C L O U D S

PRESS INFORMATION

THE STORY OF A DIGITAL REVOLUTION

A generation of artists and hackers have emerged on the internet, inventing open source technologies for art and design. CLOUDS is an interactive documentary and a portrait of this community of digital pioneers explored through the lens of code and networks.

TOLD IN A REVOLUTIONARY FORMAT

A story about software, created using software, CLOUDS represents a new form of media. In its hybrid format, somewhere between a documentary and a videogame, CLOUDS allows viewers to follow their curiosity through a network of ideas and conversations about art and code visualized in immersive 3D generated worlds.

'Everything about this project is new' – Flavorwire

A FIRST FOR INTERACTIVE FILM DISTRIBUTION

For the first time, an interactive documentary will be made available online for audiences to download and explore at home on Mac, PC and in virtual reality with Oculus Rift.

CLOUDS has been presented at festivals and museum exhibitions for niche audiences at Sundance New Frontier, Tribeca Storyscapes, EyeO, SONAR, Ars Electronica and Digital Revolution at The Barbican Centre.

In June 2015, its creators will make an unprecedented leap in virtual reality distribution making a freshly engineered, internet-based version of CLOUDS available directly from its website, powered by the open distribution platform VHX. Collectors can have the film delivered on a custom designed USB drive.

CLOUDS EXPERIENCE

AN INTERACTIVE DOCUMENTARY IN VIRTUAL REALITY

CLOUDS runs on the next generation of head-mounted virtual reality displays: the Oculus Rift. This immersive interface offers an expanded perspective, activating the senses and transporting the viewer. Presenting this documentary on technology and creativity in virtual reality offers audiences a rich, multidimensional window into the future of cinema.

CLOUDS EXPERIENCE

A VISUAL DATABASE OF ART AND TECHNOLOGY

Creative coding is broadly considered the first global art movement of the internet age, and CLOUDS is the most comprehensive documentary on the work of these artists. A new research mode gives viewers an opportunity to dive deeper into all 10 hours of interviews with 40 artists around 150 topics. You can zoom out and see a map of the network that is CLOUDS, trace your route through the story and save it for further viewing.

Shot using DepthKit, a new visual format pioneered by CLOUDS creator, James George, that mingles regular camera footage with depth data from a Microsoft Kinect' – Hyperallergic

CLOUDS is spearheading a new direction for filmmaking... an
experience that's constantly concerned with the viewer as an
individual thinker, rather than one head in a mass audience'
 – Fast CO Design.

05 | QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q&A WITH CLOUDS CREATORS JAMES GEORGE AND JONATHAN MINARD AND KYLE CHAYKA
HYPERALLERGIC, JAN. 2013

KYLE CHAYKA: How did the idea for the CLOUDS documentary come about?

JAMES GEORGE & JONATHAN MINARD: The first series of experiments took place at the Art&&Code conference hosted by the STUDIO for Creative Inquiry at CMU in Pittsburgh, where we first met. The conference had invited many of the creative coding community who had been making experiments with Kinect to a one week intensive residency. Jonathan, who at the time was a Fellow at the STUDIO, had wanted to create interviews with the residents using the Kinect. James, who was one of the residents, had come with the intention of beginning an open source platform for filmmaking with the Kinect that involved combining it with an external camera. CLOUDS began there as a series of interviews with software artists at the conference. The software developed into what is now the DepthKit.

We originally intended to make CLOUDS as a non-interactive documentary rendered in RGBD, extending the approach you can see in our beta version. The fact that we were already visualizing this data in a virtual environment resembling a videogame, with unlimited possible camera positions and visual styles, had opened up our thinking. Then at some point earlier this year, at EyeO Festival, it dawned on us that the conversation we were recording had begun to resemble an interconnected network. CLOUDS is a story featuring a community of artists who collaborate on the internet and share code, and we wanted to represent this in some way. We believe form should reflect content on all levels, so it was not long before we committed to produce this as a non-linear, generative documentary.

KC: Your footage has a very particular aesthetic to it. Describe what kind of technological and artistic innovations we're seeing with CLOUDS.

JG & JM: RGBD is a format for capturing and visualizing photographic voxel data (color in X,Y,Z) – which are essentially pixels in 3D space. This data format has a unique malleability for visual re-interpretation, and real-time interaction. We increasingly see filmmakers using different kinds of sensors and machine vision techniques for bringing real-world data into virtual environments where live action and CGI merge. As advanced graphics processing becomes fast enough to render these worlds in real-time, it is possible to let viewers navigate these lucid cinematic environments, and become more immersed in a narrative experience.

KC: How did you select the interview subjects for the film? Were there any who were particularly challenging?

JG & JM: The documentary focused on the tightly knit social network of artists surrounding the open-source creative coding platforms like Processing, openFrameworks, and Cinder. These artists, through the process of making their own work and expressing their vision, are simultaneously deeply committed to sharing their process and tools with the community. The documentary selection process was to follow this connective tissue, the creative network that binds the artists together, from one to the next. In the interest of broadening the dialog, we also approached curators like Lindsay Howard and Paola Antonelli and critics and authors such as Bruce Sterling and Regine DeBatty to discuss the way they see this community's work affecting culture at large.

Being such an international and globally distributed digital community, finding moments to capture our interviews were rare. We were very fortunate to be welcomed by new media festivals such as Resonate and EyeO where many of these artists gather in person to connect and inspire one another. The majority of the interviews were captured during these festivals.

KC: What are your goals for CLOUDS in the future?

JG & JM: We want to complete our vision of an interactive documentary, an application that allows viewers to traverse the conversation database freely following their interests. We see the project as an archive, a snapshot of the community represented in a format true to the times. We'd like to present the archive in a few other ways, we are considering the possibility of creating a web based viewer featuring video snippets, as well as a book featuring high resolution rendered portraits and interview transcripts. It's important for these voices to be available for future artists and researchers to reference.

DIRECTOR'S BIOS

JONATHAN MINARD is a filmmaker and media historian who investigates culture through the lens of data and networks. His films consider how science fiction and technology shape our hopes and fears about the future.

JAMES GEORGE is an artist using code to discover creative potential in emerging technology. He created DepthKit, a widely used open source system for the application of depth sensors to cameras in 3D cinema.

DIRECTORS – Jonathan Minard and James George
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER – Golan Levin
PRODUCER – Winslow Porter
DESIGN DIRECTOR – Bradley G Munkowitz
MUSIC – R Luke DuBois
INTERACTION DEVELOPMENT – Elie Zananiri
INTERACTION DESIGN – Sarah Hallacher
LEAD VISUAL DEVELOPER – Lars Berg
STORY ENGINE DEVELOPMENT – Surya Mattu

PARTICIPANTS

Aaron Koblin	Kevin Slavin
Andres Colubri	Kyle Chayka
Bruce Sterling	Kyle McDonald
Casey Reas	Lauren McCarthy
Daniel Shiffman	LIA
Diederick Huijbers	Lindsay Howard
Elliot Woods	Marcus Wendt
Fernanda Viegas	Marius Watz
Golan Levin	Martin Wattenberg
Greg Borenstein	Memo Akten
Javier Fadul	Paola Antonelli
Jen Lowe	Patricio Gonzales Vivo
Jer Thorp	Philip Whitfield
Jessica Rosenkrantz	Rachel Binx
Jesse Rosenberg	Ramsey Nasser
John Maeda	Regine Debatty
Julia Kaganskiy	Shantell Martin
Julian Oliver	Sofy Yuditskaya
Karolina Sobecka	Theo Watson
Josh Nimoy	Vera Glahn
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For more information and downloads visit
http://www.cloudsdocumentary.com

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Available June 2015