UPCOMING EVENTS

BLUR 2012 INVITATION
John Fillwalk was invited to keynote at the Blur 2012 Conference on human computer interaction on our work in hybrid worlds and gesture input for virtual reality. Blur will be held in Broomfield, Colorado on November 15th and 16th.

ELSEVIER EDITORIAL BOARD
John Fillwalk was invited by the Editor-in-Chief of Elsevier Publishing to join the Editorial Board of the Digital Applications in Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Journal - an international scholarly archive of interactive 3D models of ancient art, buildings and artifacts.

LASER SCANNING
The lab will be undertaking new projects for the Virtual World Heritage Laboratory including the laser scanning of over a dozen sculptures from Hadrian’s Villa and a virtual simulation of the Solarium Augusti — the largest sundial of the ancient world.

NEWS

Hybrid Design Technologies, through the Office of Information Technology is an evolutionary extension of the IDIA Lab’s innovation in virtual and hybrid environments. This update includes overviews of our current projects and events including: the launch of our Virtual Broad Art Museum project; a sponsored invitation from the Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai for their annual technology festival; an exchange program in Intermedia Arts with the Technische Universität Dortmund and BSU; and the gift of the Blue Mars virtual world technology to Ball State University.

Ball State granted rights to develop $10 million Blue Mars virtual world technology.

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The future of virtual worlds has a new home at Ball State University, thanks to the generosity of Avatar Reality Inc., which granted the university rights to the multimillion-dollar 3-D virtual world platform, Blue Mars. Blue Mars’ creator, Hawaii-based Avatar Reality, has provided expanded rights to the technology, valued at $10 million in research and development, to Ball State for 3-D simulation and research projects beyond the world of gaming.

“We are honored to have our institution selected to build upon the tremendous innovations within Avatar Reality’s Blue Mars platform,” said John Fillwalk, director of the Institute for Digital Intermedia Arts (IDIA) and senior director of Ball State’s Hybrid Design Technologies initiative. “This partnership between Avatar Reality and Ball State is an unprecedented gesture and a great distinction.”

Since 2009, Ball State’s IDIA has been a leading developer for Blue Mars, employing the virtual platform on projects such as digital laser scans of a centuries-old Buddha and the creation of the Virtual Middletown Project. The project, which ushers visitors via their computers into the world of the early 20th-century Ball Brothers Glass Manufacturing Co., is one example of the cultural heritage work possible with Blue Mars. Another is IDIA’s simulation of the 1915 World’s Fair in San Francisco.

“Avatar Reality designed in Blue Mars a next-generation 3-D platform that greatly advanced the graphic fidelity, functionality and scalability of virtual worlds — well beyond current standards,” Fillwalk said. “Its strategy connected social spaces across devices, from high-performance desktops to mobile phones. Our goal is to build upon both its technology and vision for the future of virtual worlds.”

Recognition speaks to reputation

Phil Repp, Ball State’s vice president for information technology, said the new agreement with Avatar Reality can be traced to Fillwalk’s commitment to advancing IDIA to the national level.

“The fact that other universities — and many of them of very high caliber — are working hard to gain expertise in hybrid worlds and that Ball State was identified as the university most likely to further develop this technology speaks volumes about our reputation, experience and abilities,” Repp said. “It’s an honor for Ball State and John to be singled out with this kind of recognition.”

Under Ball State’s terms of agreement with Avatar Reality, the university will begin to fully operate Blue Mars for noncommercial purposes, expand upon the source code, increase its research and academic initiatives, and enhance the community of Blue Mars. In addition, Ball State will deliver original content on Blue Mars as it has done in the past. Existing commercial activity will continue to be operated and supported by Avatar Reality, Inc.

“I am really excited about the future,” Repp said. “Through our division of Hybrid Design Technologies, Ball State will further our position as a national leader in hybrid worlds and their applications to mediated learning technologies. Our reputation in this discipline is such a perfect fit to our institutional history of innovation in teaching and learning.”

About Ball State: Located in Muncie, Ind., Ball State University is redefining education by providing relevant, immersive learning experiences that engage high-caliber students in intense interdisciplinary projects both in and out of the classroom. Its vibrant campus is home to about 22,000 undergraduate and graduate students from across the country and abroad. Learn more at www.bsu.edu.

About Blue Mars: Developed by Avatar Reality Inc., Blue Mars is a premium 3-D virtual world platform featuring unparalleled interactivity, fidelity, scalability and security, and it enables artists and developers to create and distribute interactive 3-D experiences to a global audience. Blue Mars launched in open beta in October 2009 and began selling virtual land to third party developers in January 2010. Blue Mars Mobile, an iOS app based on the content and technology from the virtual world, was introduced in February 2011.

By Gail Werner, Media Relations Manager, Ball State University.
Broad/MSU launches Virtual Broad Art Museum with original digital artworks on view in multi-user online environment.

The Virtual Broad Art Museum, a multi-user online environment developed in anticipation of the fall 2012 opening of the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University (Broad/MSU), launched today. Created by internationally recognized intermedia artist John Fillwalk and the IDIA Lab staff, the virtual space mirrors the architecture of the Zaha Hadid-designed museum, and provides an innovative and globally accessible venue for the presentation of cutting-edge interactive digital artworks. Four original works by Fillwalk, which make use of the Virtual Museum’s capacity to facilitate interaction between users and with the environment itself, have been created for the project launch. As the virtual world evolves, the work of other artists will also be integrated into the space.

“Engaging visitors with innovators at the leading edge of art and technology, both here at MSU and around the globe, is key to the Broad Art Museum’s mission,” said founding director Michael Rush. “With the Virtual Broad Art Museum, we have an opportunity to embrace the tremendous creative and connective possibilities that exist in the digital world.”

Rush commissioned John Fillwalk and IDIA Lab to create the Virtual Broad Art Museum project in advance of the opening of the Broad/MSU, the new international contemporary art museum at Michigan State University. Fillwalk works in interactive installation, virtual reality and hybrid art environments, and directs Ball State University’s Institute for Digital Intermedia Arts, which explores the intersections of art, science and technology. Adam Brown, Associate Professor of Art at Michigan State University, and Director of the Form from Thought Laboratory invited Fillwalk and IDIA to conceptual and design the virtual project.

The Virtual Broad Art Museum is accessible to the public through the museum’s website, at http://broadmuseum.msu.edu/VBAM. Users begin by choosing one of the featured works to experience. After entering the virtual museum, users select an avatar and move through the space with either a keyboard or a mouse, as they would navigate a virtual gaming environment. Visitors have the option to interact with other users with a chat feature, and the space also facilitates virtual lectures and performances, with up to 100 visitors from anywhere in the world.

The following works by John Fillwalk are currently featured in the digital museum environment:

- Proxy
In this interactive digital installation, visitors shape the construction of a sculptural and sonic composition as they move through the virtual museum. The work progresses to Screenshot from Flickr Gettr, John Fillwalk, 2012 construct in relation to the museum itself, eventually integrating into structural support for the building and becoming one with the virtual museum environment. When multiple users are in the environment, their avatars interact with one another to create a collaborative work.

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The Digital Hadrian’s Villa Project: Virtual World Technology as an Aid to Finding Alignments between Built and Celestial Features is being presented at Computer Applications and Quantitative Methods in Archaeology which is being hosted 26-29 March 2012 by the Archaeological Computing Research Group at the University of Southampton. Dr. Bernard Frisher and John Fillwalk, co-authors. Southampton, UK.

**PRESENTING VIRTUAL ARCHEOLOGY IN SOUTHAMPTON, UK**

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**BSU AND TU DORTMUND INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM**

Ball State University and TU Dortmund have signed an International Exchange program between allowing BSU and Dortmund students further study abroad opportunities. HDT initiated this to foster hybrid design and Intermedia exchange opportunities between the two campuses however the program is available to students across all disciplines.

**TWEETS**

- Invited by curator to submit work to Prix Ars Electronica — international electronic art festival. Linz, Austria.

- Invited by Reaction Grid to provide interactive virtual set for upcoming virtual event with futurist designer, Syd Mead.

- Invited to install virtual wind visualizer on OpenSim / Amazon S3 cloud based virtual simulator at Virtual Rutgers University.

**About HDT and IDIA**

Hybrid Design Technologies and the Institute for Digital Intermedia Arts engage artists, scholars, designers, educators, scientists, and technicians in the exploration of the intersections between the arts, science and technology. Scholarly, creative and pedagogical projects investigate virtual reality, HCI, visualization and 3D simulation. The labs develop projects in partnership with international client staff and students in this studio initiative investigating the forefront of discourse in emergent media design and learning.