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The Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center (EMPAC)

Press Contact:

John Rodat (Senior Communications Specialist, EMPAC)

For general EMPAC information, visit www.empac.rpi.edu. You may also call 518.276.3921

The Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center Announces Summer Residency Schedule

Although there are no EMPAC-programmed public presentations over the summer months, there's still plenty happening at the Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center.

Since the opening of its celebrated new building in October, EMPAC has hosted performances spanning media and styles, challenging genres, pushing boundaries and surprising and delighting audiences. During this pause in its presentation schedule, EMPAC will dedicate its resources to the creative exploration that brings such work to the stage, screen and speaker.

Artists from around the world will occupy the Curtis R. Priem Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center, availing themselves of the building's unique resources and collaborating with EMPAC's curatorial and technical staff to test and advance their projects. The residencies vary in duration and scope: Artists at EMPAC are free to focus on specific technical challenges, to fine tune or to experiment and wholly re-imagine their pieces, The works in development range from a multi-media opera to an experiment in data visualization as the distillation of the Earth's "vital statistics;" from an immersive work combining actual and virtual architecture as a hybrid site for both avatars and human viewers to a series of short theatrical pieces by legendary performance-artist Laurie Anderson.

Though these residencies are closed to the public, studio visits and interview opportunities may be possible. To inquire, please contact:

Emily Zimmerman (Curatorial Assistant, EMPAC)

The complete schedule of residencies is, as follows:

Lars Jan/Early Morning Opera: "Abacus"
May 9 – June 12, 2009

"Abacus" is a live performance and media installation driven by a lone presenter: Paul Abacus, a fictional character combining elements of such modern figures as Al Gore, Deepak Chopra, Colin Powell and Joel Osteen, as well historical figures, the Apostle Paul and Buckminster Fuller. "Abacus" argues the obsolescence of national borders and proposes their dissolution, while acknowledging that all presentations are exercises in manipulation. The presenter is supported by, and interacts with, a data visualization device based on Fuller's unrealized Geoscope, which would provide a comprehensive accounting and distillation of the Earth's "vital statistics," historic patterns, and future projections. Paul Abacus leverages these visualizations, generated by a team of designers and programmers, to catapult his data into metaphysical territory. While in residence at EMPAC, the team will focus on developing techniques for seamless image projection on curved surfaces, and preparing for the premiere of "Abacus" at the Roy and Edna Disney/Calarts Theater (Redcat) in July.

OpenEnded Group & Maryanne Amacher: "Upending"

Various Dates:

Mon, July 20 – Sat, August 1, 2009

Sun, August 30, 2009 – Thu, September 17

Composer Maryanne Amacher and programming/visual team Openended Group, are working on the creation of a new "opera without actors," titled "Upending." The work will involve both physical and virtual 3D spaces made possible by Openended Group-devised software, which provides the most advanced real-time rendering currently available. Their software will take direct control of EMPAC's computer-controlled rigging, following an algorithmic metascore that coordinates the image and sound. Amacher's music, too, will occupy space "in 3D:" Unlike most composers using speakers, she is not interested in "direct sound" (sound that arrives to the ear with a direct path from the speaker) but is instead making an investigation of indirect and structure-borne sound. Her piece will be a multichannel audio composition with speakers hidden in adjacent rooms, air ducts, and the understage areas of the Theater.

Laurie Anderson: a new work

June 17 – 18

Laurie Anderson's newest work in progress is a return to the use of video in the theatrical setting. During the residency Anderson will work on production of a new commission for the 2010 Olympics, and, later in the fall, will conduct closed work-in-progress sessions with RPI students, faculty and staff. Technically, Anderson is interested in experimenting with screens and equipment that are small, flexible and easy to tour. She will be in residence at EMPAC for three short stays for these experiments.

Miguel Azguime: "Air 3"
June 29 – August 9

Miguel Azguime is a composer, percussionist, and poet, as well as the founder of the Miso Ensemble, one of Portugal's most-respected contemporary musical groups. Azguime's opera "Salt Itinerary" toured America, Canada, Europe, and Asia with great acclaim; he comes to EMPAC to compose the music and develop the technology for his next multimedia performance piece.

Workspace Unlimited: "They Watch"
August 3 – September 17

Workspace Unlimited is an internationally renowned collective, comprised of Thomas Soetens and Kora Van den Bulcke, operating at the forefront of media art, creating some of today's most compelling virtual worlds and interactive art installations. "They Watch," an EMPAC commission in progress, uses a modified video-game engine to create a space, using a 360-degree panoramic screen, in which computer-driven architecture blends with the real, and where encounters with simulated characters challenge our ideas of presence, place, perception and identity. The collective's projects engage with the territories that emerge when physical spaces intersect with the enlarged public sphere of electronic networks and immersive technology. Workspace Unlimited will use their residency at EMPAC to work on the technology that allows them to "track" audience members, and to further develop interactive functions that will enable avatars (virtual versions of the collective's members, Soetens and Van den Bulcke) to engage in direct "communication" with the viewers.

Toni Dove: "Lucid Possession"
August 3 – 16

"Lucid Possession," Dove's current multimedia performance in progress, will combine music, text, dimensional robotic screens and projections to create a character, like an instrument, that speaks, sings, and dances. On-stage performers Toni Dove and composer Mari Kimura will control the entity's physical and virtual movements, singing and speaking databases, in a form like cinematic bunraku. At EMPAC, Dove will be working with her team on the challenges of projection on non-traditional surfaces, such as fog, as well as filming segments of the piece with EMPAC's high-end video infrastructure.

Mads Lynnerup: Take a Day For Yourself (Troy, NY)
Residency/production: September 1 - October 1
Installation on Mezzanine: October 3 - December 3 (approx)

Many of the themes in Danish artist Mads Lynnerup's work have roots in his interest in the everyday, whether it's the influence of billboards and advertisement texts, or his obsession with the daily routines taking place in public space. "Take A Day For Yourself" will be a video and poster project involving 8-10 members of the RPI and Troy communities, whom Lynnerup will follow for a day, individually, after they "call in sick" for work. Each individual's day be documented with video; and each will also be represented by an oversized (6' x 4') poster, featuring drawings and text of the various activities that the different days involve. The posters will be a visual guide on how to spend a day off in Troy. The posters will also be reproduced in a small-format booklet, which visitors to EMPAC can take with them. Lynnerup will spend his time at EMPAC recruiting and planning with the participants, filming in the community, editing on EMPAC's equipment and producing the posters and booklet.

ABOUT EMPAC

The Curtis R. Priem Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center in Troy, NY opened its doors in October 2008 and was hailed by the New York Times as a "technological pleasure dome for the mind and senses... dedicated to the marriage of art and science as it has never been done before."

Founded by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, the Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center (EMPAC) offers artists, visiting scholars, researchers, engineers, designers, and audiences opportunities that are available nowhere else under a single roof, providing unsurpassed facilities for creative exploration. EMPAC operates nationally and internationally, attracting creative individuals from around the world, and sending new artworks and innovative ideas onto the global stage.

EMPAC's building is a signature work of architecture and a unique facility that boasts unrivaled presentation and production capabilities: a 1,200-seat concert hall designed to the highest acoustical standards; an intimate 400-seat theater with bleeding edge stage technology; and two highly flexible studio spaces, configurable as black-box theaters or as fully immersive environments. Integrated computer, audio and video technical infrastructure underlies these superb venues, creating unique opportunities for media research and performance. EMPAC's potential for art and science spans the physical and virtual worlds and the spaces in between.

EMPAC is much more than a performing arts center: it is a laboratory that will enable artists and scientists to independently and collaboratively advance research projects at the intersection of art and technology.

About Rensselaer

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, founded in 1824, is the nation's oldest technological university. The school offers degrees in engineering, the sciences, information technology, architecture, management, and the humanities and social sciences. Institute programs serve undergraduates, graduate students, and working professionals around the

world. Rensselaer faculty are known for pre-eminence in research conducted in a wide range of research centers that are characterized by strong industry partnerships. The Institute is especially well known for its success in the transfer of technology from the laboratory to the marketplace so that new discoveries and inventions benefit human life, protect the environment, and strengthen economic development.