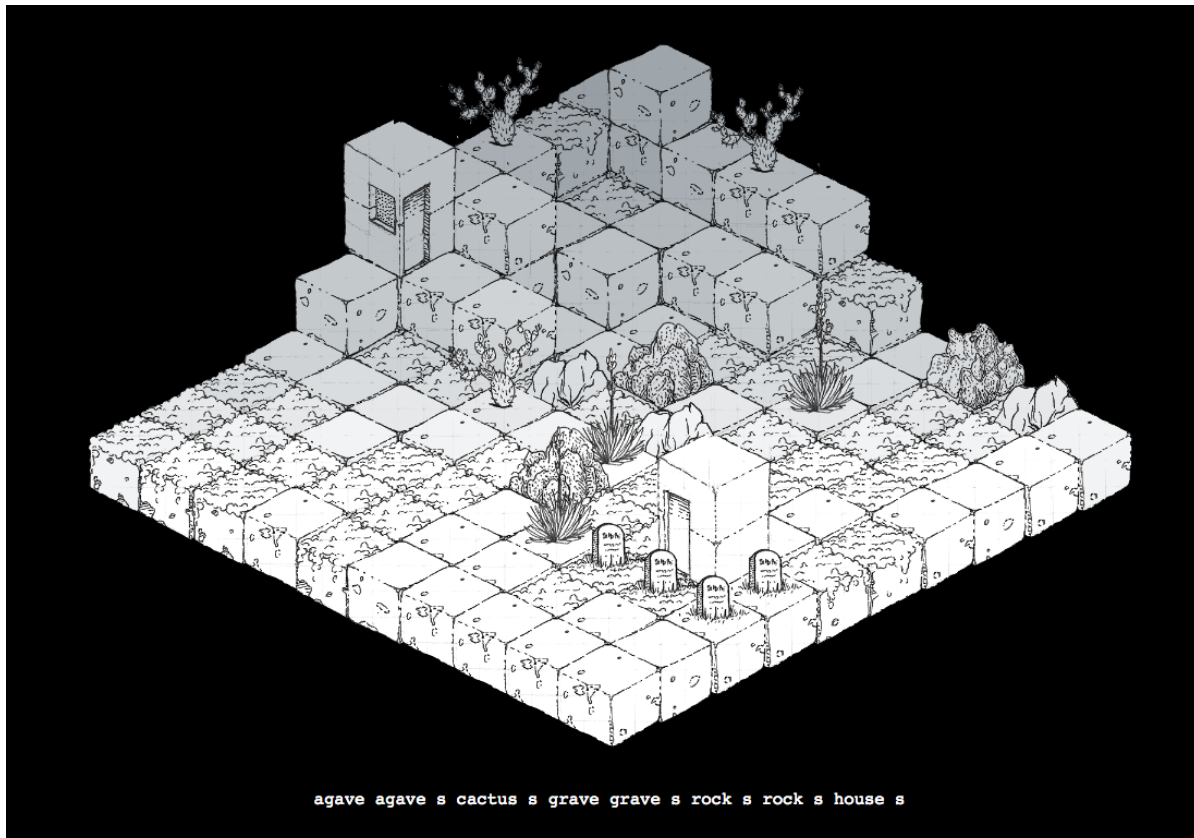
Withering Systems (withering.systems) is a small software label and publishing house for my collaborative work, often with game developer and artist **Loren Schmidt** (<http://vacuumflowers.com>). Withering Systems aims to bring quiet and unusual digital experiences to the public in unlikely places, such as on social media, in printed material, or on the street. Past Withering Systems work includes inflorescence.city (<http://inflorescence.city/>), and the moth generator (<https://twitter.com/mothgenerator>), as well as many other small games, print projects, and plant-growth simulations.

This Withering Systems project proposal is an online, networked interactive diorama made of hand-drawn objects. Tentatively titled “**A City For Humans**”, this project allows the public to collaboratively build a dynamic, shifting landscape together over time. Each object in the city is populated by the visitors to the library by simply entering descriptive text.

I am interested in this opportunity as a chance to develop a system that responds to its community, integrates hand-drawing into digital space, and fosters gentle connection and communication between the users of the public spaces of the library as they build a world together.

I am also dedicated to producing visualization systems that prioritize ‘small data’- in a world of big-data visualization, we also need generous and playful networked systems that respond to the individual, the hyper-local, and the immediate. This project maintains that data-visualization is not inherently an abstraction, a reduction, or an illustration. Rather, it can be a specific and responsive exchange that facilitates play, experimentation, joy, and a sense of place.

Narrative and visual sketches of proposed work:

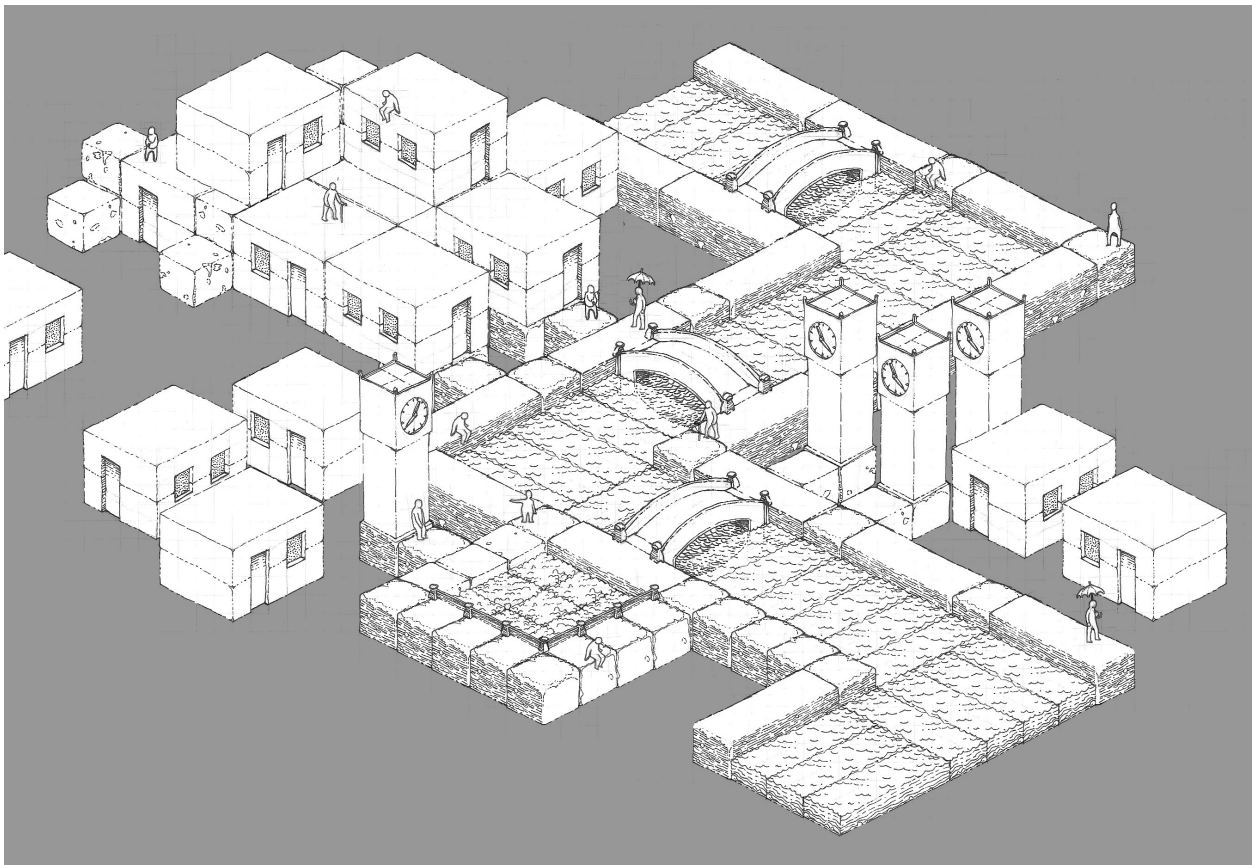


“**A City for Humans**” is an online, interactive diorama made of hand-drawn tiles, which updates live via a website interface.

There are two visitable websites that form the backbone of the project- **the visualization of the city** (which will be displayed on the digital walls), and **a mobile-friendly page for text entry** (which can be accessed by visitor’s phones, computers, or an in-place kiosk).

One can interact with or build onto the visual diorama by simply typing into this text-entry page. This text is then parsed for 3000+ common nouns and verbs, which are then immediately populated into the city as visual objects.

For example, if a person types the words **tree** and **rain**, each would translate to an individual tile that is placed in the world. Writing a word like ‘**tree**’ makes one. Verbs- like **rain**- cause an action, like a small rainstorm forming over part of the city. The visitor to the space can simply type these single words, or can choose to tell more narrative stories (eg- ‘a pine **tree** is standing in a **rainstorm**’), which will be parsed similarly. This way, each contribution is given living form in the diorama.

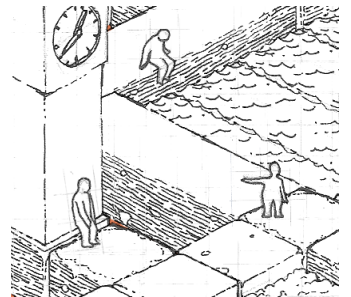


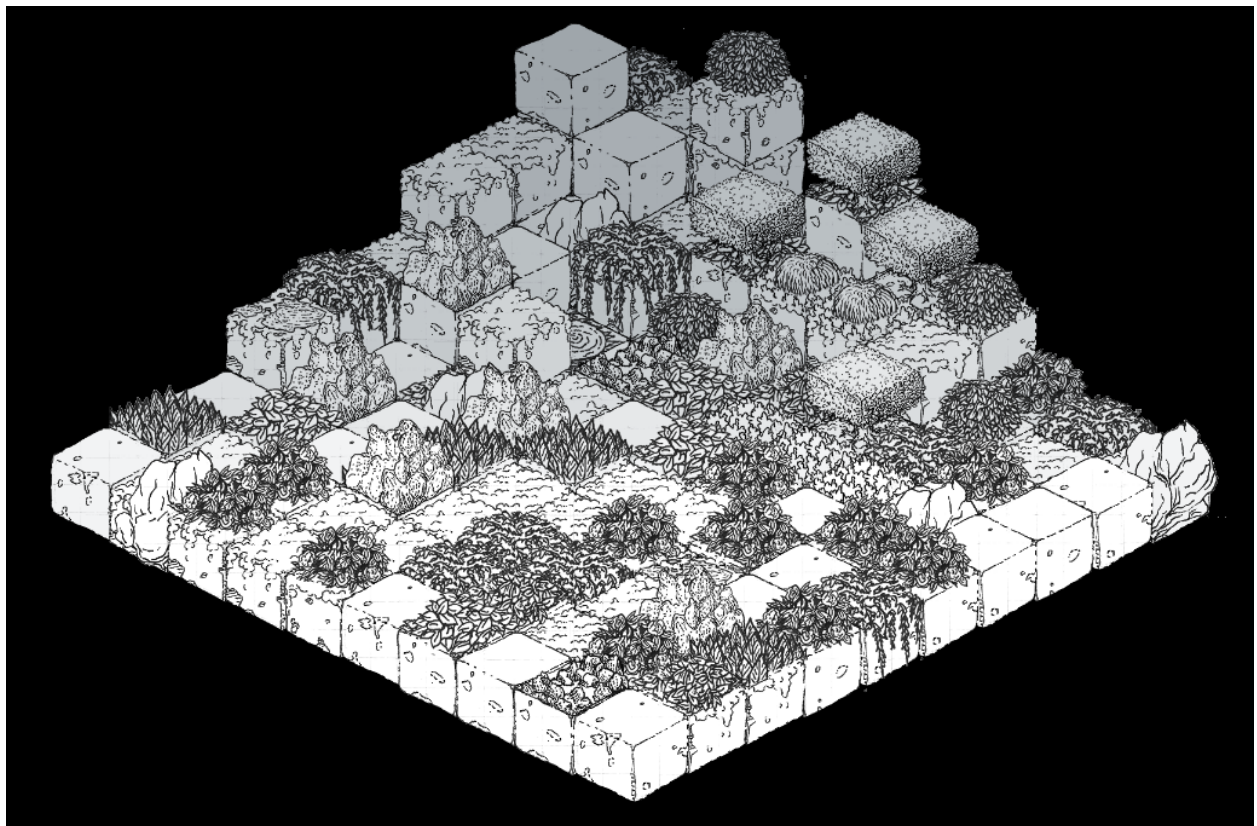
Each type of object also has specific rules that govern its behavior. For example, groups of related plants like to form around one another, and will populate particular regions rather than scattering randomly across the landscape. Roads, sidewalks, fences, hedges, and aqueducts form in linear rows, while plants, buildings, and detritus clump together more organically.

Furthermore, intelligent things like people and animals have sets of shifting needs and desires. A person may be thirsty or hungry, but may also desire more abstract things, like excitement, or beauty. These entities have freedom of movement, and will seek out objects that meet these needs, like a well (for thirst) or a field of flowers (for beauty). In this way, these placed people, animals, and plants will go about their daily business, reacting to one another and the world around them as it changes.

The project's central goal is to foster a sense of community in the library system and other common spaces by providing a quiet but responsive platform to collaboratively build a beautiful space together.

Also fundamental to the ethos of this project is cross-language collaboration. Because of the ease of translating individual words, the project is able to function in multiple languages. It is radically important to deconstruct the prevalence of English in online, language-based work, and the participant will be able to choose from a drop-down menu on the text input page between (at least) **Mandarin Chinese, Spanish, English, Arabic, and Hindi.**





Campus engagement plan:

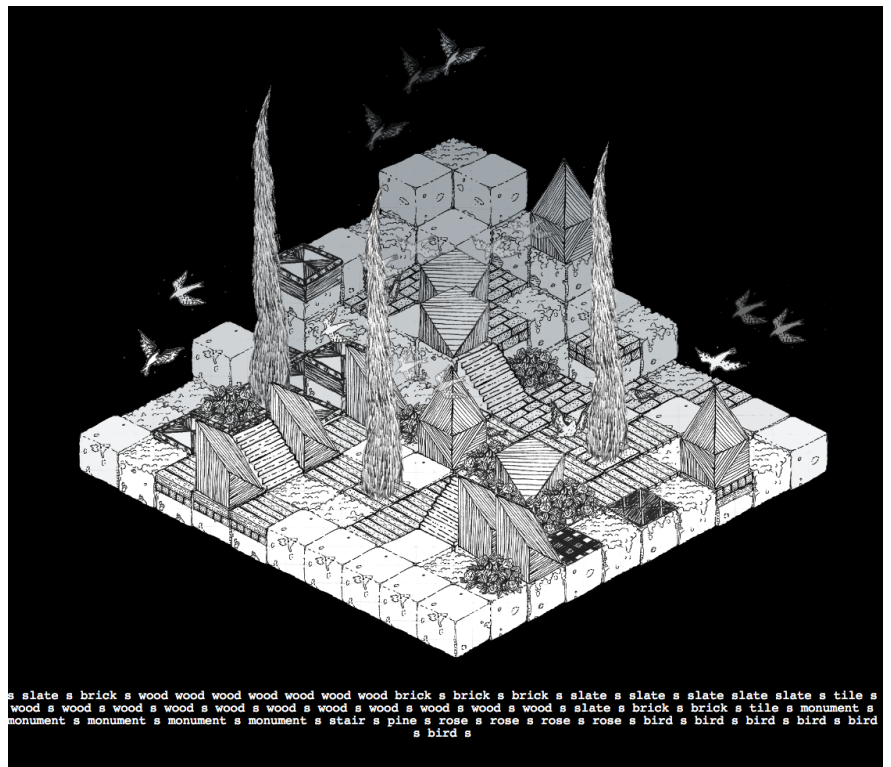
Fundamentally, this project thrives on participation- it lives, grows, and changes by the interaction of its community. Rather than attempting to distill, abstract, or pare-down community data, “A City for Humans” is a 1:1 interaction with those who choose to engage with it. However, this engagement is not temporary- much like real investment in place, the changes that are made to the digital city persist over time, influencing the digital world for the indefinite future.

Participation in the project will be parsed from an online text-input page that may be accessed via mobile-phone, computer, or any other device with a web browser. This web address will be visible at the bottom of the digital wall, as well as published in any news, media, or writing about the work.

Because it is important not to shut anyone out because of their level of access to technology, the budget includes funds for an iPad kiosk that will sit at the base of the digital wall. This kiosk (screen locked to the input website), will allow anyone to interact with the city without necessitating their owning a web-enabled device.

All source code and development over time will also be open source, and documented on Github as well as the Withering Systems personal website for those that may wish to develop similar projects, or simply view how this one was built.

There will also be an artist talk at the end of the project both specifically about the process of development, as well as more broadly about building interactive experiences for diverse groups of individual participants, play as a impetus for community, interlocked systems of rules that produce emergent complexity, and producing hard-drawn work for digital space.



Description of spaces, technologies, and support needed for project:

The fundamentals;

- The project will be a **networked website**, with two pages- the full-screen visual diorama, and a mobile-friendly page to enter new text.
- Programming will be done in **Javascript** and **HTML5**, with **Node.js** as the server backend.
- The project does not require special equipment, and may be run by any computer that can browse the web. The project does **require a stable internet connection**.
- All resultant code and code comments will be published to **Github** and mirrored on the Withering Systems website, as an open-source resource for others interested in producing similar work in the future.
- The project will resize automatically to fit the size and ratio of various screens, and may be shown on **any digital wall**.
- An **iPad kiosk** for text entry is suggested, for visitors that do not have web-ready devices.
- Withering Systems will maintain the project website for no less than **three years**, including maintenance to conform to changes in browsers and web standards. NSCU Libraries and other institutions may show the work at any point in the work's duration.

Budget;

Web hosting, 3 years - \$140/year, \$420
Domain name, 3 years - \$25/year, \$75
Travel - \$600 (estimated)
Housing, 6 weeks - \$1300 (estimated)
Per diem while at NCSU, \$50/day, 6 weeks - \$2,100
Additional technical hire, \$40/hour, 120 hours - \$4,800
iPad kiosk - \$700
Contingency funds - \$2000
Translation hires - \$40/hour, 60 hours - \$2,400
Artist fees (remaining funds) - \$10,605

Total - \$25,000

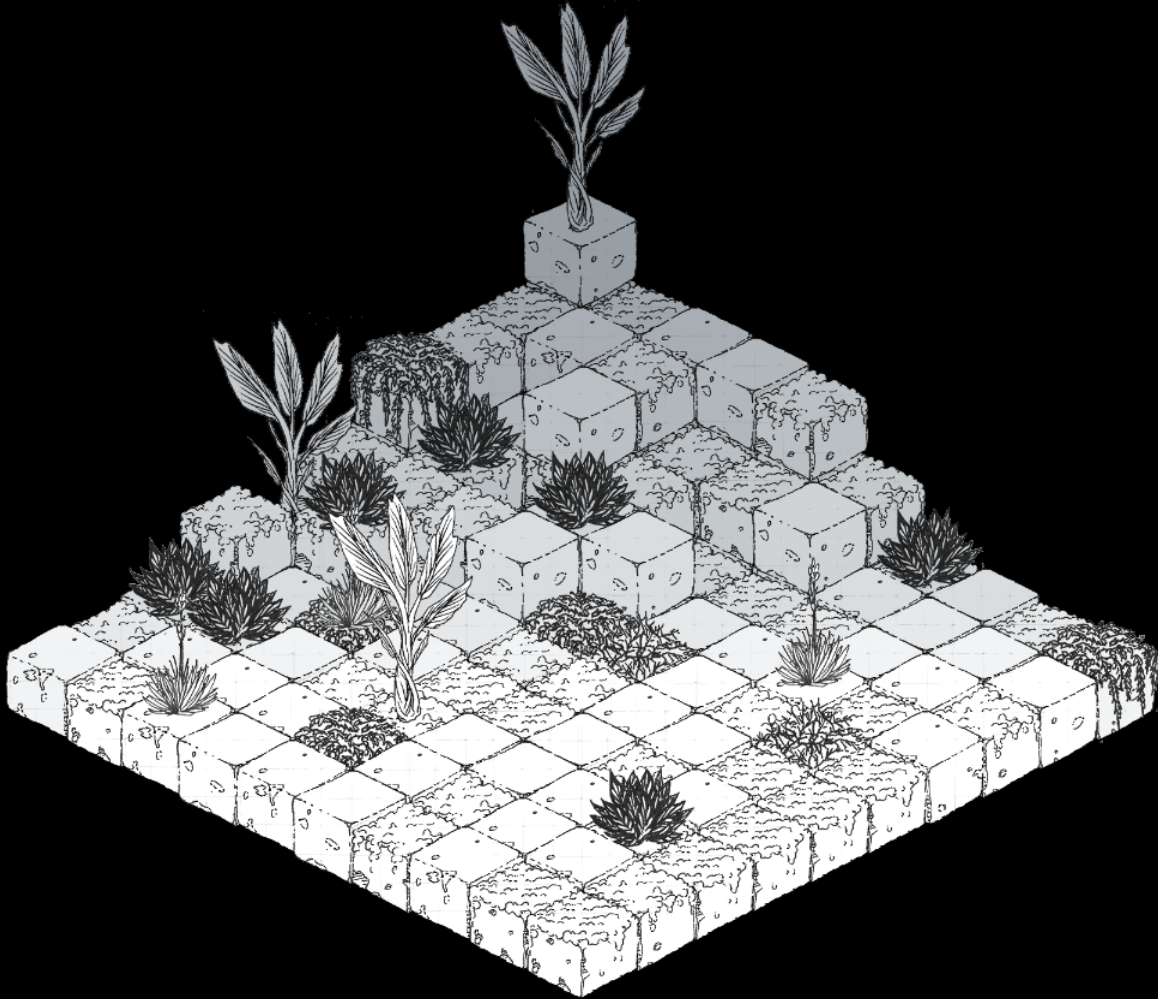
Proposed timeline;

8/15/18 - Project proposal (mockups, some prototyping, proposal, conceptualization)
1/1/19 - Beginning of project (design structure, concept design, prototyping)
1/15/19 - Documentation begins (web hosting, Github, launch of development website)
2/15/19 - On-site work begins (art, web and code implementation, work with student assistant)
3/1/19 - Test on hardware (test on screens in location, test communication via web)
3/15/17 - Finish project (last changes, fix bugs, play-test with students)

3/20/19 - Proposed launch

3/20/22 - Withering Systems dedicated maintenance of website ends

(Dates are highly flexible within the spring 2019 semester, and February and March choices are placeholders.)



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CV:

Everest Pipkin
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512-971-1733

Education;

University of Texas at Austin
BFA in Studio Art (minor in Philosophy), 2013

School for Poetic Computation,
Summer 2015

Carnegie Mellon University
MFA in Studio Art, 2018

Selected Exhibitions;

2018

Monopines, Not Gallery, Austin, TX (*2-person*)
Immutable Stage, Miller Gallery, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA
Stream Capture, Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Minneapolis, MN
Artificial Creativity, Boston Cyberarts Gallery, Jamaica Plain, MA
Make Pictures, Bitforms, New York, NY
Pixels x Paper, Babycastles, New York, NY
Author Function, Rotch Library, MIT, Cambridge, MA

2017

24 Hour Water, Powder Room, Pittsburgh, PA (*solo*)
GIPHY Presents: TIME_FRAME: Celebrating 30 Years of the GIF, Gallery 151, New York, New York
Subsurface: site-specific sight and sound, Brady's Bend Limestone Mine with Carnegie Mellon University, PA
Up In Arms, Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT
First Digital Popup, The Uncommon at Miyako Yoshigana Gallery, Chelsea, New York
Intake, Austin Design Week, Seaholm Power Plant, Austin, TX
Spam's The Internet: The Restaurant, Fusebox Festival & Museum of Human Achievement, Austin, TX
Small Objects on Tables, Flotilla Flotilla, Pittsburgh, PA
Invisible Cities: #digitalbaroque, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, New York, NY
(id)ea.code++: algorithmic objects, Vitrine Gallery, Holon Institute of Technology, Holon, Israel
Cabinet, Project Room at David B Smith Gallery, Denver, CO
The Highest Grossing Film of 1994, Museum of Human Achievement, Austin, TX
The Very Best Deserts on Planet Earth, 937 Liberty Gallery, Pittsburgh, PA
Mild Rumpus, The Game Developer's Conference, San Francisco, CA

2016

The Milano Game Festival, XXI Triennale, Triennale Design Museum, Milan, Italy
Beazley Designs of the Year, The Design Museum, London, UK
The Art of Bots, Abandon Normal Devices, Somerset House, London, UK

What's a steak, 5122 Penn and Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA
Mild Rumpus, The Game Developer's Conference, San Francisco, CA
Electronic Literature: A Matter of Bits, The Stedman Gallery at Rutgers University, Camden, NJ

2015

picking figs in the garden, Not Gallery, Austin, TX (*solo*)
Now Play This, Somerset House, London, UK
Babycastles Living, Babycastles Gallery, New York City, NY
ELO: The End(s) of Electronic Literature, Bergen, Norway
The Only Knowledge Worth Possessing, Gray Duck Gallery, Austin, TX
Ins & Outs, Art Science Gallery, Austin, TX
Just Some Me Time..., Museum of Human Achievement & Applied Self-Instruction Foundation, Austin, TX
Shapes and Other Shapes with Octopus Project, Fusebox Festival, Austin, TX, 2015
Electronic Objects Salon, XOXO Fest, Portland, OR

2014

six drawings of dogs and some of rocks, LPM Gallery, Austin, TX (*solo*)
West, The Haskell House, Austin, TX
Group Hug, Pump Project Flex Space/Lullwood Group, Austin and San Antonio, TX
Baroquemon, Museum of Human Achievement, Austin, TX

2013

Texas Biennial, Blue Star Contemporary Art Museum, San Antonio, TX
New Digital Art Biennale, The Wrong, Worldwide
Basements Were Rooftops, Fusebox Festival, Austin, TX
Snowfall DESTROYS 3 Cars, Fusebox Festival, Austin, TX
East, Fisterra Studios, Austin, TX
The Grayduck 5k, Grayduck Gallery, Austin, TX
October, Joshua Tree Art Gallery, Joshua Tree, CA
17 Tips Project, Sleeth Gallery, Buchannon, WV

Arts administration;

Board of Directors, The Museum of Human Achievement Austin, TX, 2016-current.
Gallery Director, The Museum of Human Achievement Austin, TX, 2014-2015.
Director and Founder, Wardencliffe, Austin, TX, 2011-2013.

Residencies, Programs, and Grants;

Center for Land Use Interpretation at Wendover, UT, 2018 (*upcoming*)
Signal Culture, Owego, NY, 2018 (*upcoming*)
Montello Foundation, NV, 2018 (*upcoming*)
Lacawac Station, Lake Ariel, PA, 2018 (*upcoming*)
Triple Canopy Publication Intensive, Los Angeles, CA, 2018
How to: not make an architecture magazine, Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal, Ca, 2018
Shell House, Roxbury, NY, 2018
North Street Collective, Willits, CA, 2018
Welcome to my Homepage, Digital Artist Residency, 2017
Hunting Art Prize Finalist, Houston, TX, 2015 + 2016
Studio for Creative Inquiry FRFAF Microgrant, Pittsburgh, PA, 2015 + 2016
New York Mills Arts Retreat, New York Mills, MN, 2014
Pilot Balloon Church House, Lawrence, KS, 2014
Caldera, Sisters, OR, 2014

Madrono Ranch, Madrono, TX, 2013
Joshua Tree Artist Residency, Joshua Tree, CA, 2013
Artist of the Year: Early Career, Austin Visual Arts Awards, 2012
Young Masters Award through the Texas Cultural Trust, 2008 and 2009

Talks and Publications;

Rune Factory 3, Logic Magazine, Fall 2018 (*upcoming*)
XOXO fest, Portland, OR, 2018 (*upcoming*)
Fragment Ecology for Online Space, eyeo, Walker Museum, Minneapolis, MN, 2018
Finding Judith Bronte, the accidental spam poet of Southern California, Blackflash Magazine, 2018
Visiting Artist Lecture, Youngstown State University, Youngstown, OH, 2017
Visiting Artist Lecture, MICA Interactive Arts Department, Baltimore, MD, 2017
A Prehistory of Farmville, Interrupt 4, Brown University, Providence, RI, 2017
A Digital Flower Cycle, Feral Vector, Hebden Bridge, UK, 2017
A Video Game Immerses You in an Opera Composed by Dogs, Hyperallergic, 2017
Guillaume: Visitar a Chris Marker en Second Life, Backroom Caracas, 2017
Holy words in service to generative text, Workshop in the Woods, Dartmouth University, NH, 2016
A garden-ecology for bots, Electronic Literature Organization, University of Victoria, Victoria, Canada, 2016
The Contemporary Melitzah, WORDHACK XXIII, Babycastles, New York City, NY, 2016
Bots & the rise of digital folklore, Botsummit, Victoria & Albert Museum, London, 2016
Language after the Writing Machine, Indiecade, Los Angeles, CA, 2015
Selfhood, the Icon, and Byzantine Presence, Bot Summit MIT Media Lab, Boston, MA, 2014
Pecha Kucha Vol 20, at The Contemporary Austin, TX, 2014
Curating Youtube Ephemera, Lawrence Arts Center, KS, 2014
The Forgotten Concrete Arrows of Early US Airmail, 787XX, 2014
the boy with a sun for a head, Roughhouse, March 2013

Selected Press;

A Twitter Bot Is Posting the Names and Locations of Immigrant Detention Centers, Slate, June 2018
A Twitter Bot Has Joined the Immigration Battle to Fight ICE With Facts, Gizmodo, June 2018
6 Bots That Deliver Science and Serendipity on Twitter, The New York Times, April 2017
Printed Web #5, Library of the Printed Web, February 2017
Design Museum names this year's top designs, Creative Review, August 2016
A Collection of Magical Realist Games for Your Smartphone, Hyperallergic, August 2016
These robots are better at art than you are, Dazed Digital, April 2016
About a bot, Furtherfield, December 2015
12 Weird, Excellent Twitter Bots Chosen by Twitter's Best Bot-Makers, New York Magazine, November 2015
How to Make a Moth, Studio 360, WNYC, August 2015
These procedurally generated space bowls are killer, Boing Boing, November 2015
Curator's choice: Digitale Kunst, Kunst Bulletin, March 2016
Review: The Only Knowledge Worth Possessing, The Austin Chronicle, August 2015
picking figs in the garden, The Austin Chronicle, July 2015
Procedurally-generated moths are wonderfully haunting, plausible, Boing Boing, July 2015
A Twitter Bot That Generates Beautiful, Imaginary Moths, Hyperallergic, July 2015
The Art of Twitter Art, The Atlantic, February 2015
BOOOOOOOM, August 2014
Techno-Artistic, The Austin Chronicle, August 2013