

Interview – BFFF 2017 – Julian Staddon

Who has inspired you in your life and why?

Generally, people that inspire the ways I think about the transformative nature of art and technology; how we view ourselves, our bodies and what we do with these views. In terms of my career trajectory, I think that my lecturers in art school shaped me more than anyone, particularly the teacher in life drawing who told me I didn't understand the human form or beauty. I spent the rest of my career exploring these very topics, so in some way she was my biggest inspiration. To be honest there are too many inspirational artists out there to think of! Perhaps Björk? She has had such a great career of transdisciplinary collaboration and is one artist that has consistently amazed me given me a confidence about collaborating with talented people for the greater good of the projects, rather than working alone and achieving less. I've also always loved the YBA's defiant arrogance and that also inspired me to have confidence in myself and in more conceptual approaches to creative discourse.

How would you define your aesthetics?

Like a teenager's bedroom: messy, opinionated, awkward, hard to access and full of angst, while somehow still being naïve, innocently engaged with pop culture and most of the time fun to be situated in. I try to juxtapose social aesthetics with post-biological and post-digital aesthetics and I do this through embodied interaction with real time audio-visual feedback and real time data networking. My research organization marart.org has, for the last 6 years explored what mixed reality aesthetics are/could be, and a lot of that discourse stems from my own practice.

Could you tell us about some of your most memorable projects and why you enjoyed working on them?

I guess my most memorable project was *Data Body Trader*, which is still going after 9 years. This project went from exploring vanity in virtual worlds and being quite frivolous, to now being a functional mixed reality organ trade system that converges about 8 or 9 different reality states and currently we are working on bio-printing organs for it. It has just been this remarkable journey that I never really planned and it has culminated in my PhD and many other projects.

I also have enjoyed my sensory monitoring projects, particularly those that integrate data about the body and the environment. I think the Anthropocene is really fucking scary and the ways that most people are interfaced with it removes our feeling of embodiment within our environments. This is crazy, because we see, hear, feel, smell and taste weather, so I think reconfiguring this might shift perspectives, which is what I have been trying to do with these kinds of projects. It's cool to see people be amazed by something that is considered as arbitrary as the weather and engage more directly in their relationship with it.

The piece of digital work you wish you had thought of?

I would have to say the World Wide Web. If we consider this to be a digital work and Berners-Lee to be an artist, this would have to be the most impactful creative work in history, and he made it pretty much all by himself! I can think of many tactical/social media projects today that are labelled as creative digital works that are much less creative, so I would say that I wish I invented this ever-evolving beautiful monster we all complain about, yet love with all our hearts and can't live without. For me virtual, augmented and mixed reality really started having an impact when it became networked, so for me that is the work I wish I thought of!

You will be talking about: How Technology Transforms Creativity, Craft and Perception (VR). What can we expect?

Expect a structural redefining of immersion and reality, looking at past and present models to

understand it better, followed by a range of examples of old and new media that push the boundaries of embodiment, perception and reality, including some of my work and work from marart.org. I will also discuss different methods for working with such technologies and why an open speculative approach is more important than following media trends in regards to creativity and craft. Expect your perception of VR and hopefully reality to be challenged beyond mainstream, arbitrary uses of these amazing, emergent technologies and how fashion media can be further woven into the fabric of digital media.

Who would you like to meet at BFFF?

To quote a 1991 Damien Hirst “I Want to Spend the Rest of My Life Everywhere, with Everyone, One to One, Always, Forever”. Having said that, of course common ground is important for shared journeys.

Julian, you're part of BFFF 2017 now. What is your motivation behind joining?

I find the expansion of cinema into more immersive methods of presentation to be really exciting, be it in design, fabrication, pre/post production, presentation, collaboration, promotion or more peripheral aspects. On the other hand; in general, I find the current VR/AR industry to be a little unimaginative and I think the key to addressing this is understanding these evolving media spaces, as extensions of the body, rather than a transcendence or escape from it, or even worse, just a wow factor that is embedded in traditional media communications.

Fashion exists as this fabulous transreal interface between body, environment and culture and I think that now, with the Anthropocene, disintegrating socio-political/economic ideologies and such uncertain and contested futures, fashion media stands as a rather stable force within human representation. Berlin always has had an intuitive, almost default focus on these more critical and perhaps more serious sides to creativity and what better way to celebrate that than through something as ubiquitous as fashion media and film?