



Creating amazing digital experiences

Industry experts explore the relationship between digital technology and creativity in a panel discussion sponsored by Autodesk.

Image courtesy of The Artery VFX.



Digital technology helps us tell stories in the most amazing ways. Whether it's simulated physical environments and objects, immersive experiences, interactive online games, or awe-inspiring videos, the possibilities are as endless as our imagination. Yet the process for creating truly memorable digital experiences can be elusive, requiring a mix of creative vision, technical expertise, and the application of the right technologies in the right proportions. So how do some of the industry's leading creative minds apply these elements to bring their clients' stories to life?



Alex Krawitz



Stephane Raymond



Vico Sharabani

At Creative Week New York 2013, panel discussion attendees got answers from three highly respected industry veterans. The panel, moderated by Autodesk Entertainment Industry Manager Maurice Patel, consisted of Alex Krawitz, VP Content Development at Firstborn; Stephane Raymond, Brand Experiences Producer at Moment Factory; and Vico Sharabani, ECD/CEO at The Artery VFX. These experts explained how they use digital production technologies to create compelling digital experiences, illustrating their remarks with inspiring examples of recent work.



The panel rated emotional engagement as the prime ingredient for a successful project. “Everything that we do as artists is intended to evoke emotion,” said Vico Sharabani, “and that’s where the greatest campaigns come out.” Stephane Raymond concurred, noting that: “An immersive experience needs to be instinctual; it needs to trigger both emotion and engagement.” Alex Krawitz builds emotional engagement by placing the consumer at the center of every media campaign his company creates. “We combined our production department with our strategy department to make sure that we’re listening to what consumers want and create content based around them,” Krawitz explained. Raymond summed it up by stating that a campaign’s return on investment is best determined by its “return on emotion.”



Image courtesy of The Artery VFX.

Digital technology powers the modern creative process, and the panel recognized the central and critical role that technology plays in their work. “We need technology,” stated Raymond. “We don’t exist if there’s no technology on our side. Technology enables our experience.” But simply throwing a wide array of technologies at a media campaign will not necessarily ensure its success. What matters most, the panelists agreed, is an understanding of the client’s brand and customer at the onset, prior to choosing the best tools for the job. Said Krawitz: “When we start talking to clients we don’t begin by defining what technologies we’re going to use. That comes much later in the process. We start by saying that we want to make something effective and useful for them and then proceed to determine what form the solution will take.”

Turning to an example of his company’s recent work, Alex Krawitz described the creative process behind a project for Redken, a provider of professional hair care products. “Redken wanted to give hair stylists an easy and cool way to let customers pick their hair color and style. So we created a mobile app called ‘The Style Station’ that did just that, solving a big problem for stylists.” With the Style Station, the stylist can start with the customer’s current color and style, and then proceed to select new colors and blends on screen. When the desired look is achieved, the app provides the stylist with precise information on which Redken products are needed to achieve that look. Through sophisticated computer graphics, the hair has an ultra-realistic look and feel. “It was pretty cool because we created all the hair in CG animation and it responds,” adds Krawitz. “If you shake the mobile device the hair actually moves on screen. You can even change it from straight to curly to see what that looks like.” While understandably

enthused about the technology, Krawitz reminded the audience that what mattered most was the emotional need the app fulfilled for users. In this case, the technology provided immediate and realistic feedback about how different hairstyles would actually look.

Vico Sharabani shared The Artery VFX's work on a music video starring singer-rapper Nicki Minaj, a piece that now exceeds 200 million online views. "The Nicki Minaj video is something we did a little over a year ago. It was a very complex project that included 3D scanning over a face, facial capture, pretty intricate designs, and the creation of a complex mechanical structure that morphs into Nicki's body. The process was quite amazing and it involved a cloud-based collaboration between artists and animators in North America and overseas." Sharabani cited this particular project as a prime example of how creative ideas are brought to life through technologies that in turn give rise to fresh new creative ideas.

For Stephane Raymond, technology is the wizard behind the curtain, the unseen magic that yields powerful results. He remarked: "What's really important for me is that the message gets through without the enabling technology being seen. Even though we work with technology all the time, we don't want the consumer to acknowledge it. We just want them to be immersed and amazed by it. So yes, it's all technological but at the end of the day it's all about the experience. We often say at our company that what we do is transform technical to magical."

Autodesk's Maurice Patel summed up the importance of the event: "Creative Week New York was a truly stimulating discussion by three highly accomplished creatives in our Industry. What they said is some serious food for thought as we all work to advance the VFX and digital design industry. Autodesk is excited to host events like this because this is where we get the direction and input to develop new and better tools for our customers."



See the Full Discussion from Creative Week New York 2013
Fake or Foto: Using Digital Technology to Create Amazing Visual Experiences