

Institute for Electronic Arts awarded pair of state grants

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Miatta Kawinzi reviews a virtual reality camera test during her IEA artist residency in July 2018.

ALFRED, NY – The Institute for Electronic Arts (IEA) at Alfred University has been awarded a pair of grants from the New York State Council on the Arts. One will help fund a visiting artist residency program, while the other will help the IEA research the feasibility of bringing virtual reality into the IEA studios for their artist residencies.

The New York State Council on the Arts, through its Electronic Media and Film (EMF) program, awarded the IEA a two-year grant at \$17,580 per year. The grant is for the 2020 and 2021 calendar years and is an increase from the \$15,000 per year the IEA received through the same program the last two years.

IEA Co-founder/Co-director Peer Bode, professor of Video Arts, said the grants will support the Experimental Projects Video Workspace Residency Program. The program brings visiting New York State artists to campus – typically on one- to two-week residencies where they experiment and produce new media art works. The artists also have the opportunity to engage with students in the studio and classes and provide special screenings of their work.

Bode noted the program benefits Alfred University faculty as well, “This is a great research opportunity for us because it puts us in direct contact with our new media arts colleagues...The visiting artists learn from us and we learn from them.”

The second grant, for \$10,000, was awarded by the New York State Council on the Arts EMF program through its Art and Technology Initiative. These one-year grants are awarded to institutions to support research and development of new programming, in Alfred University’s case the integration of virtual reality programming in the IEA electronic artists’ studios.

“New virtual reality technologies can be experimented with and expanded upon by visual artists,” Bode said. “The trick is to establish an access point and new studio practices with it with the intention to make art with it. Virtual reality is an exciting challenge for the arts.”

Rebekkah Palov, IEA research administrative assistant, wrote the proposal for the Art and Technology Initiative grant. She explained that Art and Technology Initiative grants aim to promote research into new media; the grant awarded to the IEA will examine the potential for utilizing virtual reality technology in the studio.

Among the initiatives the grant will fund are travel to other institutions where artists utilize VR technology, and research for acquiring equipment and programming needed to implement virtual reality technology in the IEA artists’ studios. “This will help determine how to expand what’s currently offered in our studios. After a year, we will determine the place for virtual reality in our studios. I believe it will work here,” Palov commented.

“The B.F.A. Video Arts program at Alfred University is highly respected and the oldest such program in the country. Over the years Video Arts has continually embraced new art and electronic-tool concepts,” Palov said. “Integrating virtual reality into the studio would be a natural progression for the IEA and School of Art and Design.”

Alfred University’s Institute for Electronic Arts is dedicated to the integration of electronic media within the fine arts disciplines through a focus on art making, research, and education. Established in 1997, the IEA focuses on the development of electronic imaging studios, to sponsor cross-disciplinary work, and to sponsor interactive artist residencies for the promotion of professional dialogues. The Institute supports evolving electronic studio research labs, hosts national and international conferences, and establishes artists’ residencies and workshops.