

TECHONOMY NYC

Digital Artist Adam Hurwitz

Speakers:

Adam Hurwitz, Digital Artist

Moderator:

David Kirkpatrick, Techonomy

(Transcription by [RA Fisher Ink](#))

Kirkpatrick: Now, we're about to go to lunch but before we do, we have one special treat. Adam Hurwitz, come up and join us. I will get offstage. Adam is an artist. During the lunch, you'll see Adam's work is out there. He's a very unusual artist; we're very honored to have him.

[APPLAUSE]

Hurwitz: Hi. Thank you, David. That was a hard act to follow but I'll try to do my best. Hi, everyone. Thanks for having me. I'm a visual artist and I use computer animation software to make short, non-narrative looping videos about memory. For many years, I was making paintings and then I was introduced to Maya, which is the computer animation software, sort of the industry standard, at a job where I work as a concept artist at an ad agency. I became obsessed with the software's ability to create entire worlds starting with really simple shapes and I discovered that the software could help me express these ideas that I'd had in my head for a while about memory and about what I like to call the interstices of time, which are the quotidian moments between moments where nothing seems to happen. Can we start the video please?

So I'm just going to talk over this while it's rolling. I was also inspired by the idea of subverting software more commonly used to create the spectacle of battling robots and slick car commercials by creating small, contemplative little visual poems. These pieces are about the personal melancholic daydreams of a past that might never have existed, what Svetlana Boym, in her book *The Future of Nostalgia*, refers to as reflective nostalgia, as opposed to the more sinister restorative nostalgia, which operates on a larger cultural scale and is prone to fascism. Make America great again, for example.

So I use Svetlana Boym's idea of reflective nostalgia as a sort of unifying principle for this body of work. The videos are informed by my experience as a painter and in many ways can be experienced as moving paintings. You can enter into them at any time and watch them for as little or as long as you'd like, though I find they reward close viewing.

The process of creating the videos begins with sketches and a fair amount of research before I start building the scenes in Maya. The models begin as primitive shapes that grow in complexity and eventually have textures, lighting, physics, and motion applied to them. The rendered frames of the animation are composed in Adobe After Effects, where I add the soundtracks, largely created from my own ambient recordings. I'll be showing a selection of these videos at greater length in the living room lounge area to the right at the top of the escalators. They'll be screened during lunch today and tomorrow, as well as during the shorter breaks in the morning and afternoon. I'll be on hand today to discuss the work and to answer any questions about the pieces and the process involved in creating them. So that's my spiel, I hope you enjoy the work.

[LAUGHS]

[APPLAUSE]

I suppose I have 30 seconds for a question if anybody has one out here.

Kellen: Beautiful work.

Hurwitz: Thank you.

Kellen: Do you do any of this in augmented reality or virtual reality?

Hurwitz: I haven't explored that yet.

Kellen: Hi, I'm Tanya Kellen. From PromenaVR. We do VR, AR, and animation and sell around the world. I'd love to talk to you.

Hurwitz: Ah. I've been thinking of VR and AR but I—

Kellen: I love what you're doing but—so what do you hope to do with this? What is your big, hairy dream?

Hurwitz: Well, as a visual artist, it's about getting the work out in the world and showing them in galleries, museums, any kind of venue of that nature. I think they're best experienced in that context rather than seeing them in a movie theater or something like that. And I'm interested in maybe exploring virtual reality, but as a painter, I like to be able to control the frame so—but that may be something I'll look into in the near future.

Kellen: Sure, my senior developers would love to hear from you and help you with that.

[LAUGHTER]

Hurwitz: I'd be happy to talk to them.

Kirkpatrick: The great thing is Adam's going to be today and tomorrow at all the breaks showing his work at the top of the stairs, so you've got to see it. There's nobody else doing anything like this and I can tell you, my wife Elena is a painter and recently we went to an

event out in Brooklyn where there were like 40 painters who were like, what the hell is this? This is very, very unusual, that he has the digital talents to do it and he has this painter's sensibility. So anyway, thank you so much for being here.

Hurwitz: Thank you, David. Thanks a lot.

[APPLAUSE]