Friends of Design Game students bring Iziko Museum exhibit to life

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Simulating realistic professional projects for their students is a core part of the Friends of Design Academy of Digital Arts' approach to creative education. When it comes to their Game Graphics and Multimedia Entertainment Department, however, the Academy is simulating far more than just a real-world client experience.

Together with the Iziko Slave Lodge Museum, the Friends of Design Game Technology Class of 2018 has effectively simulated life in Ancient Egypt for Cape Town's museum-goers! Their custom-built, interactive, Augmented Reality exhibit launched last December and has been surprising, engaging and educating Iziko's visitors ever since.

The KEMET Exhibit – Life in Ancient Egypt

To augment the AR exhibit, Iziko redesigned their exhibition of Egyptian objects, naming it KEMET. The exhibit explores how life in Ancient Egypt helped to shape our world today.

"It tells us about the people of the time – their prejudices, perceptions, hobbies, fear of death and ability to create for survival," says Iziko curator, Esther Esmyol. "KEMET investigates various themes relating to writing systems, science and technology, beliefs and religion, recreation and adornment, as well as professions in ancient Egyptian times."

Targeted at Grade Five learners in particular, the Augmented Reality exhibit uses a downloadable smartphone app to add narration, movement and interactivity to a custom-built diorama. The result is a fun-for-all-ages, memorable and three-dimensional learning experience that shines a light on life in Ancient Egypt while demonstrating the amazing opportunities of technology in the museum space.

More Than "Just" Games for Designers

"The KEMET exhibit is a great example of how versatile Game Technology can be," says Andrew Barclay, Head of Game at Friends of Design. "A lot of people think it's just about building computer or console games, but if you look at something like Augmented Reality – which is only one of the modules that we teach – there are applications in everything from museums and education to architecture, engineering and medicine."

Barclay says collaborations like the KEMET exhibit play a vital role in encouraging students and institutions to think outside the box when it comes to the application of Game Design skills.

"Our priority as an academy is to make sure our students are fully-equipped to enter the working world when they leave our doors," he says. "That means opening their eyes to all their potential career paths and helping them build a portfolio that will support them in whichever direction they choose."

"Projects like KEMET are an important part of that," he continues, "because they give our students hands-on experience with real-world challenges, get them thinking in creative directions, add variety to their portfolios, and demonstrate the value of game technology in new and unconventional arenas."

Friends of Design is accepting Early Bird Applications from March for Graphic Design, Web Design, Game Development & Concept Art! Visit friendsofdesign.net or email info@friendsofdesign.net for deadlines and details. Early Bird discounts can save you a whopping R20k on your tuition, valid until July 2019 only.

A new collaboration in the wings

Speaking of unconventional arenas, 2019's Game Technology class can look forward to testing their skills in collaboration with a well-known engineering and facility planning company.

"This year's big project will be a problem-solving game for a particular company's employees and officials," says Lars Espeter. "The details are under wraps for now, but we can promise that it's going to be a great one for Friends of Design students to get their teeth into."

Keen to get involved in a collaborative project with the Friends of Design Game Department? Send your ideas to info@friendsofdesign.net or call 021 300 0298 for more information.

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