

Panel A1

Auditorium

Education and Animation I

Raquel Coelho, Rex Grignon

Nimble: A Collaboration Platform for Successful Student Projects



This group talk is about an ongoing collaboration between SJSU's Animation and Illustration program (AI) and Nimble Collective in California.

Nimble Collective's is a start-up company in Silicon Valley. It was founded in 2014 by high-profile industry animators, with the goal to simplify the complex and costly process of creating animation, for both professionals and amateur animators alike. They are building a virtual collaborative animation platform that will empower animators to more easily work together to create and distribute their ideas. With all production capabilities hosted in a secure cloud environment, animators will be able to spend more time creating instead of worrying about the endless hassles of managing complex and costly infrastructure.

San Jose State University's Animation and Illustration Undergraduate program is part of California's public higher education system, with approximately 460 animation students and a very small annual budget. For many years, the program was only able to fully support two areas of animation production: visual development and 2D animation. In recent years, the school developed additional tracks in 3D modeling and animation, but soon realized that 3D animation offered more obstacles, especially for a public school with a small budget: we didn't have resources to offer courses in rigging or lighting, and without these two areas it was very hard to support students interested in producing 3D short films. How to solve this problem?

SJSU has developed a relationship with Nimble Collective, aiming to explore these new avenues for collaboration offered by the internet. We feel that companies like Nimble are refining the potential for collaboration offered by the internet, by designing tools and interface that are specific to animation. These platforms can be seen as a new learning environment, in which students can produce short films not only with their own classmates, but with other artists and students around the world. This dialogue with other cultures and artists, opens great possibilities for our students. For SJSU's AI program, Nimble's collaborative platform represents a viable solution for a problem that has prevented the students to produce quality 3D animation short films. It truly represents a new learning environment.

Recently, many animators are turning their attention to social media, cloud computing and teleconferencing as a new way to collaborate with each other and make films. Internet applications such as GoToMeeting, Skype, Google Hangout to name a few allow for new types of collaborations between professionals. In addition, cloud technology allows for file sharing and storage – making it easier for users to store and share huge volumes of DATA on offsite server what we call cloud technology. Animation is a highly collaborative field, and the internet offers new exciting avenues for collaboration. Some short films are currently being produced in this new model, using the internet to connect artists from different parts of the world. In California there are a couple of start-up companies whose

work centers in innovative ways to provide a single platform geared specifically to produce animation, with the goal to enable independent artists to realize their artistic potential through collaboration in the cloud, since mostly independent animators and filmmakers usually don't have access to the type of financial resources of a big studio. This is important to the animation field because it enables the "small guy" to do unique, original films, without the need to compromise their art to satisfy studio executives. Big studios tend to produce films that will have solid financial return. In a multi-million dollar production, there's less incentive to bet in new and original visual styles, stories, topics or techniques. Artistic risk is avoided. It works pretty much like a factory, outputting one or more blockbuster feature films a year.

SJSU faculty wants its students to take artistic risks, and to collaborate with artists all over the world. The first project in the collaboration Nimble & SJSU was centered in the production of the short film "Roadside Assistance", created and directed by SJSU alumni Kathy MacNeal. Another project in the works is "Drifting Island", a 3D console game developed with using Unreal, also benefiting from a collaboration with Nimble Collective, and largely creating within Nimble's platform. In this talk we will relay our experience, explore the potential of such internet platforms and cloud based collaborations, and discuss its possibilities and possible pitfalls and problems.

Biography

Raquel Coelho

Associate Professor of the Animation and Illustration program of San Jose State University, CA, USA

raquel.coelho@sjsu.edu

An Industrial Design major, Raquel Coelho started her career as a writer and illustrator of Children's books. She has published 19 books in Brazil, and won the top awards in the country, including Premio Jabuti for best illustrations in a children's book, and first prize as best Children's books by APCA – Associação Paulista de Críticos de Arte. She started working in Animation still in São Paulo, initially as an intern at Briquet Studios where she worked in 2D animation doing TV commercials, and then at Trattoria di Frames, animating in 2D using an Apple computer. She moved to New York in 1994 to study Computer Arts at the School of Visual Arts (MFA) and upon graduation she went on to work as a 3D computer animator at Blue Sky Studios, PDI/Dreamworks, Wildbrain Inc and Tippett Studios. She switches from the animation industry to academia in 2006, first as an Assistant Professor at San Francisco State University. As a professor, she has focus on curriculum development and industry relations.

Rex Grignon

co-founder of Nimble Collective

An animation and computer graphics pioneer. Rex has animated on some of the top films of all time, including *Toy Story* (Pixar, 1995), *Shrek* (2001) and three of the *Madagascar* feature film franchise: *Madagascar* (2005), *Escape to Africa* (2008) and *Europe's Most Wanted* (2012) at Dreamworks Animation, where he was a Director of Animation. Rex was Awarded the first ever Distinguished Alumnus Award from Sheridan College in 2007.

Additionally, he won the 2013 Premier's Award for Creative Arts and Design - Presented annually to six recipients, the Premier's Awards celebrate the outstanding contributions Ontario college graduates make to the province and throughout the world. In 2014 Rex Grignon founded Nimble Collective together with a group of industry veterans. His idea is to develop a platform where independent animators can collaborate with artists all over the world enabling them to develop animation projects.