

GEECT CONFERENCE May 30-31 June 1, 2016:

#Lights, Camera, Interaction!

Aalto University, (ELO/AALTO) Helsinki, FINLAND

The GEECT SPRING CONFERENCE “#Lights, Camera, Interaction” on VR in Film Schools took place in Helsinki, in the Department of Film, Television of the Aalto University on May 30th-June 1st 2016. Professor **Teemu Leinonen**, vice dean of research, Aalto ARTS, welcomed 56 participants from 15 countries and 30 schools. Most of the participants were cinematography or production design teachers or heads of schools.

The purpose of the two-and-half day conference was to rethink visual aesthetics and cinematic conventions in relation to the current Virtual Reality (VR) technology. VR allows viewers to experience a film that fully surrounds them. It frees the content from the traditional cinematic constraints but it also removes a principal tool for visual storytelling: framing. The idea was to ponder following questions:

How do we structure the narrative when important tools for guiding a viewers attention are unavailable to us in a 360° cinema experience? How will the introduction of basic cinematic interactivity shape the development of a new artistic language in this medium? How VR changes the conventional production workflows? How much VR challenges the established professional roles introduces new ones such as interaction designers? How to develop the cinematic language for VR?

The program consisted of introductory lectures, case studies and hands-on exercises. The presenters were both experienced teachers or researchers and graduating students who had experimented with VR in their final thesis projects.

Synes Elischka, project manager, Virtual Cinema Lab, **ELO Film School Helsinki** opened with a presentation: “Cinema & Interaction: shaping the medium of Cinematic VR”.

Ludger Pfanz (Karlsruhe University of Art and Design) gave a speech with as title: “Out of Control”. **Milena Fiedler & Jacek Naglowski, (Łódź Film School)** had “questions to ask” in “Towards the cinematic VR language”.

The lectures were held at the Media Centre Lume’s Studio Stage and the workshop took place at the Aalto University Media Factory’s Auditorium and other rooms.

On the second day followed more presentations: **Tommy Mård, Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE)** & Professor **Henrik Haggrén, Aalto University** discussed “the role of 3D modeling techniques (photogrammetry and laser scanning) in VR”. **Marijn Goossens (RITCS, Belgium)** talked about his experiences with shooting Cinematic VR for his graduate film “Paradise”. And also **Jonatan Etzler, Milja Rossi & Maja Stina Heiskala Åberg, Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts (SADA)** had their case study of a student VR project, called “Hypnagogia”. Lecturer **Tanja Bastamow (Aalto University, ELO Film School Helsinki)** spoke about the role of VR in production design and VFX education in film school environment. **Rafal Hanzl, (Lillehammer University College)** had something to say about the “Challenges of initiating and planning a VFX education with a film school”.

But the format of this conference was not only theoretical, but achieved a very interesting balance between speakers, presentations by teachers (as well as students) and real workshop practice. Therefor the organizers equipped the workshop with 360° cameras, sound sets and post-production soft and hardware. In addition, participants used their own devices.

Before the conference the participants were asked to fill in a google form and tell the organizers what kind of equipment and software they are able to bring with them. At the beginning of the workshop and after short introductions, the participants were divided into groups of 3-5 for the hands-on exercises. Each group had a support person with experience on shooting VR. After a short session with brainstorming the groups headed to various locations to shoot.

The second day ended with a visit to the beautiful Heureka's 360° Theater (Science Center Heureka) where a screening of a 10' film from **ELO** "360° film course" took place, presented by director **Sevgi Eker** and cinematographer **Alvi Pakarinen**.

Included in the visit for entertainment value was the screening of the film "The Secrete World of Moths".

On the third day the films of the conference workshop that were edited the day (and night) before, were screened at the Sampo hall. Each group told about their experiences and after that the film was screened. One audience member watched the film with the VR goggles and the image moved on the big screen accordingly. The viewer then explained his/her views and feelings to the audience.

Chaired by **Mike Pohjola**, screenwriter and **ELO** alumni followed the final panel discussion: "What is the significance of VR to film schools?", with comments of **Professor Francisco Menendez (UFVA)**, **Dr. Pia Tikka (Aalto ARTS)**, **Dr. Maiju Loukola (Aalto ARTS)**, **Professor Ludger Pfanz (Karlsruhe University)**.

All the lectures were videotaped. In addition, a 10' documentary film was realized by **ELO** doctoral student **Adriana Guiman** in collaboration with **Andreas Birkle** from the **Zürich University of the Arts**.

Kirsi Rinne was coordinator for this event. **Synes Elischka** and **Heidi Grundström** completed the conference team.

