

Observations from Artists In Residencies: Towards an Equal Collaboration

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1 INTRODUCTION

The common practice of categorizing artists and designers on one side, and scientists and engineers on the other, has led to a division of responsibilities. For the authors, the artist and researchers fulfill the same duty of raising questions, while engineers and designers answer them. However, the allocation of resources and financial support tends to be inversely correlated with the distance from the fastest-scaling product. This often results in software-related careers being better paid, perpetuating the stereotype of artists being financially disadvantaged. Consequently, artists may even internalize the belief that their work is unworthy of financial compensation. As HCI researchers turned to individual researcher-artist hybrid, the authors have experienced this firsthand. We hope this workshop shines lights on some alternative future.

2 ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Cheng Xu (floating.pt) is a tool maker, technology curator, and community organizer in San Francisco. She believes in people's fundamental desire to express themselves, and builds artifacts and experiences to facilitate creative expression and critical introspection. Before she became an independent artist, she took "day jobs" in the tech industry as engineer and designer, while exhibiting art projects and publishing in academic conferences. She received a MS on human robot interaction from Yale University and a MFA on interactive art from Carnegie Mellon University. Cheng was a resident at Pier 9, Stochastic Lab, and is currently in C/Change Creative R&D Lab Cohort at Gray Area.

Derrek Chow (derrekchow.com) has been both an artist, a researcher, and an artist-researcher. His research in Human-Computer Interaction includes novel input devices and DIY fabrication techniques. He designs, builds, and performs lighting experiences including nightclub/architectural/event lighting, audiovisual installations, and live performances. He also builds bespoke devices for individuals and is a design consultant. In the past he was a designer at [RNDR](#), and a HCI researcher at the NTU HCI Lab, ACME Lab at the ATLAS Institute, and Expressive Input & Interaction Group at the University of Waterloo. Derrek will bring his eclectic experiences and insights to inform considerations on both sides of collaborators. He will also provide his knowledge of literature and history of significant art-research collaborations to inform current practices.

3 COLLABORATION MODELS

3.1 Researchers' view

Due to limited resources, a common model is scientists creating tools, while artists utilize their creativity and know-how to produce exemplary objects. Artists, positioned at the end of the creativity chain, play the role of validating and elevating the tool. This pattern is seen recently at large scale. NFT turned abstract web3 into actionable, purchasable items. Plethora of generative images made AI research relatable. The latter example tells a cautionary tale that artists could also become the one that suffers from the exploitation of scraping companies. We hypothesize that involving artists early on in the tool design could benefit the process.

- Artists' perspective
We collected feedback from artists that participated in residencies on what did and did not work. The interviewees consisted of eight individuals (3 female and 5 male). The following list presents the identified features, without a specific order:
- Community
Desire for a tight-knit connection both within the residency and with the local community and art groups. Regular programming to introduce residents helps build a long term support system. In contrast, programs that have few group meetings didn't bring strong satisfaction. Low socializing requirement reduces anxiety for some artists.
- Know-how
Craft is vital in Bauhaus teaching and remains relevant in contemporary residencies. Both artists and researchers express a mutual desire to learn from each other's processes. However, the limited duration of residencies presents a significant challenge to fully achieving this exchange of knowledge.
- Commencement
Having a final exhibition greatly pushes the quality of output, although de-materialized outcomes like performances, participatory events, and research reports should be valued.
- Documentation
Residencies commonly require documentation for mutual benefits.
- Sponsorship
Residencies offering financial support and assistance with visa applications attract a broader talent pool.
- Publicity
Rarely offered, PR resources are highly attractive to artists in their early to middle career.
Help comes in the form of promotion on social networks, assistance with professional documentation, strategic timing of the final show, and visits from art critics and curators.
- Ownership

Buckminster Fuller maintained 100% ownership of his work as he migrated disciplines. Making Intellectual Property ownership at the beginning of residency is crucial.

4 PROPOSAL



Figure 1: Combining the views to make a wholistic understanding of the research problem

Researchers and artists, as the first two groups to encounter a new discovery, share a common drive of curiosity and a desire to showcase the potential impact of that discovery. Their distinct intellectual backgrounds provide different perspectives, as depicted in Figure 1. We propose that by leveraging the insights gathered from the previous section, where both groups were acknowledged and supported equally, a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the research topic can be achieved.

REFERENCES