

UAM CSULB NEWS

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TAMPER: Gestural Interface for Cinematic Design

January 24 – April 13, 2008

The University Art Museum is pleased to present the next installment of the *PROJECT LAB* series, *TAMPER: Gestural Interface for Cinematic Design*, an interactive system for reaching into and re-sculpting live film, using gesture technology by John Underkoffler and Oblong Industries, Inc. on view in the Wesley G. Hampton Gallery from January 24 through April 13, 2008.

TAMPER is a participatory work that fuses cutting-edge interface technology with the practice of film production. The result is an off-kilter editing room in which the museum visitor becomes cinema collage artist, literally using her or his hands to grab and recompose elements from different movies: characters here, props there, architecture from one, an entire scene from another. Each emerging paste-up flows into TAMPER's history stream, which may be browsed subsequently or used as a source of material for further collage. The experience is a form of active viewing -- by bending film back to bite its own tail.



In the 2002 movie *Minority Report*, Tom Cruise plays a detective who conducts investigations standing in front of a chalkboard-sized display, using agile hand gestures to sift through video, images, and text. It is both science fiction and not. Former MIT Media Lab researcher and computer scientist John Underkoffler, technical consultant on the movie, has developed the world's first fully realized gestural interface -- called "**g-speak**" -- allowing gestural control to replace the mouse and keyboard. This third exhibition in the *PROJECT LAB* series at the UAM will focus on the ways that "g-speak's" visually immersive environment and direct manipulation techniques enable a new kind of dialogue between human and machine. For the exhibit, Oblong Industries, the company Underkoffler co-founded with Kwindla Hultman Kramer and Kevin Parent to develop this technology, will install a room-sized "g-speak" system in the museum. The context for TAMPER is cinema and cinematic design. Gestural tools are ideal for digital manipulation of film, and film bridges high and popular culture like nothing else. This groundbreaking project proposes new means for art to reach beyond aesthetics, to twine a broader social context around the individual viewer, and to encourage community participation.

Artist Statement by John Underkoffler:

Here's cinema, one-way medium extraordinaire. It takes hundreds of people to make a movie, and since they usually know what they're doing your best bet is still the same after a century: sit, take it in. Film is a perfect form. Despite occasional false obituaries, cinema's doing just fine -- visual narrative, in this purest dynamic guise, is strong stitching and nowhere close to coming apart. Then again, here you are, picking at the seams. TAMPER wants you to. TAMPER is a filmic deconstruction kit, recombinant cinema, Mr. Potatohead with movies instead of tubers, a 24-frames-per-second director set, a jolly butcher's diagram that shows where to use the knife and how to take the sight of bleeding celluloid. Eisenstein's gloves are off but you're wearing TAMPER's, because now it's gestural cinema: a way to poke and prod and grasp and grope film, to shimmy and jostle film's parts into new configurations, to upset careful filmic structures that had nothing like it in mind. TAMPER is a fleeting tactile space for talking back to the screen.

Artist Biography

John Underkoffler was born in Pennsylvania on June 30, 1967. He received his B.S. in media arts and sciences in 1988, followed by an M.S. in 1991 and a PhD in 1999 from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). While completing his doctoral work at MIT Underkoffler invented the I/O bulb, which led to the development of the Luminous Room. Underkoffler saw the I/O bulb as a multi-purpose invention that would allow any architectural space to be used as a surface to display visual information. The bulb would record live video of the projection surfaces and more importantly could be implemented

in urban planning, where the study of light in and on buildings would assist in the organization of structures. Underkoffler is best known for his invention of the gestural interface system called G-Speak also developed during his doctoral studies. This is an interactive system where data is lifted off from the computer screen and transferred into real space. The user is able to navigate through data using gestures and arm movements instead of a mouse or keyboard. A user could move information up, down, and side to side with a quick gesture, and even point and zoom in on a specific object. A similar interface system was developed for the film *Minority Report*, starring Tom Cruise, on which Underkoffler served as a technical advisor, and the system was used by Cruise in the film. G-Speak soon began to draw interest from such groups as Raytheon, who specializes in the use of technology in homeland security and defense for communication and intelligence systems. His involvements with Raytheon gained Underkoffler even more recognition and assisted in the establishment of G-Speak, LLC in 2005. A company aimed at development of G-Speak for commercial markets. His work on *Minority Report* has led to his involvement in films like *The Hulk*, *Aeon Flux*, *The Island* and *Click*. In addition to his company G-Speak, LLC, Underkoffler also founded Imatex in 1990, co-founded Matter Group in 1999, and founded Treadle & Loam in 2000. Underkoffler has also published several articles on his work and participates in speaking engagements throughout the United States. His work can be seen in the permanent collection of the New York Science Museum and at the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry.

PROJECT LAB: NEW ART AND TECHNOLOGY.

Given the UAM's longstanding engagement with changing concepts of artistic and exhibition practices, the PROJECT LAB series presents an unprecedented investigation of digital media's impact on contemporary art and visual culture, at a moment when these effects are only beginning to be explored by the society producing them. The PROJECT LAB exhibitions presents artists working at the furthest reaches of technological experimentation as well as those responding to the broader aesthetic and political implications of new tools and media.

This exhibition is accompanied by a museum brochure with essay by writer and multimedia artist **Rick Bolton**. Bolton, who lives in Los Angeles, is well known for two collections of critical writing: *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography* (MIT Press, 1989) and *Culture Wars: A Documentary Guide to Recent Controversies in the Arts* (The New Press, 1992). His critical essays have appeared in such journals as the *New Art Examiner*, *Sculpture*, *High Performance*, *Afterimage* and *Exposure*. He is also known for multimedia installations that incorporate sculpture, photography, video, audio and Web. His work has been exhibited in a variety of settings, including Capp Street Project, Corcoran Gallery of Art, the Whitney Museum Downtown, MIT's List Visual Arts Center, the Museum of Photographic Arts in San Diego and other venues. Bolton received an MFA in Photography from Cranbrook Academy of Art, and an MA in Liberal Studies from St. John's College. Over the course of his career, he has taught at several notable institutions, including MIT's Media Lab and the University of California, Santa Barbara. He presently works in the film industry, and is completing work on a novel.

Also on view in the galleries:

Lothar Schmitz: *Survival Strategies*, an exhibition by the artist-physicist including new site-specific installations that address evolutionary uncertainty and the paradox of our decreasing ability to define nature, from January 24 – April 13, 2008.

UAM exhibitions are made possible by the Instructionally Related Activities Fund, WIDE ANGLE Fund for Art + Technology, Constance W. Glenn Fund for Exhibition and Education Programs, Institute of Museum and Library Services, Arts Council for Long Beach, and the Bess Hodges Foundation.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

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| January 24 | 5 PM – Artist talk by Lothar Schmitz |
| | 6-8 PM – Public Reception for artists |
| February 5 | 12:15-1 PM – UAM@noon, gallery talk with artist John Underkoffler |
| February 28 | 7 PM – Art + Philanthropy Panel with Bonhams & Butterfields, Los Angeles |

PRESS images are available via UAM's ftp site, please contact Public Relations Director Sarah G. Vinci for access and additional information, 562-985-4299, svinci@csulb.edu

Image credit: "G-speak" installation courtesy of John Underkoffler. Photo credit Parker Loris Underkoffler.