

REMIXX.sur.RE A youth new media exhibition and residency project

The REMIXX project is an evolution of the Gallery's commitment to supporting the production and presentation of digital artforms. It began as a response to Surrey's extraordinary youth demographic. Over 40% of Surrey's population is under the age of 30. A 2005 research study of Surrey youth's engagement with digital art reported 87% of youth aged 15-29 use a computer daily, and 74% either like or love digital artforms. 83% said they would attend a youth digital art exhibit at the Surrey Art Gallery within the next year if such an exhibit were offered. In response, the Gallery developed the concept of a youth media gallery to serve youth artists and audiences, and proposed to focus on screen-based culture.



In 2004, Sylvia Borda's "Every Bus Stop in Surrey" project demonstrated technology's capacity for effectively and efficiently exhibiting over 1000 digital photographs. Given this knowledge, combined with the opportunity of the TechLab as a site for production, the Gallery developed a concept for a youth digital photography exhibit and exhibition production residency. With the support of the Surrey Art Teachers Association, an advisory committee of Surrey media teachers was convened, and a call was issued through Surrey's School Board, to Surrey's 118 schools, for digital photographs of Surrey's people and places.

Funding to realize the project was received from the City of Surrey, Arts Now, Spirit of BC Arts Fund, the Vancouver Foundation, and

Young Canada Works through the Cultural Human Resources Council and the Canadian Museums Association. The TechLab was reserved for the summer for the youth residency with the final exhibit to be included in the Gallery's 30th anniversary program in the fall of 2005.



Professional media artists, with an interest in working with youth, were invited to serve as project mentors (Simon Levin, Henry Tsang, Leonard Paul, Sylvia Borda – and later, Jer Thorp) and the Gallery hired a youth project coordinator (Fiona Lemon). Two summer students were hired as digital artists in residence (Maimoona Ahmed – a student at SFU Surrey, and David Chen – a student at Emily Carr Institute) to produce the exhibit. A team of youth volunteers and correspondents were also recruited: Inder Nirwan, Paul Wittal, Mary Ayoub, Cesar Medina, and Emily Lampson – all Surrey high school students.

Outreach to the youth in Surrey encouraged contributions from 96 youth participants.



In order to meet the deadlines, and to create a productive experience for the youth in residence, the mentors, in discussion with staff, proposed the technical and physical architecture for the project. A curriculum of training was developed for both the volunteers and the interns, to be delivered by the mentors, or Gallery staff.



The original idea was to develop a methodology for presenting around 1000 digital photographs, but as the mentors, the interns and the volunteers began collaborating, the project evolved to become very sophisticated – to be interactive and include sound as well as imagery, and video and animation as well as still photography, and include text in the languages most commonly spoken in Surrey.



The TechLab became the hub for production – coding, conversation, emails, video editing, and animation. The youth made it their own by drawing on the walls and contributing their own artwork to this environment. The doors were always open to welcome visitors who

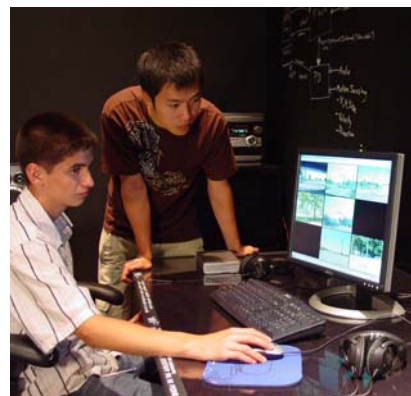
dropped by the Gallery, as well as youth participating in the project.



The Remixx team hosted a barbecue for all of the volunteers who contributed to the project over the summer, and invited their families and friends.



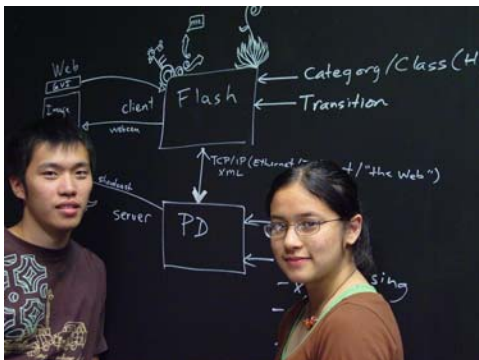
The residency began at the end of June, and was supposed to end at the beginning of September, but Maimoona and David, as well as the volunteers returned many times to add more content and assist the mentors and staff with the installation of the exhibition.



Inder Nirwan's interest in laptop composing contributed to the project. He created six original compositions that could be adapted into the audio programming of the exhibit.



Once the concept of the exhibit had been developed, and the materials gathered, the next step was coding all of the content in the database. This took weeks. It wasn't until the last week of the residency that the whole project came together. The TechLab hosted many visits from IT specialists, from representatives of gaming companies, to artists and educators.



The project used open source software during project development to save costs. The programs include Pure Data for all audio processing and motion sensing, Audacity for audio editing, Filezilla for FTP Server and Client, Firefox for web browsing, Tight VNC for remote system administration and Open Office for documentation. Leonard Paul, who developed the overall technical architecture of the project, says this about the sound: *"It creates real time audio remix using three audio loop intensities which adapt to image and motion sensing input. There are 3 variations for each music loop, each containing multiple songs. The software has an automatic BPM (beats per minute)*

detection, beat detection and remixes the six adaptive music songs in real time with speech samples in synchronization over the music. He goes on to say this about how the sensors work: "The project uses real time motion detection with blob/centroid motion detection from multiple USB camera inputs. The detection system provides X, Y coordinates and size of motion to the clients. The motion sensing has sensitivity tuning to compensate for noise in the video signal to make the motion detection more accurate. The communication with Flash and Pure Data is a simple bi-directional XML message sent over TCP/IP. The design is flexible in that up to 256 clients can run from the motion sensing server on separate machines for computational load distribution."



Mentoring artist, Henry Tsang says, *"We decided from the beginning that this was not going to be (another) slide show portrait of Surrey. After all, how could a predefined series of images with accompanying music represent an area with such a complex, rich and sometimes contradictory set of histories? And importantly, how would youth be reflected with their multiplicity of perspectives and experiences? As we worked on this "how," we realized that the original approach of using photographs submitted by Surrey school students needed to be augmented with more images as well as sound recordings, video, text and original music compositions, all made by local youth, of course. So we gathered more. Then we worked on how new meaning can be evoked through the combination and recombination and altering and shifting and overlaying of what we gathered. That was where the fancy computer programming kicked in. The REMIXX machine picks out, mixes up, blends, layers and serves on a high tech platter the tastes and textures of Surrey that are constantly evolving and changing. Just like this area and its people."*



The final exhibition utilizes nine screens, five computers, three web cams, FM broadcast, and DVD players.

Flash programmer, Jer Thorp explains the coding: *“We created this program, the Remix Client, from the ground up, using Macromedia Flash. The result is an adaptive, XML driven media mixer. Using a custom XML schema, the Remix team created a map of tags words or phrases that can be used to describe an image, a video, or a piece of text.”*



The Remix Client uses the links between these tags to create the compositions that you see exploring relationships between the media that can be both intentional and unintentional. The project uses 150 tags, 500 links, 700 images, 60 video clips along with text and audio clips to make an almost endless number of fascinating media compositions. Remix, indeed.”

Fiona Lemon, coordinator of the REMIXX project says, *“The collaborative process fundamentally shaped the project’s meaning and significance. The team was challenged to give expression to the enormous diversity of visions that emerged from the photographs, video and audio art-works.”*

Youth explored concepts as diverse as family, respect and community; difference, rebellion and disconnection; culture, pop culture and modernity; and urbanization, nature, and sense of place.



Instead of trying to define how youth perceive their community, REMIXX brings together ways of seeing and understanding Surrey. Different visions layer and recombine in order to create new meaning about Surrey’s people and places. Surrey’s youth are constantly seeking new ways to connect with and challenge the society in which they live. Youth involved with the project talked about the exciting potential of using technology to create a vision that would be different from what they saw as traditional representations of Surrey. Through REMIXX youth confirm they are up to the challenge of finding new ways to share their many perspectives and experiences.”



The opening of the exhibition was a fabulous celebration.



The mayor and three city councillors were impressed with how youth interpreted Surrey at

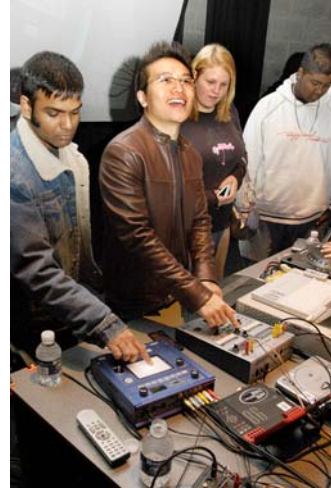
the exhibition’s opening in October 2005.



Visitors can learn a little, or a lot about the project. A comment box invites feedback on the project, or emails for follow-up. Handouts offer visitors the opportunity to take the information about REMIXX home.



The exhibition was accompanied "REMIXX TALKBACK." This event showcases digital culture – DJ and VJ artistry. Local youth were invited to bring original visual and audio files for a "jam session" at the end of the evening. This event, with the exhibit, celebrated youth driven digital culture in Surrey.



REMIXX contributors

Digital Photography, Video and Animation Artists

Adam Lee	Fiona Lemon	Kaytie Kilgour	Paul Samara
Aman Nauhria	Francisco Esperanza	Kaytie Kilgour	Paul Wittal
Amanda Davies	Geeta Dayal	Kelley Schultz	Peter Panagiotou
Amar Shikarpuri	Surveena Moor	Kelsey Corbett	Preet Grewal
Amrit Bhandal	Hardeep Gosal	Khun Khun	Priti Grewal
Ana Asunio	Harinder Dhothar	Larissa Sidal	Quinn Spicker
Angini Sami	Harleen Gill	Leah Robinson	Rachele Ram
Audrey Castro	Harman Badyal	Leanne Lim	Rajbir Minhas
Baljinder Gill	Harmeet Lehal	Lindsay Hunt	Rebecca Mumford
Banisha Sull	Ijaz Housil	Lisa Vanthof	Richard Chohan
Bonnie (Se Hyun) Kim	Inder Nirwan	Luvdeep Mandaher	Sara Caissie
Brad Binkley	Jannelle Rillorta	Maimoona Ahmed	Sarah Jastrzebski
Brandon Bhajan	Jaquiline Zwieggers	Maninder Singh	Shantel Hightower
Cameron Gibson	Jasmin Mahee	Manleen Randhawa	Shaun Quail
Cesar Medina	Jazzmine Martinez	Mary Ayoub	Silvana Avignoni
Chelsea Meinkina	Jennifer Andrews	Maryam Ateffi	Sonam Sekhon
Connie Chen	Jennifer Tjahjadi	Michael Gudewill	Sukhdeep Sahota
Curtis Straker	Jeremy Rillorta	Michael Tomboc	Taryn Sudul
Danaka Upham	Joseph Kim	Miriam Severson	Tori Lockwood
Dave Singh	Joseph McKenzie	Natasha Maurer	Viknesh Hajirakar
David Chen	Josh Antillon	Neil Hogan	Wassan Aujla
Diana Huynh	Karan Bains	Nicole Williams	Zach Sapers
Edric Dang	Karen Singh	Paige Dunn	Zafirah Khan
Emily Lampson	Kayla Ptolemy	Parminder Kailay	

Exhibition production team:

David Chen interned at the Gallery this summer as a youth digital media artists in residence. He studies at Emily Carr Institute, and is entering his final year in the Animation program. His main interests are in animation, motion graphics, and design. After graduating, he intends to work in the animation/film industry or pursue a career in visual arts. David also has an interest in Hip Hop Culture, especially in dance and graffiti elements; therefore he likes to blend influences from this culture into his own art practice.

Fiona Lemon is the project coordinator of REMIXX. She is a graduate intern at the Gallery. She is a recent graduate of UBC in Community and International Development, and is developing a practice working with youth-driven collaborative projects in the arts, community activism and recreation.

Henry Tsang is a professional artist, who served as a mentor for this project. His installations incorporate video, photography, language and sculptural elements and have been exhibited internationally. His work explores the relationship between the public, community and self in the new global order. He has experience in collaborations, collectives and public art projects. He also writes, curates occasionally, and teaches at the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design

Jer Thorp provided the flash action scripting code for REMIXX, and was one of the mentors. He is a media artist, freelance web programmer and educator from East Vancouver. His website, www.blprnt.com, is home to a variety of experiments in the field of algorithmic art, and has been featured in online and print publications around the world. Jer is currently an instructor in the Electronic Media Design program at Langara College.

Leonard Paul is a professional musician, media artist, and was one of the mentoring artists for REMIXX, and its technical architect. He was trained in computer science and music, and has received international recognition for his score for the film *The Corporation*. He has worked at Electronic Arts and Radical Entertainment on leading video games, and currently teaches video game and audio at the Vancouver Film School. He also performs his music internationally.

M. Simon Levin is a professional artist and was a mentoring artist for REMIXX and the youth correspondents. He has exhibited internationally, and creates interactive media works using sensors, GPS drawing, video and audio. He

has directed many community art and youth projects including the millennium project Collective Echoes. He currently teaches at UBC and Emily Carr.

Maimoona Ahmed interned at the Gallery this summer as a youth digital media artists in residence. She is a student at SFU's School of Interactive Arts & Technology TechOne Program. Her interest in digital media involves graphic design as well as the creation of short videos. In the future Moona plans to work with emerging technology and manage innovative projects. She sees great potential in the future of new media with the advancement of technology and the growing need for new art mediums.

Sylvia Grace Borda is a professional artist and provided training in digital media history and contemporary photographic art history. She has worked as a photographer, writer, curator and designer specializing in Internet based systems. She has exhibited her new media and photographic projects in Europe and Asia, and recently was artist in residence at the East Kilbride Arts Centre Gallery in Scotland. She teaches at UBC and the Emily Carr Institute.

Audio Artists

Original compositions: Inder Nirwan produced six original compositions with adaptive capacities
Sound recording and editing by Mary Ayoub, Leonard Paul, M. Simon Levin and Emily Lampson

Youth Photo and Video Correspondents and Volunteers

Mary Ayoub	Inder Nirwan
Cesar Medina	Paul Wittal
Emily Lampson	

Technical wizards

Leonard Paul: design of the technical architecture
Jer Thorp: coding of the Flash Action Scripting
Denis Gautier: design and implementation of the equipment installation
Information Technology Department, City of Surrey: support with equipment and network troubleshooting especially Mark Dietelbach, Wayne Wilson and Manh Che.

REMIXX.sur.RE Translations

Manjit Chima	Maimoona Ahmed
David Chen	Imelda Ahmed
Tian Tian	Heuiwon Jeong

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