

ARTISTS FIRST

AN EXHIBIT HIGHLIGHTING DIGITAL ARTISTS

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PROJECT

Artists First was an exhibition of eight animators and video game artists' personal work at the Kirkland Arts Center, that ran March 29th to April 25th. At its core, the project celebrated the hand of the artist and was a place for people to experience the process of art creation. It was also a space for community building and resource sharing, through a program based on the idea that "Art is Fun!" and a zine sharing union resources for artists.

PURPOSE

The purpose of *Artists First* was to utilize the Kirkland Arts Center's gallery and resources to provide good care to digital artists in light of the challenges they are currently facing. Good care as described by political theorist Joan Tronto includes four tenants: attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness. Museums are able to provide good care by deviating from their standard work or programming to directly interact with their community and address their current needs. Kirkland Arts Center's connections with Digipen and other professional animators made it the ideal space to provide good care for digital artists.

PROBLEM

The video game and animation industries nationwide are experiencing drastic challenges including an unprecedented number of layoffs due to the post-pandemic industry decline, the consistent devaluation of game artists' work in professional settings, and the rise of generative AI "art" in game and animation production. As a hub for these industries, Seattle digital artists are feeling the weight of the challenges.

DELIVERABLES

- One exhibition installed at the Kirkland Art Center
- One public program, 'Art is Fun!'
- One self-help 'How-to-Draw / Animate' Station
- One zine
- One 'Play with Light' interactive station



IMPACT

This project showcased the impact that a small, local gallery can have by listening to the needs of their community and diverging from business-as-usual to address their needs. These changes do not have to be large, grand gestures. They just need to be created with their community and tailored to their specific needs.

- The gallery had never exhibited digital artists due to restrictions of their ability to showcase digital media. As a result, some artists, who had worked in the video game industry for years were able to exhibit in an art gallery setting for the first time, resulting in increased exposure to their phenomenal work.
- In our programming, we built a sense of community around art creation by hosting a program inviting people to create flipbooks and sculpt with clay, giving a sense of what animation and claymation is like. Additionally, we collaborated with the University of Washington's Songwriters Circle for our opening celebration, which fostered new community connections with organizations that share the same philosophies about the importance of art creation.

PROCESS



REFERENCES

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THANK YOU!

Lane Eagles, Jeremy Hurd-McKenney,
and Travis Eriksen

Kirkland Art Center, Artists and UW
Museology

