

a2ru Emerging Creatives Student Summit 2024

PLAY

The Impact of Play on How We Create and Relate to the World

Program design by RIT graphic design student
Carina Johnson '25

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WELCOME

WELCOME

Dear Students and Mentors:

Welcome to “PLAY: The Impact of Play on How We Create and Relate to the World.” We are delighted to work with you all, in partnership with the Rochester Institute of Technology team, and in particular to experience play in this beautiful new space, the “SHED” or Student Hall for Exploration and Development. The building, by design, enables exactly the activities we are gathered here to do together.

Please take this year’s theme to heart. We hope you embrace and embody an experience that helps you see a new way to do research, collaborate—and yes, study—one that enables you to use your whole body, spirit, and brain to help yourselves and one another make the world a better place. As you expand play beyond your childhood and beyond the playground, we hope you can find more fun, inspired, and free ways to show up in the world and do amazing things because of the new perspective of PLAY.

—The Team at a2ru



Welcome to RIT and the 2024 a2ru Emerging Creatives Student Summit!

We are very excited to be your host for this year's summit. We look forward to seeing what new ideas and fresh perspectives you generate around this year's theme, "PLAY: The Impact of Play on How We Create and Relate to the World."

PLAY and creative learning are inextricably connected and there is no better place to explore and create than in RIT's new makerspace called Student Hall for Exploration and Development or the SHED. It's a place to foster ideas, connect, create, and dare I say 'play.' We certainly hope you enjoy this immersive experience as you work with students from all over the country.

We are grateful for the leadership of RIT President David Munson and his longstanding work and advocacy of a2ru. Dr. Munson was one of the founders of a2ru during his tenure at the University of Michigan before bringing the partnership to RIT. For myself, as the dean of a preeminent professional art school within a technical university that's nationally ranked in the top 100, I am proud of our faculty and students who are actively engaged with a2ru's initiatives, especially around those with connections to technology, the arts, and design. I want to thank a2ru for its ongoing support in making this summit a reality here at RIT.

Yours in Creativity,

Todd Joki

Dean, RIT College of Art and Design

A2RU TEAM

A2RU TEAM



Maryrose Flanigan
Executive Director



Veronica Stanich
Research Programs Manager

Charisse Willis
Conference Director

Shannon Fitzsimons Moen
Associate Director

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS & CREDITS

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RIT and a2ru would like to thank its sponsors for their generous support of the 2024 Emerging Creatives Student Summit.

The Strong National Museum of Play

RIT Sponsors

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Special thanks to:

RIT's a2ru Emerging Creatives task force: Erica Hickey, Kelly Sorensen, David Schnuckel, Susan Lakin, and Keli DiRisio

RIT's Command+g design lab and its graphic design students: Carina Johnson (2025), Alena Arthur (2025), Bari Hayden (2024)

RIT's Student Hall for Exploration and Development (SHED) and its staff

RIT Libraries

SCHEDULE

DAY 1

THURSDAY, MAR 14

3:00 PM	Registration Opens	SHED Main Entrance
4:00 PM	Kickoff	SHED Room 3300
4:20 PM	Panel	SHED Room 3350
	Moderator: André Hudson, Dean, College of Science, RIT	
	Panelist: Shaun Foster, Undergraduate Program Director, 3D Digital Design, RIT	
	Panelist: Lisa Feinstein, VP of Advancement, Strong Museum	
	Panelist: Dr. Catherine Lewis, Director of Disability Services, RIT	
5:15 PM	Team Formation	SHED Room 3300
6:15 PM	DINNER	SHED Main Entrance
6:45 PM	Get to Know Your Team	Wallace Library
7:30 PM	Shuttle to Hotel	SHED Traffic Loop

DAY 2

FRIDAY, MAR 15

8:00 AM	Shuttle Departs Hampton Inn to RIT	
8:30 AM	Breakfast	SHED Main Entrance
8:45 AM	Kickoff	SHED Main Entrance
9:00 AM	SHED Tour	SHED Main Entrance
9:45 AM	Strategic Brainstorming 1	SHED Room 3300
10:30 AM	BREAK	
10:45 AM	Strategic Brainstorming 2	SHED Room 3300
11:15 AM	Strategic Brainstorming 3	SHED Room 3300
12:00 PM	Lightning Talks	SHED Room 3300
12:30 PM	LUNCH	SHED Room 3300
1:30 PM	Work Session 1	Wallace Library
2:30 PM	Team Charter	SHED Main Entrance
3:00 PM	BREAK	
3:15 PM	Work Session 2	Wallace Library
4:00 PM	CLOSE: Shuttle to Museum	SHED Traffic Loop
4:30 PM	Strong Museum	

DAY 3

SATURDAY, MAR 16

8:00 AM	Shuttle Departs Hampton Inn to RIT	
8:30 AM	Breakfast	SHED Main Entrance
9:00 AM	Kickoff	SHED Main Entrance
9:15 AM	Work Session 3	Wallace Library
10:30 AM	Conflict Management Strategies	SHED Main Entrance
11:00 AM	BREAK	
11:15 AM	Work Session 4	Wallace Library
12:30 PM	LUNCH	SHED Main Entrance
1:30 PM	Feedback Sessions	SHED
3:00 PM	Process Feedback With Peers	Wallace Library
3:30 PM	BREAK	
3:45 PM	Work Session 5	Wallace Library
4:45 PM	Check-ins	SHED Main Entrance
5:30 PM	Wrap Up	SHED Main Entrance
6:00 PM	Pizza Party	SHED Main Entrance
7:00 PM	CLOSE: Shuttle to Hotel	SHED Traffic Loop

DAY 4

SUNDAY, MAR 17

7:30 AM	Shuttle Departs Hampton Inn to RIT	
8:00 AM	Breakfast	SHED Main Entrance
8:30 AM	Kickoff	SHED Main Entrance
8:45 AM	Work Session 6	Wallace Library to SHED 3300
9:45 AM	BREAK	
10:00 AM	Project Fair	SHED 3300
12:00 PM	Wrap-Up	SHED 3300
1:00 PM	CLOSE	SHED

FAQS

FAQS

Where is the summit?

All summit events, with the exception of the field trip on March 15th, will be held in the SHED Building on RIT's Campus on One Lomb Memorial Drive.

Is there a dress code?

No. We recommend casual and comfortable clothing. Some students like to dress more professionally for their final presentation, but this is not necessary.

Will food be provided?

Dinner on March 14, breakfast and lunch on March 15, breakfast, lunch, and dinner on March 16, and breakfast on March 17 will be provided. As a part of our continued commitment to reduce environmental harm, all a2ru events are meat free.

How will the dietary restriction I included on my registration form be accommodated?

Any dietary restriction noted on your registration form has been accounted for in our food orders and we will make sure you get first pass on dietary-specific foods. Please look for an a2ru staff member at the beginning of mealtimes.

FAQS

Is this a fragrance-free event?

As part of our continued commitment to providing accessible events, we ask that summit attendees be as fragrance-free as possible during the summit. Commonly worn fragrances include: perfume, cologne, after-shave and scented personal care products such as shampoos, hair products, soaps, hand creams.

Will there be gender-neutral restrooms available?

There are two gender neutral restrooms on the 3rd floor of the SHED, directly across from the classroom you will be mainly working in.

There are at least three gender neutral restrooms on the first floor, where the whole group instruction and some of the meals will be. They are located near the second set of elevators, directly next to the ensemble studio.

At the Strong Museum, there is a family restroom located in the main lobby when you enter the museum. It can be used by anyone (single person included). You can find it on [this digital map](#).

Anything else I should know?

In an effort to reduce our carbon footprint, we will not be providing bottled water. There are water fountains and refill stations in the SHED building. A reusable water bottle will be provided to all summit attendees.

If I have questions, who can I contact?

Should you need any assistance throughout the weekend, please email a2ru Conference Director Charisse Willis at a2ruconnect@umich.edu.

FAQS

Is there a number I can call in the case of an emergency?

Yes. You can call a2ru Executive Director Maryrose Flanigan if you have an emergency: 734-486-5184.

I'm staying downtown Rochester. Will there be transportation to the RIT campus?

Yes, RIT will be providing shuttles to and from the Hampton Inn and Suites Rochester Downtown, (101 S. Union Street, Rochester) each morning and evening. Please reference the summit schedule for shuttle times.

If taking the shuttle in the morning, please arrive at the lobby of the Hampton Inn and Suites at least 15 minutes before departure time. A Rochester Institute of Technology bus will be outside the doors.

If not taking the shuttle, you will be responsible for your own transportation. Uber and Lyft are typically accessible quickly in Rochester.

CODE OF CONDUCT

CODE OF CONDUCT

The following guidelines apply to all attendees of the a2ru 2024 student summit.

INCLUSIVITY

a2ru values all people. We are committed to cultivating an inclusive environment and strive to be a diverse and equitable community in which people’s differences—whether race, class, gender identity, age, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, disability, or nationality—are valued and respected. Our primary goal is to advance the arts in higher education, but we recognize that higher education is, sadly, not accessible to everyone.

Universities have historically played a role in reinforcing our society’s ableist, classist, racist, and sexist structure. Because of this, we can no longer work just to create a space for our community to cultivate its passion for art and research in universities; we must also push for a world in which all people have the freedom to access those universities and the opportunities they afford.

CODE OF CONDUCT

UNACCEPTABLE CONDUCT

a2ru wants all participants to feel safe and respected at our gatherings. As such, we reserve the right to remove an individual from the student summit if they engage in any of the following actions:*

Biased, demeaning, intimidating, coercive, harassing, or hostile conduct or commentary, whether seriously or in jest, based on sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, marital status, veteran status, age, physical appearance, disability, power differential, or other identities producing or distributing photographs of presentations or materials without permission intentionally talking over or interrupting others as a means of disregarding/undermining/ obfuscating them (as distinct from unintentional interruptions motivated by enthusiasm or sudden insight) retaliation against reporting of conduct concerns or assisting in conflict resolutions personal attacks of any kind commenting on personal appearance.

*List taken, in part, from the American Association for the Advancement of Science Annual Meeting guidelines.

CODE OF CONDUCT

SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

Sexual harassment is behavior that demeans, humiliates, or threatens an individual on the basis of their sex. It is unwanted attention that a recipient experiences as offensive or disruptive to personal well-being. Sexual harassment can include crude behavior (such as offensive statements, jokes, or gestures); dismissive or insulting modes or address (such as referring to a woman not by her name but as “honey”); unwelcome sexual attention (such as unwanted touching or repeated requests for dates); and coercion.

Sex-based harassment also takes nonsexual forms when an individual is targeted because of gender or gender expression. It singles out some members of the community as acceptable targets and as unworthy of respect. Harassment never occurs in a vacuum. Frequently, alienating behaviors including race- and religion-based harassments intertwine with sexual harassment. Working to discern, for instance, whether a comment about appearance is aimed primarily at someone’s gender, sexuality, religion, or race mistakes how harassment can leave its impact on multiple levels.

CODE OF CONDUCT

SEXUAL HARASSMENT (CONT.)

If you have experienced any unwelcome behaviors, please contact the executive director to discuss next steps. She will not discuss your report with anyone else, and reporting the incident does not obligate you to pursue any further action. a2ru's goal is to listen, to offer support, and to jointly determine the best strategy for addressing the reported harassment. We recognize that we have limited ability to respond formally to charges of sexual harassment. However, we can ensure our community is a safe space, and we have an ethical responsibility to respond to reports of sexual harassment among our membership.

**Definitions taken from the Shakespeare Association of America "SAA Meeting Policies," as listed in the June 2020 SAA Bulletin.

PANELISTS, STUDENT PARTICIPANTS, AND MENTORS



André O. Hudson, Ph.D. — Moderator

Dr. Hudson has over 16 years of experience as a teacher, scholar, and administrator. His training and mentoring programs are dedicated to addressing the problem of antibiotic resistance; Dr. Hudson and his group focus their research on identifying and characterizing novel antibiotic-lead compounds and employ techniques and approaches from biochemistry, molecular biology, bioinformatics, genomics, and microbiology. In addition, the lab has ongoing projects addressing various aspects of amino acid metabolism, microbial genomics, and plastic degradation. Dr. Hudson received his Ph.D. in 2006 from Rutgers University under the supervision of Thomas Leustek and joined Rochester Institute of Technology in 2008. Dr. Hudson served as the Head of the Thomas H. Gosnell School of Life Sciences from 2017 to 2022 and served as the Interim Dean of RIT's College of Science from 2022-2023 and was appointed in a permanent role in May 2023.



Lisa Feinstein — Panelist

Lisa Feinstein is Senior Vice President for Strategic Partnerships at The Strong National Museum of Play. Lisa oversees the museum’s education, public programs, strategic partnerships, and advancement teams—all with a commitment to promote and leverage the power of play to transform lives.

Her work ranges from government, foundation, individual, and corporate giving, to working closely with educators and leaders in the video game and toy industries to develop playful educational programs for kids and play-based events for kids at heart. One of Lisa’s main focuses for the past five years has been the museum’s expansion and The Strong’s Powered by Play campaign, which raised \$75 million.

Before coming to The Strong, Lisa served as the Executive Director of Campaign Operations at SUNY Geneseo, having also worked with a variety of other not-for-profits in the region. Before SUNY Geneseo, she was an educator and writer—teaching literature and composition for nearly a decade. Lisa also served in the U.S. Army Reserves as a supply and small arms specialist.



Shaun Foster — Panelist

Shaun Foster is the undergraduate program director of 3D Digital Design and Professor at RIT, with a passion for next-gen interactive 3D and education. With 20 years of experience in 3D graphics and interactive educational design, Foster has led multiple teams and worked on numerous award-winning, national TV, advertising, and interactive education projects.

Foster's work is at the intersection of next-gen interactive 3D, education, and interdisciplinary collaboration. His expertise in technology, tools, and training is the result of his work on multiple grants, including the NY State Augmented Reality Tourism (2013-14), an NSF BioFuel Education (2015), and a HTC Vive (VR) grant (2016), VR Cary 2017, URMV VR Steroid Pathways Learning Grant (2018), EpicMegaGrant Online Learning (2019), Epic MegaGrant Virtual Production (Co-PI 2020), VR Eye Tracking Grant NVidia, IBM-NotreDame (2022), and Meta (2023).

Foster is an Authorized Unreal Instructor (2021-Present), the recipient of the EPIC Games ICVFX Fellowship (2022) and the Provost Innovative Teaching with Technology Award (2023), highlighting his dedication to pushing the boundaries of technology and education. Currently focused on XR/VR Eye tracking, AI, and Virtual Production, he continues to find enthusiasm by connecting design thinking and creativity to find new potentials for next-generation learning, including posting training on his YouTube channel.

His recent work deals with the convergence of 3D digital design with emerging Generative AI and other large language tools toward improving and integrating with higher education.



Dr. Catherine Lewis — Panelist

Dr. Catherine Lewis (she/her) serves as Director of Disability Services at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), where she is honored to lead a socially just team committed to ensuring Disabled students have equitable access and empowered experiences in higher education. Having worked in higher education for over a decade, Dr. Lewis is committed to the idea that access matters in all aspects of the college experience and has held accessibility-focused leadership roles in college admissions and community engagement departments. Prior to centering her career fully on accessibility, Dr. Lewis maintained an active career as a flutist and music educator. A passionate advocate of integrating disability advocacy and the arts, she received a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship to research the role of art in social activism around the globe. During this 2008 fellowship year, Dr. Lewis founded the Music of Difference project: an international concert series designed to facilitate creative conversations about disability and diversity. Two Music of Difference albums have since been released and the project has been presented at venues including Harvard University and the VSA International Disability Arts Convention in Washington, DC. An alumnus of Rice University and the Eastman School of Music, her doctoral research explored intersections between disability advocacy and the arts. Dr. Lewis is a frequent guest lecturer at colleges and universities across the United States, and teaches courses on disability, the arts, and inclusive higher education at University of Rochester and Harvard University. Recently, Dr. Lewis and her team at RIT were awarded a grant by Microsoft to launch the Disability Leadership and Scholarship Program, an innovative initiative designed to intentionally recruit and retain cohorts of Disabled college students.

STUDENT BIOS

Alana Aamodt

Rhode Island School of Design

Alana researches + creates experiences rooted in joyful experimentation and playful collaboration. After studying physics for her undergraduate degree, she co-founded Momentix Toys: a toy company dedicated to helping kids practice design and engineering skills through play. Momentix leverages the creativity of chain reaction machines with the goal of diversifying STEM fields. Still fascinated by all things mechanical and kinetic, Alana continues to explore the power of play as she pursues a Masters in Industrial Design at the Rhode Island School of Design. Current research interests include repair+maintenance, play design for adults, material semiotics, and kinetic sculpture.

Alex Abair

University of Florida

Alex is a photography MFA student at the University of Florida. Born in Wisconsin, he went on to study anthropology and archaeology in Oregon. He transitioned careers into botany and computational genomics. Graduate work brought him through Oregon, New Mexico, and ultimately Florida. He continues to publish on plant systematics while developing his art practice with photography and generative AI trained on his images. He spends his free time in the wild photographing biological oddities.

STUDENT BIOS

Eric Acuña

University of Texas at San Antonio

Hello my name is Eric, you can call me E, or Evie. I use He/Him/They/Them pronouns. I am a non-disciplinary artist with a concentration in time-base media. This is my first year at UTSA in the MFA program. My interests are kinetic energy, electronic sound, or anything that transmits frequency. I experiment with tracing out the rhythm of movement from an array of explorations and reflections that are shaped by my curiosity and passion for innovation. I enjoy studying and interpreting geometric and topological properties of real-world data for building experimental machine learning models that explore key aspects of Phenomenology and Ecology.

Efe Akusu

Virginia Tech

My name is Efe Akusu, and I'm currently pursuing a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Technologies at Virginia Tech. My academic journey has been a thrilling exploration of the intersection between creativity and technology, with a focus on UX & XR design. This field allows me to blend artistic expression with technological innovation, creating digital experiences that are both functional and visually captivating. Before now, I've worked in the media and entertainment industry as a motion graphic artist.



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STUDENT BIOS

Martina Alcaino Manzor

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

Reading, learning, doing. Being from the countryside, my entertainment has always been art. This passion, combined with an interest in math and history, has evolved into my career. Architecture gives me a space to design for the people, with an insight that only a career such as this could give.

Saurabh Anand

University of Georgia

Saurabh Anand (he/him) is Assistant Writing Center Director and Rhetoric and Composition Studies doctoral student in the Department of English at the University of Georgia. His work has/will appear in Writing Center Journal, Journal of Writing Analytics, and the College Composition and Communication Journal. Community Literacy Journal, English Journal, Washington Square Review, and Journal of International Students have published his creative work on minority language learning, teaching, and communal experiences. In 2023, the International Writing Center Association honored him with the Future Leader Award. His writings aim to expose his vulnerabilities, practices, and enactment of his racial, sexual, linguistic, and ethnic identities that disrupt and challenge heteronormative pedagogies in Writing Studies aimed toward queering normative ways of understanding negotiations of identities in tutoring practices and research.

STUDENT BIOS

Sam Burgoyne

Rochester Institute of Technology

Hi! My name is Sam Burgoyne, and I am currently a fourth-year student at RIT, pursuing an accelerated BS/MS degree in Game Design & Development with a minor in Mathematics. In my free time I like to play games, play soccer, play cello, hike, and rock climb. I'm also very into Esports; I founded my own team back in high school and I am now the president of RIT's Esports Organization. I've had a lot of experience with many different disciplines, from digital art, to programming, and project management. I look forward to working with you all during this summit!

Emilie Chiofalo

Penn State

The opportunity to participate in the 2024 Emerging Creatives Student Summit on the theme of "Play" would provide invaluable benefits to me as an architecture student in a leadership role. As the third-year class representative deeply involved in extracurricular activities with NOMAS, APX, AIAS, and the Beehive student tutors, I strive to harness the power of collaboration, creativity, and innovation in all my pursuits. The summit would allow me to expand these skills while gaining new perspectives on the relationship between play and creativity. As the class representative, I am the voice of the student body, a liaison between the students and the faculty, and a mentor to my fellow peers. I have held this position over the last three years, and I have noticed my classmates gravitate towards me for advice. Attending this summit and learning the best practices in cross-disciplinary teamwork and receiving mentor feedback will also allow me to lead groups more effectively in my current roles. Connecting with students of various disciplines as we tackle the concept of "play" together through arts-integrative projects would push my boundaries as both a leader and creative. I would utilize this experience to spark new ideas, designs, and

STUDENT BIOS



solutions leveraging unstructured play. I have recently re-emerged in the Beehive student tutors program and I am involved in professional events coordinating in APX. Both of these activities involve leading classmates in different majors and disciplines. Interdisciplinary exposure and training at the summit would serve me well in translating my passion across communities. As I eventually design service projects throughout my academic career, the lens of “play” provides a refreshing filter. Attending this summit means stepping outside my comfort zone to play across fields, gaining insights to bring back to everything from architecture models to community initiatives as both an emerging creative and pioneer in connecting spaces.

Vaibhavy Darshan

Rochester Institute of Technology

Hello, I’m Vaibhavy (vae-bh-ve), and my pronouns are she/hers. I’m a second-year game design and development major, passionate about extended reality. I’m deeply passionate about creating immersive storytelling experiences through my exploration of Augmented and Virtual Reality technologies. Outside of my academic pursuits, I enjoy listening to Bollywood music, watching movies, and diving into various gaming adventures. I’m excited about the opportunity to connect with fellow innovators at the summit and explore new avenues in the world of XR.

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STUDENT BIOS

Brandon Davis

University of Texas at San Antonio

Senior Music Composition student minoring in Music Technology. Interested in academic projects, VR technology, and studying abroad.

Kaitlin Deans

The University of Alabama

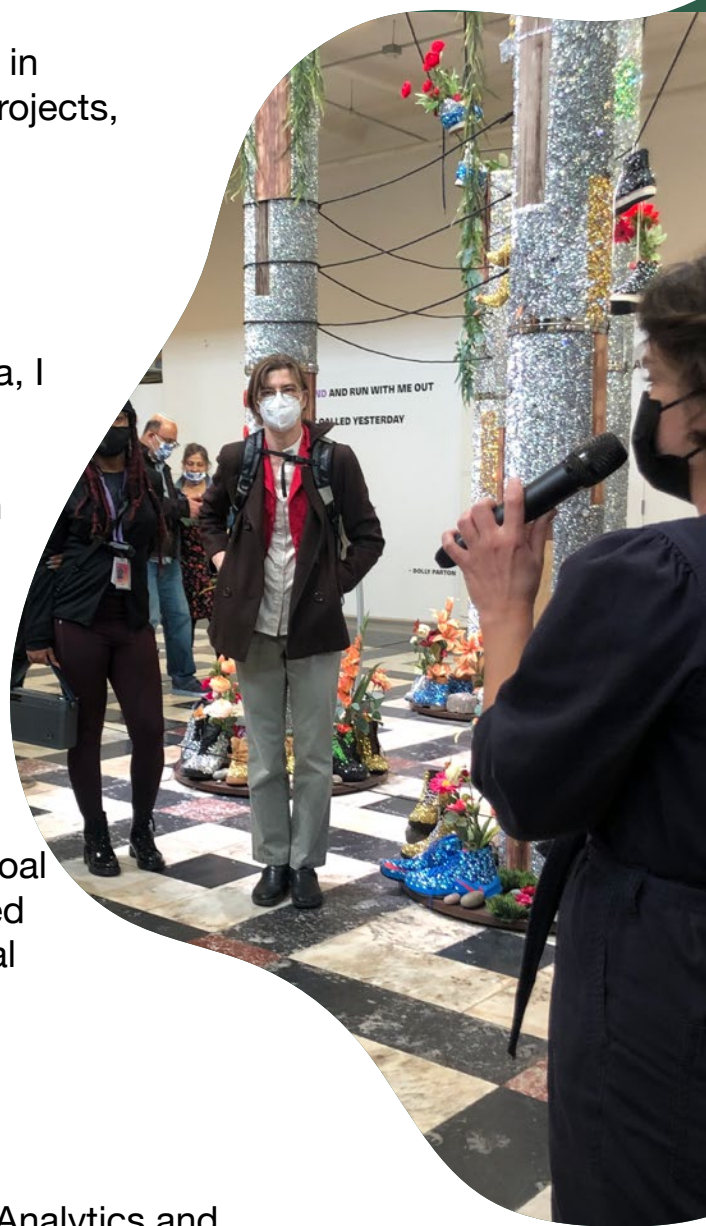
I am a freshman at the University of Alabama, I am 19 years old, originally from Bentonville, Arkansas. I am dual-majoring in biology and music, and I am minoring in the McCollough Institute for Pre-Medical Scholars and the Randall Research Scholars Program.

I have been singing for 10 years, performing in various plays, musicals, and recitals, and I eventually joined the Bentonville High School Chamber Choir, becoming President of the entire choral department in my senior year. My ultimate goal is to become a surgeon, a goal I have worked towards by obtaining my Emergency Medical Technician certification.

Nhi Dong

University of Cincinnati

I'm Nhi Dong, a junior majoring in Business Analytics and Marketing at University of Cincinnati. With a profound interest in the realm of creativity, I'm thrilled to explore the theme "PLAY: The Impact



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STUDENT BIOS

of Play on How We Create and Relate to the World” at the conference. As an international student, I’m eager to contribute a global perspective, I believe that by embracing innovation and diverse experiences, we can collectively shape the future of the world. I’m looking forward to engaging with everyone to uncover new ways we influence and create a dynamic world through the scope of “PLAY.”

Emily Dustman

University of Georgia

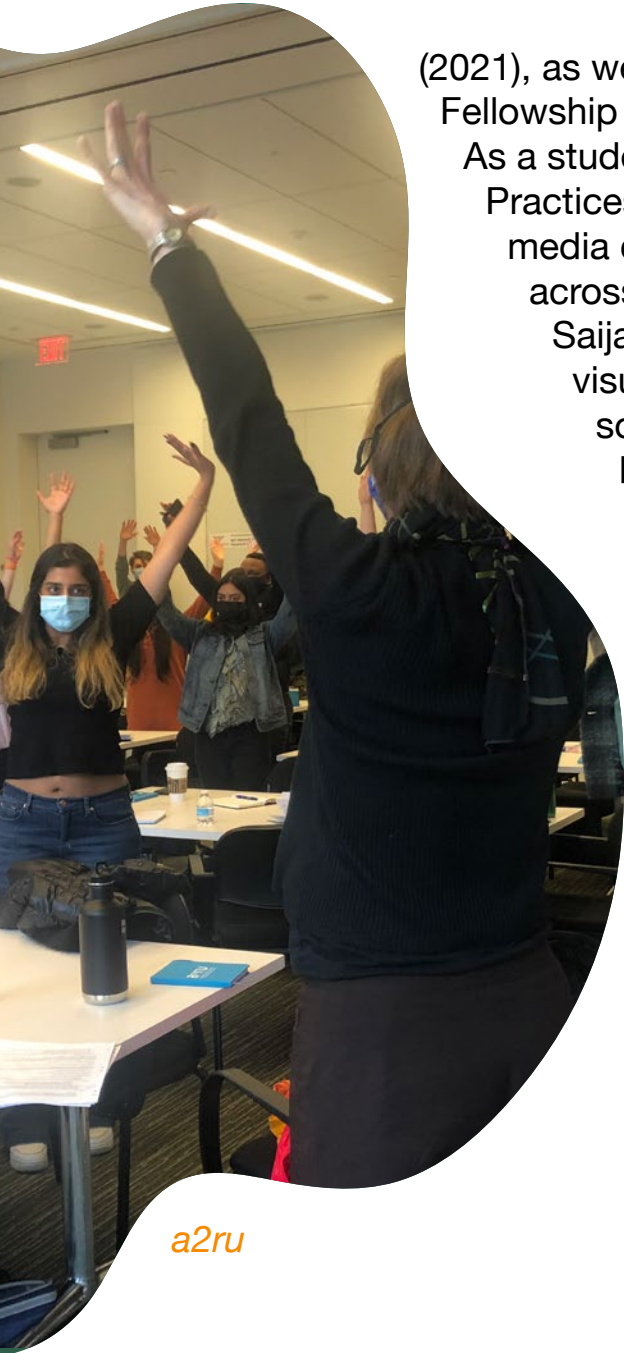
Emily Dustman is an artist and scientist who has been published in various journals for research regarding species of conservation concern. She is a professionally trained scientific illustrator and instructs sci-art workshops for botanical gardens and exhibits at science centers around the country. Emily works in many mediums and is inspired by the natural world, textures, colors, found objects, and whimsy. She is currently pursuing her PhD at the University of Georgia where she is exploring the role of art and emotion in science communication.

Saija Fantauzzi

University of Maryland

Saija holds an associates degree in Veterinary Science from Seneca College, Toronto, as well as her Bachelors of Fine Arts, from Maryland Institute College of Arts (MICA), Baltimore. A first year Masters of Architectural Design student at University of Maryland College Park, Saija’s work is multidisciplinary in nature. Interning for companies such as Ralph Applebaum Associates, Present Company, and Luke Works Inc, her abilities cover multi facets of design, fabrication, education, and research. Saija has been awarded the Jill Mino Memorial Award (2016) for her work in contemporary dance, and the Entrepreneurial Apprenticeship Award

STUDENT BIOS



(2021), as well as Philip E. and Carole R. Ratcliffe Foundation Fellowship (2022), for her work in Architectural design.

As a student, Saija has worked for MICA's Emerging Practices Lecture Series as their poster designer and media coordinator, and has been a teaching assistant across humanities, and architectural design courses. Saija's background in performing arts, science, and visual art has given her architectural studies depth; some days you'll find her casting concrete and building walls, others you'll find her nose deep in a design project or a piece of writing. As a student of architecture Saijas work is often collaborative focusing on life scale design, the built environment, and material and cultural context.

Reese Gabrielson

The University of Alabama

My name is Reese Gabrielson and I am from Knoxville, Tennessee. I currently major in Finance with a minor in Philosophy. I am a member of the Alabama men's crew team and I am a leader in the ABXY gaming club and the Will Nolan Film Club.

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STUDENT BIOS

Luis Garcia

University of Maryland

Luis Garcia is a 3rd year lighting and media Peruvian-American Graduate student from the University of Maryland. He has a background with programs such as After Effects, Unreal Engine, and Augmented3D. His goal as an artist is to open doors for the next generation of young Latinx designers.

Jana Ghezawi

University of Georgia

Jana Ghezawi is a first year MFA student at the University of Georgia, Lamar Dodd School of Art. Jana is a multidisciplinary artist working with oil paint, papier mâché, drawings, scriptwriting, sculpture, and experimental interactive art installations. Her research interests include game theory, ancient art history, mythology, animation, storytelling, and image making. In previous work, she has explored interactive installations where the audience could take the role of a fictional character whose identity was based on socially acceptable deception techniques used in gameplay (lying, cheating, bluffing, etc.) that would otherwise be considered morally wrong outside of the game's perimeter.

STUDENT BIOS

Jordan Gifford

Rochester Institute of Technology

An Industrial Design student in fourth year of study at Rochester Institute of Technology, with a minor in Mathematics. Has developed numerous concepts over the course of studying, which utilizes child-born creativity to develop fun yet engaging solutions to problems. Hopes for a2ru to be a step along the way to entering the toy design industry after graduation.

Eva Ginns

University of Maryland

Eva Ginns is a senior at the University of Maryland, studying Immersive Media Design with a minor in Disability Studies. Her work has focused on incorporating playful and interactive elements with creative experimentation and whimsy. Outside of academics, she is the Social Director for UMD's Gamer Symphony Orchestra, in line with her desire to bring together communities, as well as her love of music and video games.



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STUDENT BIOS

Gala Gonzalez

Virginia Tech

I'm a transnational electronic artist and researcher from Buenos Aires, Argentina. I'm currently enrolled in the iPHD program in Human-Centered Design at Virginia Tech and my work focuses on the development of health-related technologies that seek to promote the empowerment of vulnerable communities. My current research studies the human voice and the restoration of speech for individuals experiencing significant voice transformations. I aim to assess identity restoration using AI-generated voices and interactive systems enabling individuals to engage in singing. At Virginia Tech, I lead the international communities of PD-L2Ork laptop orchestra, an open-source software for telematic performances that allows musicians and programmers to engage in live performing.

Lekha Gowda

Georgia Tech

Hey! My name is Lekha Gowda, I'm a 4th year business major and computer science minor at Georgia Tech, originally from NJ. I've always loved the arts and grew up with dance, theater, and music. In college, I started modeling and am signed in Atlanta, NYC, and LA. I plan to model full time post graduation! I'm also a professional henna artist, enjoy fashion/sewing, and worked in music as an A&R researcher. As an advocate for the arts, I started an organization called "GT Creatives," that is dedicated to bringing the arts to such a STEM dominated university.

STUDENT BIOS

Faith Gowen

University of Michigan

Hi, I'm Faith! I'm currently a first-year master's student specializing in human-computer interaction with a certificate in spatial computing at the University of Michigan. I have always gravitated towards interdisciplinary study, and I completed my bachelor of science in computer science and visual arts at Duke University to further explore my niche in STEAM. The theme of this conference is especially exciting for me as someone who pursues spatial computing, a field typically recognized for gaming. In my future career, I aim to help evolve spatial computing for everyday use cases, and create immersive experiences that are inclusive and accessible to diverse users.

Massimo Greco

Rochester Institute of Technology

Massimo Greco is an artist and director based in New York. They are currently attending Rochester Institute of Technology, earning a BFA in Photographic and Imaging Arts. Massimo's photographic and experiential work predominantly focuses on the performance of identity in the contemporary digital world that transcends the spaces of photography, VFX, and fine art. Through leading an aesthetic collaboration, Massimo explores the creation of iconography.

Traci Westcott

STUDENT BIOS

Rebecca Greene

Rochester Institute of Technology

Hi! My name is Rebecca Greene and I am a junior majoring in Game Design and Development at Rochester Institute of Technology. I love creating and making all kinds of different things, especially if it is with art, technology, video games, or if I am learning something new.

Braulio Gutierrez Gonzalez

University of Texas at San Antonio

I'm an MFA candidate at the University of Texas at San Antonio and my concentration is within New Media which specializes in the movement throughout time in art. I primarily work with interactive works where the viewer is placed to move and interact with the piece to get a different perspective of the experience.

Ghida Hammoud

University of Michigan

Ghida Hammoud puts an innovative foot forward. She created a Photobook that merges photography and bridges language barriers for Arab Americans. Ghida is known for her empowering leadership skills. Her track record in innovation management allowed her to practice as a TA for a course in Integrated Product Development and as a Welcome Leader for The University of Michigan where she studied Innovative Product Development to receive her Bachelor's Degree in Art and a Minor in Entrepreneurship. Ghida assembles business from an environmental standpoint, expecting to enforce a circular economic model for products made by her startup company iDiga, innovate today, paradise tomorrow.

STUDENT BIOS

Her active participation in innovation events like The Detroit Design Jam, The Exploring Post at the Smith Group, and Initiative for Inclusive Design organization showcases her commitment to driving change. Her photography work, Coming of Age has been exhibited at the Stamps Gallery where she also worked as a Gallery Assistant. Ghida often studies and goes on adventures based on spontaneity to nearby Lakes to far away Museums as a case study into warm moments and nostalgia as exhibited in her Instagram photography page @photogra_gh and in her portfolio at ghidahammoud.wordpress.com. She is the founder of Paradise Shoppings, transforming thrift clothes and crafting custom prints for businesses and the community.

Zoii Henr

Rochester Institute of Technology

I am a fifth-year international student from Jamaica studying Integrative Medical Design in RIT's School of Individualized Study (SOIS). I consider myself a creative engineer and critical maker. My passion is to redesign healthcare spaces and innovate medical devices for atypical minds and bodies. I have expertise in visual storytelling, product prototyping, and 3D modeling. My studies have involved 3D Prosthetic Application, Biomedical Engineering, Industrial Design, and Medical Illustration.



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STUDENT BIOS

Laurel Holcomb

The University of Alabama

Hi! My name is Laurel. I'm from Georgia but attend the University of Alabama. I'm majoring in International Relations and minoring in Chinese. Some of my favorite things are listening to music, working out, talking to friends, and interacting with my church!

Emma Houston

Penn State

Hello! I'm in my sixth year at Penn State studying Art History and Sculpture. I've always been interested in making things, but it wasn't until my fourth year that I started taking art classes, and my fifth year that I was encouraged to apply to the BFA program. I've done a lot of work recently to understand what it is I make art about. I aim to invoke curiosity, joy, and comfort through my sculptures and the best way I've figured to achieve those goals is through play. Most of my pieces are large and interactive, the ones that aren't still tend to have a playful nature to them. I'm very excited to develop my understanding of play from different perspectives to employ onto my work!

Nelson Hsiao

Texas A&M

I'm Yi-Cheng (Nelson) Hsiao, a Graphics Programmer specializing in Graphics Programming, VR and AR. I was a Graphics Software Engineer at HTC VIVE. Now, I'm studying Computer Graphics at Texas A&M University. I'm passionate about turning innovative ideas into reality, pushing the boundaries of graphics and XR.

STUDENT BIOS



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Leah Humenuck

Rochester Institute of Technology

Leah Humenuck is a PhD candidate in Color Science at the Munsell Color Science Laboratory at Rochester Institute of Technology. Leah's research interests are in imaging, reproduction, and lighting for cultural heritage. She is also a book and paper conservator which informs her color science research of archival items. Leah holds a BS in Chemistry from Sweet Briar College and an MA with honors in Conservation from West Dean College of Arts and Conservation.

Christina James

University of Georgia

I am a PhD student in the Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Department at UGA. I am particularly interested in the way problems are solved and projects are developed across fields in the hopes of creating an interdisciplinary undergraduate artist-scientist training program.

Olivia Kendall

University of Maryland

I am a senior at the University of Maryland studying Studio Art with a concentration in Graphic Design. I aspire to work at a Graphic Design Firm that specializes in designs that

STUDENT BIOS

promote inclusivity and accessibility. Outside of school, I enjoy working on personal art projects. My favorite medium at the moment is textiles and crochet. I enjoy making different garments, accessories and abstract sculptures with these materials.

Yohermry Kpodo

Rochester Institute of Technology

I am a multidisciplinary designer with a passion for technology and creativity. My hope is to blend technology and the arts to create experiences that provoke thought and change.

Leann Kuchler

University of Rochester

Hi I'm Leann! I am a senior at University of Rochester double majoring in Computer Science and Digital Media Studies, with a passion in UI/UX Design and Human Computer Interaction. In my free time, I like to watch movies and do creative activities like writing, drawing, and crocheting.

Dhruv Kulkarni

Georgia Tech

Hey guys! My name is Dhruv Kulkarni and I'm a student studying literature, media, and communication at Georgia Tech. I'm interested in environmental & conservation education and ways to make it interactive. I love reading, origami, photography, and foxes; and also do tech theatre.

STUDENT BIOS

Max Ladrix

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

I'm a student in the areas of music, musicology and aesthetics. I'm really interested in cultural studies with a Latin American perspective. Also I'm a trumpet player and dedicate most of my life to art.

Yeaji Lee

Virginia Tech

Yeaji Lee is a Ph.D. student at Virginia Tech, specializing in Sonification, Voice Agents, and Robotics. With several years of experience in the tech industry, including roles at LG, she has led projects in system management. Yeaji holds an MFA in Art Technology from Sogang University.

Sui Liu

Rochester Institute of Technology

Hello! I'm Sui, a 4th year Industrial Design student with an immersion in Music at RIT. I am from Brooklyn, NY and Oaxaca, Mexico. I love public space design, making music, learning languages, racing and basketball. I'm a sucker for the kind of facts you learn from a ~20 minute educational Youtube video about city design, geography, transportation, economics, history, etc.



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STUDENT BIOS

Lucia Li

Rhode Island School of Design

Lucia is a California-born designer, illustrator, and student at the Rhode Island School of Design who is particularly passionate about toy and soft goods design. While they are currently studying industrial design with a concentration in Nature, Culture, and Sustainability Studies, they love to bring more playful, illustrative qualities to their design work. Ultimately, they hope to explore design as a means of communication and education, with particular interest in youth & children's education, sustainability, and environmental justice. Outside of studio they can be found sketching, collecting, or wandering the great outdoors.

Rainamei Luna

Penn State

Rainamei Luna is currently a Ph.D. Candidate in Music Education at Pennsylvania State University. She holds a B.M. in Music Education from the Eastman School of Music and received a M.A. degree in Music and Music Education from Columbia University. Prior to her doctoral studies, Rainamei taught K-6 general music and choir and maintained a private piano studio. Her research interests revolve around inclusive pedagogy, play in higher education, and lifelong learning across multiple generations. Current research projects include program development for individuals with disabilities, embedding popular music pedagogies in adaptive music classes, and intergenerational music-making.

STUDENT BIOS

Hryso Maheras

York University

Hrysovalanti Fereniki Maheras (Hryso) is a computational art practitioner specializing in generative audiovisual art simulations and electronic kinetic art. Currently a Ph.D. student in Computational Arts at York University, she also serves as a studio instructor for audiovisual arts. Hryso actively collaborates with fellow digital artists, engaging in live coding performances. She has showcased her work through recent performances and art installations at prominent venues, including LAZNIA Center for Contemporary Art, Nuit Blanche @Toronto, the International Conference for Live Coding, International Conference for Generative Art, Congress @YorkU, and Exit Points @Array Space.

Aidan MaKinster

Rochester Institute of Technology

I am a School of Individualized Study student at Rochester Institute of Technology, focusing on engineering applied through entrepreneurship so that one day I can work with smaller businesses or start my own business in a product design-oriented role.

Traci Westcott

STUDENT BIOS

Maxwell Mandell

Virginia Tech

A Virginia Tech double major in Cinema and Theatre with minors in Strategic Communications and Brain & Adaptive Behavior. My creative journey spans cinema, photography, and music production, offering an interdisciplinary perspective. Over eight years in childcare, from teaching piano to pandemic support, shaped my insights into play's impact on human development. Academic pursuits explore creativity, education, and holistic development, evidenced in research and a documentary. As a Social Media Coordinator for an elementary school, I gained practical insights into fostering creativity in education. I'm excited about the summit's theme of "play," as I bring diverse experiences to collaborative projects.

Amira Martin

University of Michigan

Hello! I'm a passionate interdisciplinary student majoring in Graphic Design and minoring in UX, dedicated to seamlessly blending art and technology. My goal is to challenge preconceived notions about the creative limitations that technology might impose in the realm of art. I am actively engaged in this pursuit with the Michigan Arts Initiative, where I started the Opportunity Project, an interactive website connecting BIPOC students with internships in Art, Design, Computer Science, and Engineering. In my free time, I like to try new fruits, exchange music playlists with my friends, and drink freshly squeezed juices from my local bodega.

STUDENT BIOS

Joshua Michaels

Rochester Institute of Technology

Joshua Michaels - 2nd year Marketing Major, Student Assistant for RIT's School of the Performing Arts, President and Founder of B.A.R.S. (Black Artists & Records Society), Brother of Delta Sigma Pi Business Fraternity, Musician on Apple Music, Spotify, etc.

Hannah Nettikadan

Rochester Institute of Technology

I'm a third-year Graphic Design major from Massachusetts with a minor in Art History and an immersion in Creative Writing. I also play the violin and knit, and love music, art, and film.

Adeline Newmann

Michigan State University

I am an interdisciplinary artist, sketchbook artist, and immersive experience designer! My research focuses are immersive, experiential storytelling, and how environmental and medical stories and histories can be expressed in creative and engaging ways. I'm excited to be an MSU STEAMpower graduate fellow (2022-2023) and graduate mentor (2023-2024)! Before pursuing my MFA, I worked as a VJ in the US and Estonia, and as a Video Designer/VFX Designer for Walt Disney



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STUDENT BIOS

Imageneering on attractions in the US, Hong Kong, and Japan. BFA Experimental Animation – California Institute of the Arts (2012), MFA Studio Art - Michigan State University (2024) IG: @skezhboooook

Kiyem Obuseh

University of Wisconsin—Madison

Hi I'm Kiyem. I'm working on a few art projects but the one I'm most passionate about is a TV show that I'm developing with some friends.

Ahema Odeng-Otu

University of Wisconsin—Madison

I am a graphic design major and an illustrator interested in making my interests visually exciting, compelling, and accessible. I've enjoyed drawing portraits and designing book covers as a hobby since middle school, and I've continued to build on my skills through self-study. I also enjoy problem solving and philosophy. I am currently researching West African culture through a philosophical lens with the goal of elucidating my findings through artwork.

Alexis Oltmer-Bergmann

Penn State

Alexis Oltmer is an interdisciplinary artist with a BA in Fine Arts in Photography from the University of Buffalo (2013). Currently pursuing an MFA at Pennsylvania State University (2024), her work delves into the intricate relationships between the environment and humanity, framed by personal and community experiences. Currently, Oltmer's work focuses on the recontextualization and data visualization of the occurrence of Superfund Sites in the United States.

STUDENT BIOS



Dustin Paden

University of Rochester

Hey, I'm Dustin! I'm a senior at the University of Rochester pursuing a BA in Digital Media Studies, Psychology, and Studio Arts plus a User Experience certificate. I explore the ways we can make technology squishy, emotional, and human through performance art, painting, installation, digital design, and research studies. In my free time, you'll probably find me playing cello, whipping up avocado toast, and rock climbing. I'm looking forward to meeting everyone!

Supratim Pait

Georgia Tech

An artist researcher, working on the helms of experience design, creative expression, arts based HCI, speculative design, & Interaction design. In 2nd year of MS in Digital Media at Georgia Tech, working as a Researcher at the Future Feelings Lab focusing on design of emotion interventions and a Research Assistant for Digital Integrative Liberal Arts Centre, supporting projects lying on the verge of liberal arts and technology. Loves cheesecake.

Traci Westcott

STUDENT BIOS

Emily Pasek

Michigan State University

Emily Pasek is a geologist and fourth year PhD student at Michigan State University. Drawn to graduate study in geocognition by a longtime interest in interdisciplinarity, she has supplemented her dissertation research on the intersection of the arts and the geosciences with a series of wildly varied pursuits ranging from sampling campus sewers to detect COVID-19 outbreaks to interpreting sequoia grove ecology for visitors to a California national park. Em is particularly interested in integrating the arts and the sciences to enhance creativity, identity, sense of belonging, and inclusion.

Bill Pauly

University of Houston

I am a fifth-year undergraduate student pursuing a Bachelor's degree in architecture with a minor in interdisciplinary arts. I am interested in community engagement and the exploration of carbon-conscious materials, and how they relate to sustainable design/construction practices.

Grace Peters

University of Florida

My name is Grace Peters. I am a second-year mechanical engineering major. I am a TA for Engineering Innovation and Entrepreneurship which is why I was invited to this conference. I love to read, travel, and hang out with my friends, family, and cats.

STUDENT BIOS

El Pimentel

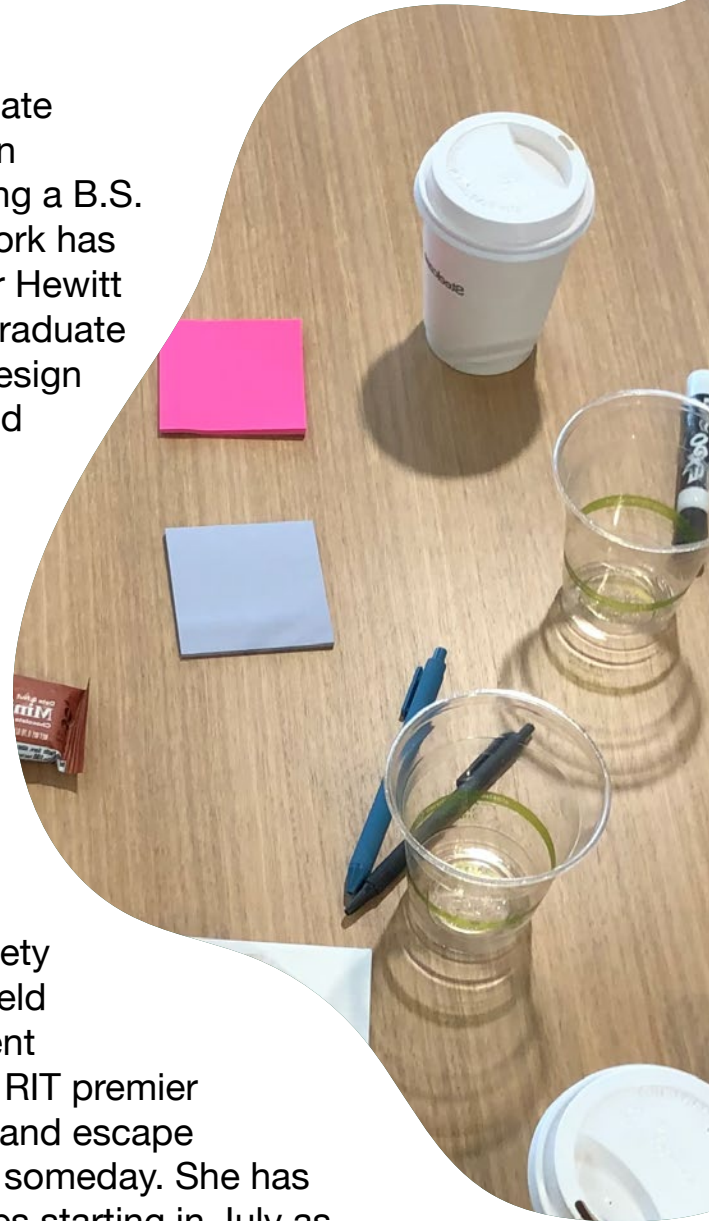
Georgia Tech

El Pimentel is an industrial designer passionate about crafting design solutions to strengthen marginalized communities. Currently pursuing a B.S. in Industrial Design at Georgia Tech, their work has been featured by YoungArts and the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum. As an undergraduate researcher, they're exploring participatory design methods for Atlanta overdose prevention and putting them into action as founding team member of their social startup, Nalopack (nalopack.com). Outside of the studio, El loves sewing costumes for theater, drawing caricatures, and hiking the Pacific Northwest.

Allison Ritter

Rochester Institute of Technology

Allison is a 5th year Mechanical Engineering student at RIT. She is involved with the Society of Women Engineers on campus, and has held the positions of President and Outreach Event Coordinator. She likes jazz, and plays in the RIT premier Jazz Ensemble. An enjoyer of board games and escape rooms, she hopes to design one of her own someday. She has already accepted a position at GE Appliances starting in July as an Edison engineer in Louisville, Kentucky!



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STUDENT BIOS

Caroline Robbins

Rochester Institute of Technology

I am a 4th year Advertising Photography major at Rochester Institute of Technology. I have a passion for taking the smallest of ideas and building them out into something incredible, and I love doing it alongside others who share my same passion.

Miles Rocktaschel

Rochester Institute of Technology

Hello! I'm Miles (he/him) and I'm a 4th year Medical Illustration major at RIT! I like crafting, exercising, horror movies, and listening to music! I'm a big fan of Radiohead. Fun fact: I'm in an Electronic Music Production class this semester! I have no music production experience, but I find it interesting :) My default pose in photos is a double thumbs up. I am an energetic, selfless and curious person who's always willing to help people out.

Montserrat Rodriguez

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

Chilean singer-songwriter and 25-year-old civil engineer, Montse resonates with folk/soul. In 2021, she reached the semi-finals on "Got Talent Chile." Lotus selected her in 2019 to perform at Lollapalooza 2022, showcasing her songs "Perdida" and "Un Lugar." Her lyrics excel in storytelling, inspiring reflection, and advocating for environmental respect.

STUDENT BIOS

Hunter Shallcross

University of Cincinnati

Hunter Shallcross is a filmmaker and producer from Louisville, Kentucky. His interests are in crafting compelling narratives, he specializes in the creation of on-location research documentaries that intricately explore and dissect contemporary events.

Theron Smith

Texas A&M

I was born and raised in North Texas and have always had a passion for art. While my main areas of interest are character design and animation, I also have experience in traditional art. I am currently a grad student at Texas A&M University in College Station, pursuing my Master of Science in Visualization. My goal is to one day direct my own, feature-length animated film using the skills and knowledge I've developed over the years.

Tanmay Srivastava

University of Cincinnati

My name is Tanmay Srivastava. I am a junior at the University of Cincinnati, pursuing a major in History and Digital Media, complemented by minors in Economics and International Business. As an Indian film producer, director, and editor, I've successfully overseen the creation of fourteen documentaries, two feature films, and

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STUDENT BIOS

three short films through international collaborations. My involvement extends beyond film production—I've actively participated on juries and curation teams for various film festivals in Asia and North America. Additionally, I hold the distinction of being the Founder of Synergy Pictures and Co-Founder of Infinity Pictures, contributing to the vibrant landscape of the film industry.

Claire Thessen

Texas A&M

I am a 3D artist and Graphic Designer studying Visualization at Texas A&M University. My main focus is Look Development for 3D animation, so I use a blend of technical skills and my background as a 2D artist to tell stories through concept art, modeling, and surfacing. I minor in Game Design and work in a VR Research Lab designing UI/UX elements and 3D assets for games. My second minor is in Graphic Design, so I also have experience in web design, the Adobe Suite, and I am the Design Chief for a fashion magazine.

Zachary Thomas

Rochester Institute of Technology

My name is Zack, I am a 3rd Year Mechanical Engineering Student at RIT, and I became a participant at this year's a2ru summit through networking with one of my professors that I met in the previous spring semester. Through receiving an email from my college, I was able to take a multidisciplinary course on XR (Extended Reality) where I was then able to receive the opportunity to participate in this event and get into contact with a professor in my major that is giving me the opportunity to work in a VR research Co-op here at RIT.

STUDENT BIOS

Pin-Hsuan Tseng

Penn State

Pin-Hsuan Tseng, a Ph.D. candidate in Art Education with a minor in Curriculum and Instruction at Pennsylvania State University is also a middle school artist-teacher, researcher, and activist in Taiwan.

pinhsuan.com

Abby Tuckett

Rhode Island School of Design

Originally from Cambridge, MA, I grew up playing sports, making art with recyclables, and learning the rules of a city. Many years later, I was playing soccer and studying architecture at Mount Holyoke College, attempting to learn the rules of rural western Mass. Whether on a field or in a studio, play and curiosity continue to be the structure of my work. I am now finishing my Masters in Architecture at RISD, wondering what is next. I love meeting people, so feel free to say hello.



Traci Westcott

STUDENT BIOS

Camila Villegas Mancilla

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

I'm 24 years old, and I studied Social Science and did my major in International Relations and minor in Public Policy. Right now, I am earning a master's degree in Political Science with a focus in Human Rights. I'm from Chile, specifically from Puerto Montt, where I had my first approach with Arts in general. Since I was little, painting and dancing were my favorite things to do in my free time, I have been practicing contemporary dance for 10 years and have started to do professional work in this area.

Anna Wang

Rhode Island School of Design

Anna is a junior studying Industrial Design at the Rhode Island School of Design. She is interested in UI/UX design, programming, and woodworking. Some of her extracurricular pursuits include founding a toy design organization and developing an AR headset interface for astronauts on space missions. In her free time she enjoys exploring cafes, watching movies, rock climbing, and skiing.

Rachel Zdansky

University of Houston

Hi! My name is Rachel Zdansky and I am currently a junior attending the University of Houston. I am majoring in American Sign Language Interpretation with a minor in Interdisciplinary Art. My interests include writing poetry, photography, playing trumpet, sketching, travel, and my dog!

STUDENT BIOS

Jodie Zeng

University of Rochester

I am a Senior Computer Science and Digital Media Studies double major and all-academic team varsity student athlete looking to enter the sports industry. My interests include machine learning, software engineering, and data modeling. I love using my problem-solving and programming skills to find solutions to complex problems.

Evelyn Zou

Rochester Institute of Technology

Evelyn is a Computer Science and Japanese major at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). Outside of being a student, she's a designer, crafter, and creator who likes to dabble in a bit of everything. Over the years, she's designed jackets, built websites, crocheted little characters, and even laser cut a mini floating table! She also loves to dance, ski, and play games. As someone who loves to play, explore, and learn new things, Evelyn is super excited about this year's theme and is honored to be a part of the 2024 Emerging Creatives Student Summit.

MENTOR BIOS

Jake Adams

Jake Adams is a lecturer in the School of Interactive Games and Media within Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences at Rochester Institute of Technology.

Joseph Allgeier

Joe Allgeier is a toy maker, safety specialist, inventor and Visiting Lecturer in Industrial Design at RIT. His background consists of degrees in Sculpture, Art Education, and Industrial Design. He is the owner of RESKO Safety LLC. and the inventor of the B-Respirator (respiratory protection for the Bearded Man).

Garret Arcoraci

Garret Arcoraci is a Senior Lecturer at the iSchool at RIT, bringing over 17 years of industry experience into the classroom. For the past decade, he has dedicated himself to educating the next generation of tech professionals. He recently developed a new course exploring the intricacies of the DevOps movement, aiming to bridge the gap between traditional IT operations and software.



Traci Westcott

MENTOR BIOS

mari jaye blanchard

mari jaye blanchard is an independent animator and Associate Professor of Animation in RIT's School of Film and Animation. Along with several of her own award-winning shorts which have screened internationally including festivals in Annecy, Melbourne and Berlin, she has produced animations for Sesame Workshop, Nickelodeon, and Comedy Central. She is a New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA) Gregory Millard Fellow, an Asian American Arts Alliance Urban Artists Initiative (UAI) Fellow, and a co-founder of the New York-based animation collective Family Camp.

Emmanuel Brefo

Emmanuel Brefo MSc, MBA, is an analytical chemist with 8 years of industrial experience in developing and optimizing green chemistry methodology that focuses on sustainability. He is currently working with NYSP2I on their emerging technologies project.

Stephen Cady

Stephen Cady is a Lecturer in the School of Information for the Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences at Rochester Institute of Technology.

MENTOR BIOS



Cory Crane

Dr. Crane's primary research involves developing, implementing, and evaluating brief, adjunctive interventions that use healthcare technology to meet individualized needs, increase treatment compliance, and reduce recidivism rates among individuals who engage in intimate partner violence. Dr. Crane's lab at RIT is also involved in basic research efforts to elucidate proximal moderators of the relationship between alcohol use and partner violent behavior using survey, experimental, meta-analytic, and ecologically valid, daily reporting methodologies among understudied and high functioning populations of interest, such as moderate to heavy social drinkers, military veterans, and relationship dyads.

Elizabeth DeBartolo

Elizabeth DeBartolo is the Director of the Multidisciplinary Senior Design Program in the Kate Gleason College of Engineering at RIT, where students from Biomedical, Computer, Electrical, Industrial, and Mechanical Engineering work together on multidisciplinary projects.

While at RIT, she has worked in materials characterization, access technology design, and engineering education.

Traci Westcott

MENTOR BIOS

Dennis Di Lorenzo

Dennis Di Lorenzo is the Executive Director of RIT Certified, RIT's innovation engine for professional education and workforce development. A trailblazer in professional higher education, Dennis has 25 years' experience in professional higher education. Prior to joining RIT, he served as Dean for NYU School of Professional Studies.

Rob DiMarco

Rob DiMarco is a senior IT professional focused on leading technology teams across multiple industries including Health Care, Retail, and Manufacturing. An MBA program graduate of RIT, Mr. DiMarco currently teaches Accounting Information and Analytic courses in the Saunders College of Business and is active in developing strategies for companies on both implementing and benefiting from AI technology.

Keli DiRisio

Keli DiRisio is an Assistant Professor at RIT. She focuses her research on creating digital solutions to help college students learn about emotional regulation and to give them the tools to deal with stress. She is also someone who is always looking for ways to put type on everything!

Seth Eshelman

Seth Eshelman is the Founder and Principal Designer at Staach, a multidisciplinary design and manufacturing company dedicated to responsible business and sustainable manufacturing. He graduated from RIT in 2006. Staach has designed and manufactured sustainable products including furniture, interiors, and built structures that can be found around the world, including in Shake Shack locations and at Google's offices in Mountain View, California.

MENTOR BIOS

Michael Frank

Michael Frank is a lecturer in Humanities, Computing, and Design in the School of Communication at RIT. He's a producer of an actual play podcast where he practices techniques for collaborative world building and storytelling.

Samara Frame

Samara Frame serves on the leadership team in the Division of the Arts at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. In her role as Advancement Manager, she oversees strategic development planning, fundraising, and interdisciplinary engagement. As a professional union theater artist, she's served both on stage and as an arts administrator for more than two decades. She worked as Director of Audience Engagement for Forward Theater Company, where she grew authentic relationships with audiences, led fundraising events, developed partnerships, and created a robust accessibility plan.



Carlos Ortiz

MENTOR BIOS

Miles Friday

Miles Jefferson Friday is a composer and educator who aims to construct communities where sound can serve as a site for critical inquiry to be realized, not just in the abstract, but in practice. Miles's creative output acts as a form of project-based research, where he utilizes music technologies and engages with theoretical scholarship as a means of exploring personal subjectivities of auditory reception, re-thinking instruments and/as objects, and proposing ways in which sound-based practice can operate more dynamically and equitably. Miles's works have been performed across the United States and internationally. Miles holds a doctorate from Cornell University and is currently an Assistant Professor of Digital Music at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Dean Ganskop

Dean is a lecturer in the School of Information in the Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences at RIT, teaching web application development and relational and non-relational database courses. He's also vice president for software development and principal systems architect at RecordsOne, Inc, a health IT company with products for revenue cycle management and for improving medical auditing effectiveness.

MENTOR BIOS

Erica Haskell

Erica Haskell is the Inaugural Director of the School of Performing Arts and Professor of Ethnomusicology at RIT. She holds a Ph.D. and MA in ethnomusicology from Brown University and is co-founder of Free Dirt Records, a folk, bluegrass, old-time and county music record label. In her scholarly work she has explored the politics of music, applied/activist ethnomusicology, and the involvement of international humanitarian organizations in cultural events and projects in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Matias Homar

Born in Argentina, my work was always mediated by the intersection of music and technology. As part of my PhD in music composition, my research focused on the use of interactive devices to affect the process of composition, performance, and education. Currently, GEP (interactive musical instruments) is aiming to incorporate visual components to encourage deaf and hard of hearing people to create music in real-time by using bodily movements.

Traci Westcott

MENTOR BIOS

Joel Hunt

Joel V. Hunt, Ph.D., a music theorist, composer, and performer, explores diverse genres encompassing jazz and pop to interactive electroacoustic and algorithmic computer music. His research delves into jazz-pop theory, electronic music history, and computational analysis, while his recent creative output spans audio-visual installations, modular synthesizer improvisations, and computer music. Dr. Hunt is also an accomplished jazz saxophonist and band leader.

Kate Johnson

Kate Johnson's professional practice entails a combination of sculptural processes in pursuit of physical engagement of environment in which the work exists as well as with the audience during these site-specific interactions. Building upon a narrative apologue, the continuous visual metaphor of a tooth representing a translation of currency can be perceived throughout this research transforming in scale, medium and permanence.

Thomas Kinsman

Thomas B. Kinsman, Ph.D., is a multi-faceted creature. A fourth-generation college professor, he is a Senior Lecturer in the C.S. Dept. at RIT. His hobbies include computer graphics, Art Therapy, and teaching optics, aerodynamics, and micro-controllers. He is a gardener, a rock hound, a wood worker, a licensed magician, a potter, a photographer, and a Maker. He has degrees in Electrical Engineering, Electrical and Computer Engineering, and Imaging Science. He teaches a course on Computational Creativity and Algorithmic Artwork, which he created. He is the Zoo Keeper for the Computer Petting Zoo – a demonstration of interactive computing for children taken to Maker Faires. He is never bored.

MENTOR BIOS

Nick LaLone

Nick LaLone is an assistant professor in the School of Interactive Games and Media in RIT's Golisano College of Computing and Information Sciences.

Amy Latessa

My background is in art history & linguistics (undergrad), visual culture theory (MA) and architectural/cultural theory (PhD). I have worked at the University of Cincinnati since 2013 and currently run the outreach and engagement department in the new Digital Futures building, an interdisciplinary research facility with 24 labs which focus on using technology to “solve problems that matter.” I have a humanities background and experience working in technology and research computing.

Jessica Lieberman

Jessica Lieberman is an associate professor in the School of Performing Arts in RIT's College of Liberal Arts.



Traci Westcott

MENTOR BIOS

Kusi Manu

I am Kusi Appiah Manu, a Civil Engineer by profession with over half a decade of experience in construction and affordable housing. I am currently pursuing a Master of Science (MS) in Sustainable Systems in RIT's Golisano Institute for Sustainability. In addition, I am working on a study related to using sensing technologies in addressing construction risks and creating a sustainable built environment with Dr. Yewande Abraham in the Civil Engineering Technology department.

David McCarthy

David McCarthy is a composer and concert organ improviser from Winnipeg, Canada. He has been teaching music at RIT since 1998.

Kayla McGhee

Kayla (she/they) is currently serving a dual appointment as Interim Associate Director at UW–Madison's Office of Multicultural Arts Initiatives and Outreach & Engagement Coordinator at UW–Madison's Division of the Arts. In her work at UW-Madison, Kayla leads public programming initiatives aimed at highlighting creative arts research. She also works with a team to develop student support strategies for First Wave Scholars, connects students, faculty, staff, and community members with funding for arts initiatives, and builds meaningful partnerships to increase access to the arts across disciplines.

MENTOR BIOS

Chantala Murphy

Chantala Murphy has created and moderated multiple asynchronous play-by-post roleplay groups. Each community is populated by approximately 25 artists and writers who worldbuild in a collaborative setting.

Josh Owen

Josh Owen is an internationally renowned industrial designer, educator, and author. He is the president of his eponymous design studio, Josh Owen LLC, and is the Vignelli Distinguished Professor of Design and Director of the Vignelli Center for Design Studies at Rochester Institute of Technology. Owen's projects are produced by major manufacturers and have won many awards. His work is included in the permanent design collections of the Brussels Design Museum, Centre Georges Pompidou, the Chicago Athenaeum, the Corning Museum of Glass, the Denver Art Museum, the Musee des beaux-arts de Montreal, the National Museum of American Jewish History, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Red Dot Design Museum, and the Taiwan Design Museum. He is the author of the book *Lenses for Design*. Learn more at joshowen.com.



MENTOR BIOS

Alejandro Lozano Robledo

As the Director of the UC Future Mobility Design Lab, Alejandro Lozano Robledo partners with multi-disciplinary researchers, industry partners such as Boeing, U.S government partners, and Non-Profit partners, to co-create innovative proposals that shape the future. He has led the Mobility Systems Design program since 2020 and taught in the Industrial Design, Master of Design and UC Honors Programs, partnering with companies such as Gravity Sketch and developing new workflows for Design Education. He has worked with companies such as Boeing, with more than six design patents awarded and the International Crystal Cabin Award earned. He has published his research at national and international conferences.

Rolanda Spencer

Dr. Rolanda JW Spencer, an Xavier University professor, merges academic expertise with a passion for multi-medium visual arts, focusing on uplifting the spirit and divine feminine. Currently pursuing an MFA at RIT, her work challenges perceptions and inspires transformation at the crossroads of art and academia.

Sandra Turner

Sandra is the founder and CEO of Viggie Kids Corp. She is a human-centered designer and entrepreneur with a thirst for blurring the lines between the intersection of business strategy, technology, and design. Sandra successfully invented and commercialized the patented Vidget 3-in-1 Active & Flexible Seating System® from concept to market.