ACE Maker Monday Commissioning Project 2016-17

Background:

Maker Monday Commissioning Programme is collaborative arts and digital technology projects, working with four artists commissioned through an open call process. The project is led by Birmingham City University, in partnership with four Birmingham based cultural organisations Sampad, mac birmingham, Birmingham Open Media (BOM), and fizzPOP. It aims to increase the ambitions and opportunities of local artists and makers to inspire local audiences. The commissions will provide a new layer of opportunities for upskilling artists working across technology, and for them to fully consider user / public engagement.

The application process for the Maker Monday Commissioning Programme was highly competitive. Dozens of artists submitted for a place on the programme and were tasked with presenting their ideas to a panel of judges from Birmingham City University and the project partners, Sampad, mac birmingham, Birmingham Open Media and fizzPOP.

The Maker Monday Commissioning Programme, supported using public funding by Arts Council England, supports the four artists to further develop and strengthen their digital artistry within their work. Artists will research and develop different ideas and upscale their individual understanding of what possibilities are currently available in the digital world, what the latest advances are and - through a process of experimentation - how these technologies can integrate with their discipline. The project support will facilitate the artists to continually stretch and challenge both their own artistic practice and their audience's expectations and experience.

The 4 successful commissioned artists are:

1. Sonia Sabri Company (SSCo)

'Nu Body' is a new dance and digital solo production from Sonia Sabri, Artistic Director of SSCo, which will explore the light vs dark, the real vs fairy tale versions of female existence. The work will look at female body image and in particular women's complex relationship with their own bodies, teasing the audience with perceptions and misconceptions of the female. The digital art will be cutting edge and experimental using image manipulation in a sensory dialogue with the live body. Sonia hopes to use e-motion software, Processing, Max/MSP visual programming language to create audio and graphics; and Particle Engines to easily bend and manipulate graphics by the body. Sonia Sabri Company has previously enjoyed some experimentation with digital artistry in their productions, their production 'Occasionally We Skype' was co-produced with Black Country Touring, involved dancers, musicians and actors, who used iPads and iPods either held or worn, combined with live VJing. 'Echolalia', a commission by Birmingham Hippodrome, used light projections interacting with a solo performer alongside an experimental sound score.
www.ssco.org.uk
https://www.facebook.com/soniasabricompany
https://twitter.com/SoniaSabriCo

2. Kate Spence - Home For Waifs And Strays

An interactive installation based on the Magdalene Asylums (also known as Magdalene Laundries). Kate will create an experience using digital theatre that tells the story of a young woman who has been sent to a Magdalene laundry. It will inform (with true accounts) of the horrors that took place, using narrative that is impacting and emotive. Kate will use real and fictitious elements that allow the user to take retribution. She intend for this artwork to be displayed within a gallery context, with the possibility of furthering its reach outside of the gallery. It will be a large scale installation incorporating digital theatre, gaming technology, VR and/or AR elements and motion capture as a vehicle to take true accounts of Magdalene Laundry survivors and create an empathic experience for audiences that they can interact with and control the narrative, from the perspective of a young woman taken in to work in one of the laundries.

Kate would use the Maker Monday Commission funding to explore the different types of digital technology that would work best to take the audience on an immersive and emotive journey in order to create empathy, and to build the prototype of the computer game and physical set aspects of the installation.

www.katespenceliveart.co.uk
https://twitter.com/kate_spence

3. Ben Neal - Psicon Lab, Swoomptheeng

As part of Bens involvement with the Swoomptheeng art collective he has helped to create a series of innovative MIDI instruments made of wood which are used in dance music performances in Pop Art vein (bright, cheeky and easily accessible but with serious critical undertones).

Swoomptheeng have appeared at music and art events, workshops and conferences presenting the instruments as curious creative technology products. For the Maker Monday Commissioning Project Ben will develop one of two ambitious instruments which have a more unusual interface and striking visual impact which contrast with their use for dance music. The instrument will connect to a laptop and control music and DJ software via MIDI (as the others do) and will be made from electrical sensors and an Arduino microcontroller. They may also include visual components such as lasers or LED screens. This playful and visually arresting object would be used by Swoomptheeng and their audiences at art and music events and festivals. It will also operate as an interactive art exhibit and sculpture as well as a functioning musical instrument. It could also control VJ software for motion graphics or any other MIDI compatible software. Because of the unusual technique required to play the instrument it could be used in new ways or by people unable to play music using more traditional method for example those with disabilities. The use of a traditional or classical instrument to play modern Bass music raises social and historical questions about context, function and taste, and explores ways in which technology can re-invent established norms. The object is also an inclusive, participatory device and can act as a gateway to new interest from otherwise disengaged audiences.

www.psiconlab.co.uk
www.swoomptheeng.com
Http://twitter.com/psiconlab
Http://twitter.com/swoomptheeng

4. Leon Trimble , Chromatouch

The Selfie Synth - The Selfie synth brings together a few of Leons experiments with chip based synthesizers – specifically, making sounds with simple computer chips like those found in the arduino. This will use the Raspbery Pi and some iteration of Puredata – open source software that uses a graphical, node based interface. Leons experiments have led to his using face tracking in a Kinect 2 to let a person influence the sound of musical notes playing. The selfie synth will be a simple device for making tuneful music on your own or in a group with little or no musical or technical knowhow. The really fun thing about the selfie synth is the camera that lets your face make changes to the sound as it plays, e.g. smile for major key, wink each eye to pan the sound and blink to create echoes. The Selfie synth will come with an app that lets you wirelessly configure the sounds and synth programs on the device. It will be a great tool for musical workshops, and Leon envisions a music teacher configuring the device for multiple situations before handing them out to a class.

www.chromatouch.net
https://twitter.com/leolodreamland
www.chromatouch.tumblr.com

The Maker Monday events has already seen successful collaborations forged and attracted international attention. For example, the Internet of Clothes project, which will see wardrobes fitted with WiFi, has allowed unused attire to automatically be auctioned online, or donated to charity.

To find out more about our Maker Monday Commissioning project, please visit:
http://www.bcu.ac.uk/makermonday