THE USC SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS’ INTERACTIVE MEDIA DIVISION’S GAME INNOVATION LAB RECEIVES NEA ARTS IN MEDIA GRANT TO SUPPORT WALDEN, A GAME

NEA expands arts funding to video game design for the first time in 2012

APRIL 25, 2012 (LOS ANGELES, CA) – National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Chairman Rocco Landesman announced today that The USC School of Cinematic Arts’ Interactive Media Division’s Game Innovation Lab is one of 78 not-for-profit national, regional, state, and local organizations nationwide to receive an NEA Arts in Media grant. The Game Innovation Lab is recommended for a significant grant to further the development on Walden, A Game. Walden is part of the first class of video game projects to be given consideration by the NEA. The 78 Arts in Media grant awards total $3.55 million, and support the development, production, and national distribution of innovative media projects about the arts and media projects that can be considered works of art.

Tracy Fullerton, the lead designer of Walden and the Chair of the Interactive Media Division at USC’s School of Cinematic Arts said, “This is a historic moment for games as an artistic form. When an organization as prestigious as the NEA chooses to recognize video game designers, working in the field, as artists, it send a clear message about where the form is in its development.”

Walden, a game, simulates the “experiment in living” conducted by Henry David Thoreau at Walden Pond in 1845-47. The game allows players to walk in Thoreau’s virtual footsteps, attend to the tasks of living a self-reliant existence, discover the beauty of a virtual landscape, explore the ideas and writings of Thoreau and cultivate, through game play, their own thoughts and responses to the concepts discovered there. The project is directed by Fullerton.

The current Walden team includes Fullerton, Kourosh ValaNejad, Todd Furmanski, Luke Peterson, Shaun Kim, Kristy Norindr, Kyla Gorman and Logan Ver Hoef.

Chairman Landesman said, “While Americans across the country are experiencing art live and in person every day, NEA research has shown that more than half of American adults also consume the arts via electronic media. I am thrilled to announce these Arts in Media grants and look forward to the organizations’ efforts to reach ever wider audiences and create innovative new works of art.”
The NEA received 329 eligible applications under the Arts in Media category, requesting more than $36 million in funding. Grant amounts range from $10,000 to $100,000 with an average grant amount of $45,513 and a median of $40,000. The USC School of Cinematic Art’s Interactive Media Division’s Game Innovation Lab is among the 25 percent recommended for funding, a sign of organizational strength and creativity.

For a complete listing of projects recommended for Arts in Media grant support, please visit the NEA website at arts.gov.

ABOUT THE USC SCHOOL OF CINEMATIC ARTS  CINEMA.USC.EDU
The University of Southern California’s School of Cinematic Arts is one of the leading film schools in the world. Founded in collaboration with the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in 1929 over 80 years ago, the USC School of Cinematic Arts has fueled and mirrored the growth of entertainment as an industry and an art form. The School offers comprehensive programs in directing, producing, writing, critical studies, animation and digital arts, production, and interactive media, all backed by a broad liberal arts education and taught by leading practitioners in each field. Its more than 10,500 alumni are among the world’s most distinguished animators, scholars, teachers, writers, directors, producers, cinematographers, editors, sound experts and industry executives. Since 1973 not a year has passed without an alumnus or alumna being nominated for an Academy Award.

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