

Transcript

Speaker 1: [inaudible]. Hello and welcome to the graduate, a radio show dedicated to graduate student research here at Berkeley. My name is Stephanie [inaudible]. I am a graduate student myself and I'll be your host is finished show on this radio station, k a l x Berkeley. Back in December I spoke with Laura Greg, a master of fine [00:00:30] arts student in the art department.

Speaker 2: So welcome Laura. Oh, thank you Stephanie. And um, Laura is working on an internet controlled paintball gun. So first I'll just have you describe the project.

Speaker 3: So the, the project is called no, someone's knocking at the door. Um, it started with the idea of creating a collaborative painting and it's, it's sort of hard to motivate people to collaborate on, on paintings or in artwork. So I [00:01:00] thought it would be nice to have a fun interaction that's, that's enjoyable and can sustain attention for at least a short amount of time. So it's, yeah, a web enabled paintball gun. Basically there's a robotic turret set up in my studio, trained on a canvas, and you can go online and aim and fire this gun and shoot a random color paintball at the canvas.

Speaker 2: Huh? [inaudible] okay. So what's the user experience? So the user goes online and what are the choices that they use or has?

Speaker 3: So you [00:01:30] see a Webcam that's, that's online, that's attached to the, um, the tripod that holds the gun. And you can within within the canvas space that you can see, you can click on any area and that will re aim where the gun is pointing and then you can double click and it fires.

Speaker 2: Hmm. So this is a really interesting, this is a really interesting project and it brings up a lot of issues. But I think, uh, first thing I'm gonna ask, [00:02:00] what inspired you to make this?

Speaker 3: So I, it was actually, uh, I was in a game design class and I was trying to, I'm trying to, I'm trying to find a way to allow people to collaborate that was, um, you know, easy to motivate participation and created almost as this, um, unintentional byproduct, sort of a, a painting. And I am have always been interested in paintball guns despite never playing the [00:02:30] sport and um, being a little scared of it and being totally scared of guns, any kind of gun. I still can't, even after working with it for months now, I still can't stand in front of it even when it's off.

Speaker 2: But I guess the web interface makes it a little less.

Speaker 3: Yeah, definitely. But it's still scary to have the thing in my studio, especially once I surrender control to no strangers is on the Internet. Um, but I, I was very fascinated by this device, so it definitely inspired the project and I love paint balls themselves too. [00:03:00] It's, it's sort of an interesting, um, and strange sort of cultural token. And I wanted to play around with it. And, and I wanted to play around with collaborative painting in a, in an abstract way.

Speaker 2: [inaudible] so for those of you who are just joining us, this is Stephanie Gerson with the graduates on Cadillacs. And today I'm talking to Laura Greg and MFA Student Who's building an internet controlled paintball gun. [00:03:30] So before we go on, what is the website that people can go to to play with this when it's ready?

Speaker 3: So the website is, um, my, my portfolio I've site is Laura greg.com. That's l a u r a g r e g and slash paintball to go to the, um, someone's knocking at the door project.

Speaker 2: Good. So one of the issues that this brings up is the issue of authorship. So how do you attribute authorship [00:04:00] to a decentralized population of people? Essentially?

Speaker 3: It's, it's true, it's an interesting problem. And, and something I'm thinking about and still playing around with, I don't know how people will feel about totally surrendering, um, or surrendering their, uh, their authorship to this piece and not having a name. I, um, I intend to really not have a, not have a way to sort of leave your name next to the marks you make. Um, though I'm, you know, willing to think [00:04:30] about that somewhere. Uh, but it is, it is an interesting problem because it's my piece, but I am not at all creating the painting and creating sort of the final product of the uh, or the art object itself. So it's, it's not my piece anymore. It's um, a lot of people's, but yeah, it's not, there are no names attached to it either. So it is a strange, it is a strange authorship and something I'm keen [00:05:00] on exploring a little bit more

Speaker 2: [inaudible] so you refer to the art object. Um, but there's a difference between the concept for the piece, which is clearly something that is yours, let's say, but, and the painting, which is something that, yeah, the issues of authorship are kind of blurry. But, um, but let's just stick with the object itself, the painting. So if the painting sold for millions of dollars, right, who would get paid for the painting? [inaudible]

Speaker 3: well that's, that's a great, that's a great question. [00:05:30] I suppose my web hosting, I get paid a little bit. Um, if I got to that point, I'm, I'm not sure how to deal with it. I suppose I'd try to distribute it or at least put that money towards creating a new art object or a new art device or a new means of creating new art objects.

Speaker 2: Um, yeah. And we see this issue of how to attribute authorship, um, and intellectual property, um, to a decentralized population a lot in this whole [00:06:00] era of web 2.0 right where a lot of the content is collaboratively produced. Um, and property law gives

us this notion of the Commons, right. Property that's individually owned but communally managed or at least the community has rights to it. And that's kind of the inspiration for this whole creative Commons license. Um, and I actually, I think creative Commons is trying to create a license for collective authorship. So would you, would you be interested in using something like [00:06:30] that for the painting?

Speaker 3: Yeah, of course. I do use. So the interface itself is built in an open source environment called processing, um, which you can find it. processing.org which I love and I love programming in it and I think it's just really interesting and really beautiful. So all my code is available on the website and you're more than welcome to sort of build your own. And I absolutely support the tenants of, of creative Commons. I am [00:07:00] a huge fan of Lawrence Lessig. I think he's done really wonderful work and I would love to see a, a common collaborative attribute license. I think that would be a really interesting path to take. So I would certainly put that on. I'd be curious to know how people feel about the, the authorship they wish to keep over any, um, any participation they they put towards the piece. I don't at all know how people react to that yet.

Speaker 2: [inaudible] yeah, and you were talking [00:07:30] about, well, are people going to sign it and if they sign it, is that going to be visible to everybody? Um, but I haven't figured that out yet necessarily. Are you gonna ask people for their contact information?

Speaker 3: I wasn't planning on it. I suppose I was thinking of having, using flicker, flicker has that beautiful um, annotating tool, right, where you can sort of add these notes. So I thought it would be nice to sort of keep, keep a flicker page updated with photos [00:08:00] of the canvas as it develops and grows and, and then people could go on and annotate the painting with their, you know, oh, this is the spot I

Speaker 2: right. Or, or your signature could just be the state of the painting at the point that you contributed to it. Yeah. So once again, you can check out Laura's paintball gun on the web at Laura.gregg.com/paper that's Lau, r a g [00:08:30] R E I g.com/paintball

Speaker 1: and we'll be right back. Our NextSeq show of be talking to Qadisiya Catalani from the public health department about her video voice project. So please join me, Stephanie Garson for the graduates every Monday from 12 to 1230 on [inaudible]. And if you have general feedback ideas for graduate students to interview, or [00:09:00] if you'd like to be interviewed yourself, don't be shy. Send an email to the graduates. calex@aol.com the graduates collects all one word, the graduates k l x@aol.com. So welcome back.

Speaker 2: Today I'm talking to Laura Gregg, an MFA student here at Berkery about her internet controlled paintball gun. [00:09:30] Okay. So another issue that this brings up is that this is a gun. So yes, it shoots paint, but it is still a gun. Um, which definitely suggest the possibility of intranet controlled weaponry. Right? And I guess this Kinda goes back to the attribution or the authorship, but this time we're not calling it authorship, we're calling it liability. Right? And the question of how to hold a decentralized population

liable for something. [00:10:00] Um, so I'm curious, why did you, well, you talked about how you like paintball guns, but, um, would you have used, would you have similarly wanted to use some kind of robotic paintbrush thing or is that something about a gun in particular that you were interested in? Is it in this static choice, that symbolic choice?

Speaker 3: That's a really great question. I think one of my motivators was, well, you know, also robotic paint brushes have [00:10:30] been done in a number of ways, but also I, yeah, I love this. I love this device and they're actually called pink ball markers. They refuse to call them paintball guns. It's another sort of liability thing I imagine. Um, but I wanted to take this device that I, uh, admire so much and remove the, remove the violence of it in a way, um, to use it to create something that, that's an art piece. It seems such a strange device that that shoots out paint. Like if it's this [00:11:00] violent object, but it's been really robbed of its violence by, yeah, by shooting out paint, which is a beautiful and wonderful substance in itself. So I did, I did want to, yeah, certainly using a robotic paint brush would not have the same personal effect as, as using the gun dies. But there are a number of, of topics that come up immediately. People's reactions when I talk about this piece is, oh, it's a feminist piece. So it's a nonviolent piece [00:11:30] that is not quite the path I want it to go and you know, it's okay for people to think whatever they like. Okay.

Speaker 2: [inaudible] um, do you have any, any future plans for making this into, you know, taking it even further? I guess the gun idea even for like an army of paintball guns or something or I guess referring to what people are, what people are going to think about the fact that it is a gun and where you can take that.

Speaker 3: That's true. It's definitely a, [00:12:00] I mean it's definitely going to depend on, on the reaction I got to it and the participation I get in it. Um, I'm curious to see where people take it and sort of get direction through that. One thing I am very interested in is manufacturing my own paint balls. So if I were to take this a step further, I think that's the way I'd go. Um, I think it's really interesting that you, they don't make red paint balls. It's illegal in the sport to use red paint balls, which like blood. Right, exactly. It's a safety concern, which I think [00:12:30] is real. It was really surprising to me to hear, cause I didn't expect, you know, like culturally sensitive to something like that. But, um, you know, uh, I didn't, I decided to keep it as a constraint. I'm not going to try to get red paint balls. Um, but it is an interesting one. Um, and they are, they are mostly biodegradable, but I'd like to play around sort of the shells are made of crude oil and aren't the best, um, way I think you can do it. So I'd like to play around with that further [00:13:00] and just really, uh, you know, I feel like a lot of ownership over devices and pieces come from taking them apart and really understanding them and really sort of being able to build them from the ground.

Speaker 2: [inaudible] so for anyone who just tuned in, you're listening to the graduates on Calex. This is Stephanie Gerson and I'm talking to Laura Greg about her internet controlled paintball gun. All right. So another issue that this brings [00:13:30] up is the question

that we always come back to of the, is this art? Right? I'm the same old, you know, what is art and does it require an artist? And I guess in this case it would be, does it require an artist with some kind of deliberate intention or more choices other than just direction and fire?

Speaker 3: [inaudible] yeah, of course. That's a tough question. And, and as of as a very new green artist, it's, [00:14:00] it's a hard one for me to answer. I don't, I don't know how to define what artists and, and as you know, someone who associates with the, with the new media genre of art, it's, it's hard to define new media art at all. And, and to talk about it, it's, it's a new field and it's, there's, there isn't the same sort of common language that there is around, um, other, other disciplines, which makes it difficult but also makes it, you [00:14:30] know, more interesting. And I think I had Walid bestie who's a photographer, visit my studio recently, um, to talk about, uh, the piece with me. And he did this really wonderful thing of, of really breaking it into to three elements of, uh, of a painting, of a sculpture being the gun and of a, you know, a website or a collaboration or whatever you'd want to call the final part.

Speaker 3: So I thought that was a really wonderful way to [00:15:00] break it down and very useful, um, to think about it that way. So, yeah, the, the painting is not at all something I'm going to be involved with, but that device certainly is. So I, I am sort of a sculptor in his eye and I am a little bit of a, um, you know, uh, an interaction designer or I'm not sure, I would never call myself a computer scientist or a computer programmer or a web designer. So I don't want to try [00:15:30] to fill any of those roles. But you know, clearly I am doing some programming. Right? Yeah. Know earlier in the conversation I differentiated between the concept and the actual painting. But yeah, you could split it up in different ways. And I guess the question of, of is this art, you know, which aspect of this are you talking about? Do you want to consider the whole thing together or do you want to say, I am the artist of this part? Whereas everyone else is the artist of some other part.

Speaker 2: But I find it kind of ironic, [00:16:00] or maybe not ironic that I'm with this decentralized our production, um, that, that seems uncontrolled and it seems like there's all these possibilities. The painting kind of always ends up looking the same. Maybe or maybe not. Kind of like experimental music. Just kidding. Any experimental musicians out there. But I'm, I think a better analogy might be, um, Arthur's canvas. There's a, I think he's a, he's a graduate student in computer science. I don't [00:16:30] know. Yeah. I don't really look at him on the show sometime to talk about this, but he created this virtual canvas where people can write whatever they want, but they can't take it back, which is great. But, um, it all ends up being pretty predictable. You see, you know, someone is a hottie and someone is sexy and there's lots of exclamation points and a, there's compliments to, to Arthur and um, and so I got on there last night and I wrote, I think this is great but doesn't it always end up looking the same [00:17:00] unless I do something but not in this like this.

Speaker 2: And then I just pressed eight, the number eight and I let it just go. And then I entered it and it actually went off the canvas because I didn't put any spaces in it. So it was just kind of the thing I was trying to be monotonous and make it look different than it ended up looking totally different because they went all the way off the canvas like nothing else that was on there, which I found kind of amusing. But not to say that art has to be unpredictable or or and monotonous to be artful, but [00:17:30] if you did the painting, if you did this interaction multiple times, do you think it would end up looking the same and does that even matter or not? Because the art is in the interaction. And in the idea anyway. Anyway.

Speaker 3: Yeah, I mean that's, that's, that's a good question as well. And, and I am really curious to see if people come up with unique ways to leave their mark or, or more interesting things. I, you know, another, another statement I, I intend to talk about or, or intend to [00:18:00] imply, um, in this piece is, uh, the, um, you know, internet add or whatever you'd like to call it. This, this 32nd attention span where we're all dealing with as we become more, um, avid media consumers. And it's actually, it's actually okay. And, and for me, if, if all the pieces end up looking the same and I am only working with one canvas for the duration [00:18:30] of the piece. Um, but even if I were to run several, I think actually, um, the similarity it seemed, uh, the similarity you'd see between them is almost the most interesting part. You know, to see a bunch of random strangers interacting for 30 seconds, not having a really involved, uh, artistic, uh, experience or intention behind it. To see that same pattern form across [00:19:00] a completely different set of people each time is very interesting. And I think it says a lot about our attention span or our internet use, neither of which I think is a bad thing. I'm very interested in both. Um, yeah, I don't, I don't think ATD is something to be fought in personally. I, it's something I relish in myself. So,

Speaker 2: um, actually that, uh, now I'm wondering, do you, are you going to have an ending point? Is there going to be at some point when you say, okay, [00:19:30] this painting is done, is there going to be a time limit or, and how many and how many chances do people get to shoot the gun? So such if you're not collecting identification information? Hmm.

Speaker 3: Yeah. No, you can, you can, you can go on and fire it as many times as you like. There will, if it got, if I got high traffic, I'll start to sort of have to deal with the issues of um, multiple input and, you know, maybe doing some calculation behind multiple people trying to control [00:20:00] it at once, which I think can lead down some interesting roads. Um, but in terms of an ending point, I haven't, I haven't quite thought of that far down yet. I'm not sure when it would be finished. I, I think there's, um, there's a critical limit to how much paint the canvas can take. I think. Yeah. I think it might sort of start slipping off of the plywood. It's like that. [00:20:30] So we'll see to start slipping. The painting is over. Yeah, I think so. Or once it gets too heavy and falls off of my studio wall and, yeah. So I don't, I don't know. I think I will want to be in my studio anytime it's, um,

active. Uh Huh. So for safety reasons, so there's going to be set times [inaudible]. Yeah, I'm just, yeah. I, I just feel nervous about sort of other people being in the space. It's a shared space. Um, [00:21:00] our studio spaces. I mean I have my own room, but you know, you never know who's wandering in there and I don't want anyone getting hurt. I don't want any damaged until the people are working on their own thing. Okay.

Speaker 2: There it goes. Laura's Naipaul gun going on in the other room. Um,

Speaker 3: I like that idea. I like that sort of, you know, image of, of working there and not, you know, hearing hearing was device sort of my be screaming robot. Sounds Fun.

Speaker 2: Sounds like. Yeah. It sounds like the constraints that you put on [00:21:30] it are kind of just gonna go evolve with the interaction, but I guess that's part of the interaction.

Speaker 3: Yeah. And that's part of the shared authorship. I'm very interested to see, um, to get more feedback on it and to see how people are reacting to it and what I could make more successful in terms of adding other control elements, which you asked before. I don't, I don't know. I'm a little technologically limited in what I can do personally. Um, so I'll, I'll have to think of if there, if there are anything else, if there is anything else people would like to [00:22:00] do with it besides shoot me, whichever. [inaudible].

Speaker 2: Hmm. So once again, this is the graduates and I'm talking to MFA student, Laura. Greg. So where is the painting in a go?

Speaker 3: Um, you mean when it's finished? Oh, I don't know. Um, I guess if someone wants to buy it, I'd sell it. I, I'm, I, um, am very attached to objects. I grow very attached to things and tend to keep [00:22:30] everything so it will probably enter my archive. Um, but I haven't, you know, because, you know, in particular it's a piece that other people have now made for me. So I see it as something that I'd like to keep in the long run. But I'm open to suggestion and money essentially if no money.

Speaker 2: Interesting thing is that usually the, um, these digital interfaces are used [00:23:00] to create something digital and therefore everybody has access to it. But if you're using it to create something that can only exist in one place, obviously people will have access to images. Of it, but the painting itself. Um, so are there any other projects that you're working on that you wanted to talk about briefly?

Speaker 3: Um, this, this is certainly my main one. My focus has been, um, on the aesthetics [00:23:30] of, of random noise and that sort of, um, an element I'm dealing with in the paintball piece. Sort of your, your lack of color control, which is incidental to some extent, but also what I'm interested in and um, yeah, the aesthetics of, of jitter and um, static noise is something I'm working on. Um, a hand, a hand painted painting of, you know, [00:24:00] a random color. That's something I've been working on for a long time except it gives me severe RSI, which is really frustrating. I feel like my, um, the work I've

done on the computer has really limited the work I've been able to do in painting, which is, which is sad. Um, but I, I'm definitely dealing with that aesthetic and almost everything I do. So, uh, beyond that I'm, I'm really enjoying building little creatures and learning a bit more about electromechanics [00:24:30] and um, just toying around.

Speaker 3: But yeah, it's, school is new for me, so I'm really just enjoying playing with things and, and experiencing new types of media in new, new ways to express, um, my vision. Is there a way that you would characterize your vision? Who are your I work in general. I know that's an enormous question. Don't ever ask an artist that is a very intimidating thing to ask. Oh yeah. I, I don't, [00:25:00] I don't think there's a way I, I've a lot of people tell me, you know, that I have a style and, and you know, clearly my style or it's not, and I'm told that a lot, but it couldn't, I could never personally quantify anything I would call my own style. Um, so sort of randomness is, is the one thread I'm working with. But beyond that, no. Um, not really. I know I'm not going to, [00:25:30] um, you have to learn to accept your limitations as an artist.

Speaker 3: So while I enjoy painting and while I enjoy photography that there is a threshold at which I feel like I won't ever be able to, you know, uh, paint like Davinci or whatever. Um, so I have to learn to work within my constraints and figure out the aesthetic that, um, is my own. So, uh, you know, I think computers are, [00:26:00] um, an interesting way to go about. I'm, I really love the idea of collaboration and I think all of my pieces do include, uh, collaboration and participation on behalf of the viewer. Um, which is, yeah, very, very important to me. And one of the reasons I'm enjoying so much working with people like Greg Niemeyer, um, is my, my mentor here and, um, Joe MCI and a lot of these, the other [00:26:30] new media artists I've had access to, I just am so intrigued by reactive artwork that is, um, yeah, that, that reacts to the viewer and allows the viewer to really change it.

Speaker 3: And not just in a way that they're, you know, oh, you can push a button and a, B or c happens and, you know, such a limited scope the way many interactive pieces are. I really want to, uh, give yours a feeling that they've [00:27:00] created a change in the art piece itself or done something to affect it or another. Yeah. Let the viewer do the work for you. Right. Cause a lot easier. Um, so, uh, when is this gonna be done? When can we actually play with it? Um, that's a great question. So it is, um, yeah, it runs locally. Um, at the moment it's going to take me at least a few more weeks to get the Internet [00:27:30] interactivity up and running. I should I, I'd say by the end of the year it should be, um, available by the end of 2007. Yes. By the end of 2007.

Speaker 3: So is there anything else you'd like to share? Uh, yeah, just wanna thank um, all the people who've helped me out. I've had a ton of help on this project. So, uh, number one is Chris Wu who runs and owns the only remaining legal paintball snore in the city. Um, that's SF paintball and he's really great. This has been super helpful and [00:28:00] is a paintball genius. Um, I have my advisor, Greg Niemeyer has helped me out a lot. Um, one of my co grads, Aaron [inaudible], um, has helped me so much with the mechanics

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of it. I don't know anything about building things. So he's been really great. Um, and Mickey K Cayman as well to help me with that. And um, my boyfriend, Braden poets, he saw me a lot with programming and yeah, just, just all the, all the faculty and all my other Grad students who have [00:28:30] just been tremendously helpful to me. So it's really been great. Thank you. Oh, and happy birthday to one Ra. Okay. Well thank you for joining us, Laura.

Speaker 1: Thank you, Stephanie. So if you'd like to check out a gun and shoot it sometime in the near future, can visit her website and Laura.gregg.com/ [inaudible] that's I a U R A G R E I g.com/. [00:29:00] Paintball. You've been listening to the graduates, a radio show dedicated to graduate student research every Monday from 12 to 1230 on k a l ex. My name is Stephanie Gerson. Please send comments to the graduates [inaudible] at aol.com that's the graduates, k a l ex@aol.com and during the next week, [inaudible] [00:29:30] [inaudible].