Hank Whitson's Design Protfolio

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RANDOM ACTS OF FUSION

A nation-wide experiential marketing campaign for the 2013 FORD FUSION. The project featured live events, sweepstakes, and celebrity talent.

PROJECT OVERVIEW & GOALS:

42E was approached by Team Detroit to help launch Ford's revamped 2013 Fusion model sedan with a talent-forward campaign leveraging the star power of Ryan Seacrest, Joel McHale, and Kate Micucci.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

My first campaign introduced me to the basic principles of live event design, including mechanics/interactivity, environment aesthetics, layout/throughput, production, scheduling, and budget. When scheduling the front page's carousel, I closely collaborated with the artists to refine my knowledge of color theory and visually appealing layouts. I also had my first brush with UGC (user-generated content) contest moderation. We pivoted several times during the campaign to capitalize on emerging information about the car, and lowered the barrier of entry for our user submissions, and developed a tremendously effective model for viral UGC.

PROJECT OUTCOME:

The campaign was considered a tremendous success, garnering over 17 million interactions and even more impressions.

PRESS:

MotorTrend

INFAMOUS: PAPER TRAIL

A promotional ARG (alternate reality game) and post-launch DLC missions (downloadable content) for Sucker Punch Production's PS4 title, inFAMOUS: Second Son.

PROJECT OVERVIEW & GOALS:

42 Entertainment partnered with Sucker Punch Productions to drum up excitement for INFAMOUS: SECOND SON while also creating a retention incentive in the form of downloadable content and off-console game missions to sustain players' engagement with the title in the weeks following launch.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

I conceptualized the first phase of the ARG's narrative, centering the story around a civil rights movement for the game's fictional race of super-powered individuals. In addition to assisting with the design and playtesting of the game's interactive, online environments, I also performed the market and aesthetic research pertaining to the manga-style drawings left behind by the DLC's focal character, Celia Penderghast. I also assisted in localizing the DLC for other regions, and provided technical support for the project following the DLC's launch.

PROJECT OUTCOME:

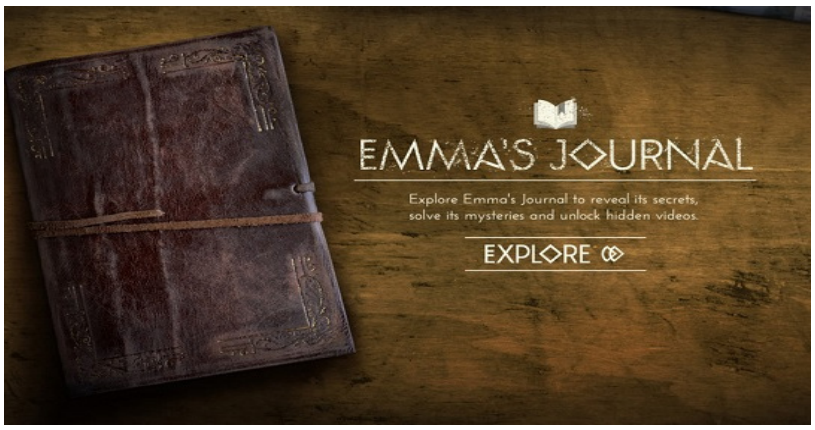
Paper Trail's DLC mission successfully increased player retention and led to a software launch that moved 1M copies in 9 days. Notably, PS4 hardware sales also doubled during the month of SECOND SON's release. Over 3M unique players in 15 territories experienced Paper Trail's side missions. Paper Trail's ancillary sites and off-console interactions shut down on December 16th, 2018.

PRESS:

Kotaku

DIG DECODED

A transmedia ARG and associated suite of puzzles for USA Network's 2015 drama, DIG.



PROJECT OVERVIEW & GOALS:

USA Network proposed an alternate reality game to extend the universe and drive engagement toward its 2015 drama, DIG, focused on the international exploits of spies and archaeologists in Jerusalem.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

Dig Decoded was my personal crucible as both a UX and puzzle designer. The client frequently requested changes to the web layout, feedback, and user interface, which allowed me ample iterative practice on refining visual design and functionality. It was also my first time designing a broad suite of puzzles under extremely limited technical constraints (most puzzles were static images, and others had simple click and drag mechanics) on a tight timetable. Fortunately, the archaeological subject matter of DIG lent itself to a number of engaging puzzles. Additionally, I wrote the puzzle hints, flavor text, and some of the additional narrative content that was voiced by series-lead, Jason Isaacs, in the campaign's audio logs. I was present on set during film shoots of additional footage that integrated with puzzles to ensure that clues were properly seeded.

PROJECT OUTCOME:

It must be acknowledged, the TV series was canceled after a single season. But the interactive puzzle suite itself was fabulously received and won the **Cynopsis Model D Award for Best Use of Companion Video for a TV Show** and was also **a finalist for Best Online/Mobile Extras for a Linear Show in the Cablefax Program Awards.**

PRESS:

ARG NET

UNIVERSE OF ADVENTURE CLUB

An interactive theme park experience with digital integrations, in partnership with Nickelodeon and Mall of America.

PROJECT OVERVIEW & GOALS:

Mall of America reached out to 42E for a means of enhancing the Nickelodeon Universe in-park experience with digital extensions, including a interactive hardware kiosks and online ranking system linked to RFID cards.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

During our Mall of America collaboration, I continued to refine my UX and digital experience design skills by assisting with the visual design of the hardware kiosks and its user interfaces. Due to time and technical constraints, the interactives were programmed in Adobe Flash, and I was responsible for searching branded material (namely: SPONGEBOB and TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES) to be incorporated in the kiosks, where I learned the very basics of Flash and Premiere. This project also opened the door to theme park map design. The map went through a number of renovations and included integrated puzzles and “secret” information about the park.

PROJECT OUTCOME:

The Universe of Adventure Club program was canceled shortly after its inception due to kiosk maintenance and logistical troubles, as well as issues related to the aging Adobe Flash platform. These proved to be valuable lessons in future-proofing digital installations. The integrated branded content and interactives produced were high quality and well-reviewed by test audiences, however.

VOYAGERS

Transmedia world-building, online games, and digital collectibles integrating with Random House's middle grade science-fiction series, VOYAGERS.

PROJECT OVERVIEW & GOALS:

Voyagers is a multi-author science fiction story designed to incorporate digital elements and expanded online content from its inception. 42 Entertainment/Animal Repair Shop was responsible for the transmedia content, which leveraged physical codes and clues included in the books.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

The VOYAGERS project went through a number of rounds of iteration, with a great deal of brainstorming for interactive content ranging from apps, to browser games, to puzzle integration. Initially, I worked on the project as a narrative designer, reviewing the book series and providing the lead writer with ideas for expanding the lore with in-universe documentation. After the departure of 42E's lead writer, I was the sole inheritor of the written aspects of the project, providing all the digital content for books 3-6. Additionally, I worked on VOYAGERS as an experience designer, conceptualizing the Circuit Splicer Game, and refining the other interactives as a play-tester and collaborator. Finally, I provided user-interface and visual feedback for the web-site.

PROJECT OUTCOME:

The 6-book VOYAGERS series was a commercial success for Random House and the interactives are still live to this day.

LIVE LINK:

www.VoyagersHQ.com

PRESS:

Publishers Weekly

TRANSFORMERS ARE DANGEROUS

Viral marketing campaign built for Paramount's TRANSFORMERS: AGE OF EXTINCTION.

PROJECT OVERVIEW & GOALS:

Drum up excitement for the fourth installment in the Transformers film franchise with an interactive narrative accounting for the story between the second and third film. The campaign featured the central site for AGE OF EXTINCTION, as well as an anti-alien narrative with a propaganda-styled aesthetic and a hot-line where viewers could call in "Transformers sightings," generating UGC for the campaign.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

As a member of the design team, I brainstormed potential narrative frameworks and interactive activations for the campaign. Once the campaign was launched, I monitored social media feeds to track campaign impact and curated the audio UGC submissions for use in other advertisements.

PROJECT OUTCOME:

The teaser campaign reached half a million unique participants with 1.5 million page views. The campaign earned the **Mobile Marketing Award for Most Effective Tablet Ad Campaign** and was also named a **Webby Awards Honoree for Interactive Advertising, Media Display, & Banner Campaigns.**

PRESS:

The Hollywood Reporter

ZEDD TRUE COLORS

A color-themed, city-by-city, track-by-track album launch party for Zedd's TRUE COLORS.

PROJECT OVERVIEW & GOALS:

The electronic and dance music artist, Zedd, wanted to launch his sophomore album, TRUE COLORS, with unconventional, news-worthy fanfare that celebrated his listeners' creativity, passion, and support. 42E developed a nationally focused campaign centered around 10 "listening parties" hosted in unforgettable locales around the country. Fans in selected cities participated in live scavenger hunts to gain invitations to the listening parties. Additionally, nationally remote and international fans were invited to participate in UGC sweepstakes to win iPhones, Beats headphones, and more.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

While less narratively-focused than most campaigns, TRUE COLORS gave me an opportunity to explore every other aspect of experience design. From brainstorming distinctive locales for listening parties, to developing live interactive experiences for each party, to location scouting local areas suitable for scavenger hunts, to building and striking sets, and curating/moderating UGC competitions, the campaign was a landmark moment in my career, and remains as some of my proudest work as an experience designer.

PROJECT OUTCOME:

TRUE COLORS was a phenomenal hit with fans and press alike. **Zedd's album debuted at #1 on the Billboard dance and electronic chart**, and the campaign was adapted into a feature-length documentary about Zedd's life, which was an official selection of the 2016 LA Film Festival.

PRESS:

[Buzzfeed]
[Vanity Fair]
[People]
[Huffington Post]
[MTV]

ORDER OF 10 CHALLENGES

A promotional ARG for the launch of NVIDIA's GTX 1080 graphics card, framed around the lens of great scientific discoveries.

PROJECT OVERVIEW & GOALS:

To celebrate the launch of their new flagship GPU, the GTX 1080, NVIDIA sought a campaign that would be mysterious, viral, and engaging to its core audience of die-hard gamers. Running with the nomenclature of the card's Pascal Architecture, 42E designed an interactive campaign involving influencer marketing via mystery packages and distributed puzzles, a robust suite of challenging puzzles, and an international second phase.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

I had recently been promoted to the company's associate narrative designer and came up with the premise of framing the contests narrative around a fictional order of important historical scientists and their landmark discoveries. Our puzzle mechanics were based on famous scientists (such as Ada Lovelace) and technological developments (like the antikythera mechanism and Aztec mathematics). This was unquestionably the most challenging puzzle suite we had developed. Beyond composing the narrative and conceptualizing puzzles, my other duties included location scouting for live events and preparing text for localization and translation.

PROJECT OUTCOME:

The Order of 10 Challenges was a phenomenal success that kicked off a new paradigm of launch scarcity for NVIDIA GPUs. The GTX 1080 sold out upon launch, and remained unavailable (or exceedingly difficult to acquire) for nearly six months after the card's launch in April 2016. The Order of 10 puzzle suite site garnered over 1 million sessions with a near equal split between mobile traffic, referrers, and direct traffic, and a less than 10% bounce rate.

PRESS:

Gamers Nexus

Slash Gear

RAM TRANSMEDIA UNIVERSE

A “Universe Bible” for Ideate Media’s prospective transmedia franchise based on the works of author Ramlee Awang Murshid.

PROJECT OVERVIEW & GOALS:

Ideate Media secured the transmedia rights for the works of popular Malaysian author, Ramlee Awang Murshid (RAM), and approached 42 Entertainment for guidance in establishing a Marvel Cinematic Universe-style franchise using the intellectual property. The ultimate deliverable of this project was a detailed franchise bible that incorporated all of the characters from RAM’s novels, as well as a proposed media roll-out schedule, a compendium of in-universe rules, character timelines, character webs, suggestions for localization, and more.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

The RAM project was my first taste of leading a team. Even though I was the junior-most member of the interaction design team, I was asked to spearhead the development of the intellectual property bible. My supervisor augmented my writing with infographics that assessed RAM’s different characters through the lens of gamification, as well as creating relational maps and other visual elements. My coworker, with a background in film production, read their film treatments and provided notes for TOMBIRUO while I summarized novels for the team. In the end, I assembled the structure for the bible and wrote the majority of its content. It was thought-provoking, challenging work that demanded imagination, cultural sensitivity, and business savvy.

PROJECT OUTCOME:

In 2017, Ideate Media and Astro Shaw produced a movie based on TOMBIRUO, based on the titular RAM novel, originally released in 1998. While I do not know what Ideate’s current plans for the RAM franchise are, the first film ended with a Marvel-style stinger teasing the existence of Laksamana Sunan (RAM’s most popular character) in the same universe.

PRESS:

Forbes

SECRET ORDER OF KEYS

Subscriber retention, puzzle-based enrichment, and an associated rewards program for the Loot Crate subscription box service.

PROJECT OVERVIEW & GOALS:

Loot Crate approached 42E requesting a simultaneous customer appreciation and retention program. Each monthly crate was accompanied by a puzzle suite with some unique requirements: each puzzle needed to incorporate at least one of the objects included in that month's shipment, resulting in analog puzzles with printed (later fully digital) aids and supplemental material. Additionally, 42E was also tasked with developing a web hub that tracked participants' profiles and progress.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

At this point, I was the company's sole writer, and I composed all the copy, hints, emails, and promotional material for this campaign, in addition to contributing puzzle design. The Secret Order of Keys involved the broadest array of branded properties out of any project at 42E, including THE GOONIES, BOB'S BURGERS, DESTINY 2, JURASSIC WORLD, LEGOS, and many more. In addition to serving as the coordinator between the art, design, and narrative departments, I was placed in charge of 42E's precocious Interaction Design Intern. After just a week of training, the intern was actively contributing to the puzzle design for Secret Order of Keys, and they submitted several puzzles that were ultimately selected to be used in the campaign. Finally, the 42E team was small at that point, so the design and art teams had to field support inquiries delivered via our Facebook page's messenger system.

PROJECT OUTCOME:

Even though the Secret Order of Keys was meeting performance metrics, fiscal need forced Loot Crate to cancel the program 7 months after its inception. In terms of lessons learned, the printed aids proved troublesome for Loot Crate subscribers who did not own or have access to printers—a valuable lesson in making suppositions about your target demographics' technical means and capabilities. We managed to pivot to fully digital puzzle aids however, and ensured our customers' satisfaction by assisting them in real-time.

MODELLAND

Narrative consulting, world building, character creation, and experience framework for Tyra Bank's ModelLand LBE (Location Based Experience).

PROJECT OVERVIEW & GOALS:

In 2011, Tyra Banks released a young-adult fantasy novel centered on modeling, whose story would later provide the narrative premise for a location based experience in Santa Monica in partnership with 42E.
But Tyra Banks was dissatisfied with the reception of the original novel, and wanted to overhaul the narrative and universe prior to the opening of the LBE. 42E hired me as a consultant to help overhaul the lore, cast, and cosmology of ModelLand into something that was easier to follow, more emotionally impactful, and truer to Tyra Banks' brand.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

I was only involved in the earliest phases of the ModelLand project (2018-2019). My first responsibility was reading the original novel and developing a useful plot and reference cheat-sheet for other members of the team, while also calling out content that could translate to live experiences at the LBE. The majority of my time was spent reworking the cosmology of ModelLand, and developing a cadre of new male model characters (who were under-represented in the original novel). At Tyra's request, I focused on developing characters that defied visual stereotypes in the fashion industry (muscular Asian male models, a bookish black character, a shorter white male model). I also developed an in-universe glossary of slang and terminology for use at the LBE.

PROJECT OUTCOME:

The work was conceptually similar to the RAM transmedia project, but through a lens of fashion, which made it a refreshing challenge. After delays pertaining to creative gear-shifts, later exacerbated by the pandemic, the Modelland LBE in Santa Monica opened its doors in September 2022.

PRESS:

Women's Wear Daily