

TD 03a - Mark Atkin discussion

Heidi Gromauer

I would like to add something. The question indeed, what abilities do you have to have as a documentary filmmaker in this new working groups? With other competences (?unclear ?) graduated as an editor (?unclear ?) ... with the programmes and social network communication, to talk a little about that. Also about the teaching we have to consider other abilities, other people collaborating in the team, what team is this? That I would be....

Jon Jerstad, Oslo University College

The statistics about 17% are interested in interaction and 60, quite. I mean we've always been dreaming of an audience that engages, but is this interaction, it's not just the act of pressing a button to watch something else?

Mark Atkin

Absolutely not, no.

Jon Jerstad

To dip in deeper? And because this is wonderful, this is like it's not soap opera, it's not just passive viewing, it's not just what we've ... what television would flood us with. It's the promise of something new.

Mark Atkin

Yes. Although it probably does involve soap operas and things like *Britain's Got Talent*, they're very high on the level of interactivity. Quite frankly they really are, because people get super excited and they want to get involved and the programmes do provide all the buttons in order for you to press you know. In order to be able to actually get involved and people are also looking for a relationship with that content, that happens in-between episodes. To that water cooler moment when you're actually talking about it as well, it can live sort of longer online with many other people and I mean you can actually engage. You talk about going back into that world with someone else, but actually if you provide adequate content you can allow people to actually dip

in and out of that world through allowing shared content and online only, stuff. You know that keeps them engaged inbetween episodes, there's a lot that you can learn from that kind of, popular television.

I was talking to someone last night about the amazing influence that *Big Brother's* had on channel 4. And it really was such a, innovation is such a massive way, because its sort of revolutionised how they do documentary. Because I'm sure your all aware of what *Big Brother* is, you know fairly trashy reality TV, but it inspired a new form of documentary which they call "the rig" now, where they put cameras everywhere, in places like schools. They've got fixed rigs, fixed cameras everywhere, and they've made this series of documentaries in schools.

One was called *Educating Essex* one was called *Educating Yorkshire* and this is real public service stuff. And everything they've learnt about interactivity, they've learned through *Big Brother* was well. Literally every single programme on Channel 4, every single programme. Is interactive in some kind of way.

A lot of that's done sort of in house on a sort of programme support, where their providing additional content, around programming. But an awful lot of it is real multi platform commissioning where they, where audience interaction is at the heart and its something that makes it work. And it worked for *Big Brother* as well. So it's sort of inspiration could come from all sorts of sources. Now in terms of how do you make money? I can answer your question in lots of different ways.

The scenario I just described where everything on Channel 4 is interactive. And a lot of it's done in house. In the terms of programme support means that if you go now, as a independent documentary producer, you pitch something, they will commission it. They will commission you do to loads of extra stuff, to keep that audience interested. To create noise around it, to allow people to share stuff, to bring attention to it. But they're doing it, and they're just giving you more money for more work.

And that's, that works. So quite a lot of what they are doing now, they've been doing for so long that its becoming kind of formatted, they know exactly what's needed. And they just go to you and say: "I want 10 short form documentaries bringing us closer to the characters, in ways you just cant achieve within the format of a television show, etcetera. I want you to do extra research so we can actually poll the audience's opinions about the National Health Service." You have to work now with representatives from the government and psychologists in order to give us the content in order for us to create that.

So, all sorts of things but it's a win for you and it's a win for the audience. The other thing is that documentary producers - they've got to be quite agile about how they find, money. Because they've had to be. And I was describing how it was to set up this Crossover Market at doc fest recently. And we've realized with all the different sort of Crossover Labs we've done around, it would be really great if there was one place you could go to in order to get this stuff financed. Because there are so many different ways you can tell as story these days, and I've describe a little bit about how it could be virtual reality there or it could be in a theatre there. A live sort of, interactive thing. Or it could be running around in streets like Blast Theory do with mobile devices that are Internet connected. And or, it could be, it could be something in collaboration with a publisher, we need to bring all of these disparate funding people together in order for these things to be activated. And it is possible, and we just did it as an experiment for the first time properly last year.

For just one day of the market, quarter of a million pounds worth of deals, there on the day, and we're still trying to work out subsequently what those sorts of meetings lead to. So it's possible to get things funded but you have to think imaginatively, it's partly in order to know exactly the platform which you should be on in order to tell this story I think you need to go through the kinds of processes that I was elaborating on in order for it to work for the audience. What doesn't work, what they like to do, in order that it's going to work for them. Then you can make a good case to the funders.

It’s getting more competitive these days. Because there are more people who are trying to work in that space, I think it excites them. There are more opportunities; there are opportunities now for people who have given up on television completely. But I know some independent producers do, working with publishers, I’m a very big fan of this company called Touch Press. Who I encourage you to take a look at if you don’t know them. It’s a collaboration. So they create sort of really high end iPad apps that sort of like, are filled with rich video content, very, very high end more high end than television wouldn’t dare to go. So for instance one of my favourite things that they have done is *The Waste Land* so it’s an app they dedicated to one poem, they’ve done the *Liszt Sonata* as well. So it’s just one app dedicated to one piece of music, I wouldn’t listen to that piece of music. But it’s so beautifully designed that I’m now drawn into the complexities of this piece of music that I would have never been introduced to. The interactive design is so gorgeous, it sort of sucks you in because I’m interested in how it works. I never understood poetry really, I’m not a fan, but. I’m drawn into the world of *The Waste Land* and I really appreciate it. Now, TV did not want to commission that stuff, it was done as a commercial venture. So there is no advertising in it, but they took the risk, put up the money, made it available and made a profit. Yes!

Jon Jerstad

Can I say what, what’s the film look like when it’s an app?

Mark Atkin

There is lots of answers to that question! So in. So the thing is it all blurs so you said what does a film look like, when it’s an app? You could also say what does a book look like, when it’s an app? A book looks a bit more like a film in the terms that a film could look a bit more like the internet. It depends what it is you want to do, the only way to answer that question is to say “what do you want to do with it?” how do you want to communicate with your audience and what do you think your audience wants to do?

So something you can do when a film becomes an app, is that you can put a rich, a rich layer of information over the images. So that you can stop the action at any given moment, and then you can draw...

Jon Jerstad

Is that with a touch screen?

Mark Atkin

Yes, exactly, that's the whole point. I mean you touch it and it's, that's the whole interaction. So, it's very easy to do and you can touch anything and you can find out about it, touch and you get the biography coming up. It could be that it's embedded within the app, all that information, the other, the very good thing is that, quite often in television programmes, we use infographics to illustrate difficult points. This allows you the opportunity to interact with the infographics. And then read them in a way that you know you're going to understand it. And spend some time dwelling over it. So that's been done, and it's quite easy to do its quite easy to do and its not terribly expensive to do.

You can also draw information in that's from the Internet that's accurate to right now. Rather than when you made the film. And that can be, it's absolutely as for 5 seconds ago, that your now bring onto... onto....

Judith Aston, UWE

So there is a film called *Alma - A Tale of Violence* [another title given by speaker] that's a little documentary film, but the ways it's filmed for a iPhone for a app. It's literally, she's looking, it's one character, about her life as a gang member, it goes for 40 minutes and she is looking straight at you. Not filmed in classic TV documentary, where you frame shots with this breathing space. Central, looking straight at you, so it looks like she's talking to you. They have a parallel stream about it and when it gets to intense you just scroll up and there is a parallel film stream. Which is illustrating what she is talking about. So instead of cutting its 2 parallel narratives at the same time, it's really powerful.

Mark Atkin

It's so simple! It's one woman, and then you look at her and then you, the way you interact is like your stroking her face. Because that's kind of how you have to pull down the, other layer. As you kind of wander is she, a monster? Or is she a victim? Because she's done the most appalling things I mean, and the other layer its not even film is it, its actually art, isn't it?

Judith Aston

It's pictures and art work. Some of the things you've been talking about, re-visualised through animation and graphics. But it's also film of the barrio when she was with this gang. You know it evokes, it brings to life what she's talking about. A slightly more distanced way.

Mark Atkin

It's absolutely brilliant, I highly recommend it. Now the interesting thing about this, it was made for it was commissioned by ARTE and because of the sort of German laws with ARTE I don't understand terribly well, but you always have to make a TV version as well, you cant just do online, something to do with their media regulations. So the television version was very different, it was structured very differently. They took the assets and gave it to a director and a editor to work together to do it. And it's so inferior, the TV version. For this reason.

The television version starts the way the iPad version ends, so the iPad version ends with this, massively powerful reveal, that at the end of it you're just, devastated. Now television can't do that. Television needs to [...] give you content and so it starts with that and so you're deprived of some of the power and meaning behind what was created. And development, whereas with the iPad version, the human mind copes incredibly well with things that are non-linear. The context is provided by the upper layer that you can bring down every so often that shows you the world of gangs in Guatemala. And you piece it all together and your mind copes perfectly well with that, TV linear you know you have to provide context and it's inferior. *Alma, a Tale of Violence*.

Jon Jerstad

And ARTE actually financed the app?

Mark Atkin

Yes they did didn't they. And it was also it was more than just a start up, I guess the CNC and all those people but.

Judith Aston

It's easier in France and Canada, the two places that are of leading in this kind of world. Get more government funding, they really are leading.

Mark Atkin

It's also possible to self publish these days in a way that has never been before. So that it doesn't need to, so that idea that it could cost 8,000. Actually it really can cost 8,000. Because quite a few people that make, well filmmakers have done collaborations with web designers in order to create interactive narratives. And having done that, then they're sort of making the framework sort of available usually you have to pay a small subscription because it's very cheap. But then makes it very easy for anybody to sort of import video, text, photograph, audio to create some sort of interactive narrative. So that leads me on to answer another one of your questions, really which is about. Getting close to your subjects.

I think that interactivity allows you to get far closer to your subject than film or television, can manage because, because you are interacting with them. Your getting closer to them, it's a very personal experience and because your making choices about where you go and how you interact. It's sort of, it's sort of bringing you much closer to them.

Rolf Orthel

Say I'm making a film in prison. I'm in this prison I want to portray 3 prisoners, take it as an example. And so I think what I learned over time is the one and only thing is that helps ideas form is for being there always, every day.

Something special happens if you stay on there. That's the only thing I've learned over the year, but this background is why I say you need to be there, because only then I can catch these very precious moments. And when I get those and I know how to edit the film it's a very fine piece of work. 5 minutes or an hour, one of them. But I don't understand too well where this interactivity now takes place. I don't get that.

Mark Atkin

Well first of all it's.... I don't think you should change the way you make those films. And there is always going to be, god willing, there is always going to be a place for those films and I am always going to be watching them. So the question then is more: do you want to or do you need to, or does your audience want, in addition to watching the film, would they want to get closer, would they want something more along the experience of being in the prison, for a length of time, so they then understand the gravity of those inmates. It might be able to provide that.

Rolf Orthel

In film I mean. This film being in a prison I'm supposed to know to make a film how you get that feel. Of here I am.

Mark Atkin

I'm not taking that away from you I'm saying that...

Don Zirpola

I think that the thing is you can make this elegant film (?) but we all have stuff we would love to put in movies. That's sitting there all of these gems, they might not be that focused at that particular subject. So by having the opportunity to have so many other layers that you've only shot. Can give you a rich opportunity to sell product yet again.

Oh yeah.

(?unclear?)

Rolf Orthel

To tell the same film in a slightly another way. I can get that yeah.

Mark Atkin

Well I'm not entirely sure that I agree with that. The reason being that I mean, often you get people think that online is the sort of place to put your DVD extras and little bits of film that didn't make it into the main film and that's never a good idea. Because if that wasn't good enough for the film its not good enough for online, in fact somehow, it's, if there are any faults in it they show up a bit more online. It's not, the stuff you put online needs to be specially shot you know for that purpose.

Don Zirpola

Well my point was that, its not that I'm talking that I have extra stuff its just that I have 14 hours, other I have 5 hours of really great stuff, my shows a hour long. There are so many different layers that I could possibly go into but I don't, I cant do that for the format that I chose to do. With our format I've got maybe another 3 hours of great material, to be able to go ahead and mine that material to get more layers and more meaning, so it could be, so you were talking about the experience of being in prison. It may be that there are a number of different layers of what that could be.

Rolf Orthel

It was actually very, very abnormal prison, the prison was an island. 3 kilometres long and 800 meters wide, 150 prisoners and when you get to the prison you get a key to your room. And it was for prisoners who were towards the end of their punishment. So they still had to do 1 or 2 years, so that they were socialised, before they enter society again. Because when they go back normally, 70% goes wrong again and when people go to Bastøy - the Norwegian island - it was 32%, so it was an incredible experience. And they take care of the island so they go to the woods and cut the trees, they take care of the sheep and all that, they build the houses and all that, they run the

boat to the main land. They can swim in summer, to the main land, two ever did and the others didn't because they know you have to go back to a serious prison then. That was the prison I was talking about.

Mark Atkin

Well I don't think that, I don't think that any of the stuff that I'm talking about or any of these new platforms, completely displace traditional filmmaking. I hope it doesn't and I like feature docs, I like people who spend years with their subjects, that's not the point you know. I'm not saying it's all over, it certainly isn't, there is always going to be a market for it. The thing is you've also got to think about the context under which that will be seen. And all those things like questions, how's it going to be noticed? And how are you going to bring an audience to it? It's increasingly important these days, it's not just about the film but it's, it's so hard to get those sorts of films financed, there are fewer and fewer.

And television is tending to being more formatted it because of the Internet. It wants something more serious because that sort of investment makes more sense to them. They also want something that's going to make a bit more noise on other platforms because that's going to bring more audience to it. So it's very difficult to do that for a one off feature doc, very difficult. And you increasingly have to think what's my, what is my audience going to do? Before, during and after the cinema moment, particularly if you're the sort of filmmaker that wants to change minds and instil compassion. There's great opportunities that could be seized in order to do that.

Judith Aston

Also they are changing aren't they, if you look at audience, younger people coming through, this is their medium. If you don't have a response to it on some level, then you know if you want to reach that audience. As a storyteller first and foremost, do I get my story out to the people I want to reach?

Jon Jerstad

But I suppose it's partly our job to create those trends, because it's not like a 22 year old is particularly going to create trends. A 22 year old will tend to look at what his or her friends are looking at. So I've become very inspired by what you are saying, terrified and very excited.

It's like the examples, *The Waste Land* all those sorts of things. A friend of mine made a film – very well-produced - about the sea gypsies on the coast of Burma. And then, he made an app. And it was how to keep your breath, how to breath. Because they were diving, yeah, whatever underneath. That is very simple. But it is a different experience, so on this island, did you say Norway?

Rolf Orthel

Norway.

Jon Jerstad

Norway ok, I'm from Norway. (?!)

Rolf Orthel

Bastøy

Jon Jerstad

Right that's a historical film.

Mark Atkin

That's *Project Moken* isn't it?

Jon Jerstad

Yes exactly yeah. So is that what you are thinking of, because it seems that the whole thing is slightly curious, relating to the film.

Mark Atkin

Well that's kind of good because it's the sort of thing that you can go to your friend in the pub and say "how long can you do it for?" And then they do it and

then that's bringing them into the world of this – the divers - absolutely. Something like that's very, very simple and it's the context in which it's used. Ok well that's something that you can do that gets people interested.

Jim Fara Awindor, NAFTI, Ghana

All this that were talking about, the different levels, different levels of platforms. Is it about keeping the audience? Or because I'm just coming from this perspective that, for us as teachers of documentary, I mean – what do we teach? Do we try to teach with, teach them that there are different platforms or how do you go about it... You know there are traditional forms of teaching documentary and all these other things that are, I mean these days, I'm just wondering so. Do we add it or how? Because I think that's why we are here, we do we go about teaching documentary with all these new forms?

Mark Atkin

Yeah, so, well. The way I think that people need to, need to have the confidence to know that the content they want to create is meant to reach an audience. And I do think you need to teach them how to reach that audience, so yes. You all, everyone needs to learn the skills that they don't have in order to bring them the requisite skills but that's the same on any other shoot, you know. The director can't necessarily edit, and the producer can't do the sound mix you know. So they know already that they can't do that and they need to bring that skill on. So the question actually is once you've worked that skill out, from the skill sets you're likely to need, on a production and you know when you need to deploy them. Then it kind of brings us into your question Heidi.

How, as a filmmaker do you sort of acquire the skills that you don't have? And so first of all I would say you need to recognise that the content that anyone is making now sort of goes into this rather, complex ecosystem. You need to maximize peoples' chances of discovering it and interacting with it. That's the essential thing it's not that it's going to be meaningful for you and it's going to be meaningful for the audience, it's increasingly requiring that as well. So in order for you to get funded in the first place, you need to do that.

So the difficulty we've currently got, because - first of all I have to say I don't know the answer to this question because I don't know so much about the academic world. The situation we've currently got which I was talking about to great lengths with Heidi last night, is that if you're a filmmaker today and you think "oh maybe I want a game in this, I want a game I want a game" of course you're not the right person to do a game, but how do you find someone that makes a game? You can't look in the yellow pages, or even if you did find someone with a game that you sort of, quite liked. And get through to the people that made it you don't really know how to initiate that conversation or how to judge the quality of the conversation. That is why we set up Crossover in the first place because we bring those people together. Get people to collectively define, what the creative universe that we all work in together looks like and start creating together, out of that. So we've been quite successful then in forging collaborations, which I've seen work, people set up new joint ventures and they go in together to, and get funded from commissions by larger game companies or from television or from film. I spent 6 months on, this year as a multi platform commissioner for Channel 4, filling in for the commissioner, who was writing a book at the time. Literally every single credible people who were coming in had done the Crossover lab before, and were coming in together with digital agencies. Or they knew enough about it and we put them together with the digital agency in order to create a multi platform project.

So, in a small way were trying to kick start that, but it is kind of a problem, what you want to do is to bring the disciplines together and get them working on a project together. Then they probably understand it. And if that becomes a part of your curriculum, then I think you'll be doing a good job and the kind of thing you want to do is to knit bits together, of your collage, in order so they can form these collaborations in the future.

Joram Ten Brink, University of Westminster

Two skills which don't exist at the moment in traditional films schools is code writing and design. From your experience how complicated is it or how long is

to, or how much interest is there in the market for people to engage in code writing and design.

Mark Atkin

I mean to say you're a creative film maker, its probably the, you're probably not at the mind-set that will lend itself to it and I admire the people who seem to be capable of doing that. What's more important is that you become somewhat literate, somewhat computer literate. That you understand a little bit what those codes do, you don't need to do it yourself. Increasingly were getting to the stage where, you don't need to know the code in order to operate complex systems. And so...

Joram Ten Brink

But if you want to engage the students in creating original work, they need to learn code writing.

They just need to work collaboratively with someone who does know that. That's the thing, so I think that's the idea, if you can bring people together to work on a joint project so that one person says something that person thinks, so they get the experience of work shopping and collaborating together. And then they'll know exactly when, that will sort all sorts of problems, one of the biggest problems is when the film maker gets all of the material together and think now I want to make something interactive, and bring on the coder at the end. That's like completely the wrong thing to do. And they need to be involved right at the very, very, very beginning.

Joram Ten Brink

The fact that these people have inside information on how code writing is done in order for them to really understand the possibilities of...

Mark Atkin

I think that it's an advantage but I don't think its necessary. I just think you need to know, you need to know how they match their work. And at what time they need to be involved, one key thing to always bear in mind. Is the kind of

production for web stuff is kind of the opposite for production of film. Where the shape of the film takes place at the very end in the editing room, you kind of mould a lot of stuff together and then you shape it. Where as with the web stuff, once you start layering the code that’s the shape it has taken and it cannot change. Which is why they need to be there at the beginning because, you need to know strategically how that’s going to be deployed because you cannot go back and change it, you’ll have to rip it all up and start from scratch.

Don Zirpola

I know a production designer his name is Alex McDowell, if you look at his website he’s got a production *Mandala*. And it’s really interesting because looking at the process of film making, feature film making, games, all of those activities the code writers where there right at the beginning. So that production development were the things that you were talking about.

Mark Atkin

So you need to be quite strategic about it as well because then you need to know when the film component, ideally you’ve got to, you’ve got a second unit making film stuff and for whatever web stuff or game stuff is. But you need, that needs to be filmed at the same time so you don’t have to go out and film all over again so you have to plan it properly it could save you a lot of time and money. Because then all you need there in the skills is a multi platform producer. Their job is to be that link person between the game stuff and the web stuff.

Judith Aston

If you’re dealing with documentary particularly, because you’re dealing with documentary subjects. You have a ethical responsibility to them so if your going to direct a documentary, I think if your going to treat it really properly you need to direct the transmedia elements as well. In order to be able to direct them you need to understand them, so I think film makers, you know it’s useful to learn some code and to really understand as much as you can. That way you can have that real ethical, overall understanding. I’ve seen a lot, quite a few documentary makers who’ve collaborated with games designers

and then if they then get control of that code they will then start treating that subject matter or, becoming a lot of game designers, coders sort of become pseudo directors.

They're actually in charge in the way that project is, you know you sit in an edit suite with a editor. And say where do you need to sit the coder. They need to be inside that process, if you get, I think true integrity, especially in documentary...

Mark Atkin

Knowledge is power isn't it.

Judith Aston

Exactly.

Marc Vandewalle, LUCA, Brussels, Belgium

It makes it more complex, less flexible. In the olden days you could have like a director or maybe filming himself. Bringing a sound guy in and doing his stuff for months, like you example being on the island with the inmates. In the editing room perhaps having a third person on board and that's about it. We could be really flexible we thought like wit this thing, you could do it but with all this stuff. You need a coder, you need some more people coming in...

Mark Atkin

I mean... in a way the more that gets created the more templates there are. So that then, you don't need the coder, now you can operate it. So there's, then it becomes like editing basically.

Marc Vandewalle

And it's, what I mean is like 10 years ago it became quite easy to become an editor or a director. Because like it used to be with this spool with the cutting it used to be very complex. Now you can do it at home you can do it on a tablet if you want. So the technicalities are becoming less and less complex. From what I, going back a bit to the olden days, thing is you need a whole crew you

need a team of 20 people, to make your interactive documentary, I'm not saying it's another way to go I mean.

Mark Atkin

You can do it if it's massively complex and massively ambitious. On the other hand you can do, you can do the things like The Guardian - things that Mandy was referring to. Now they've done a few they're really starting to feel like a format, chose to spend a lot of time with the coder. They've got the framework matched and in effect, you can do that really easily using Raconteur. You can make something that looks and feels exactly like that you know it's only going to take you a day and a half to learn it.

Judith Aston

The thing is the younger generation, well now younger people now who have grown up with computing, you know, they, they can pick up a camera they can learn that soon. But they can also code innately from birth.

Marc Vandewalle

You can even train those people into new skills, from what I got. They used to be trained as editors, cameras, sound, directors and now we've got different stuff besides that. To have them evolve into real documentary makers.

Judith Aston

You know we need to train them in storytelling, that's skills...

Mark Atkin

That's the most important, you know, you say your sort of terrified and I don't want you to feel terrified and I don't want you to think they should do anything that doesn't come naturally. But you should sort of think about your audience and what they think. And if you don't know how to do it then maybe think about working with somebody who does and as I say things are tending to become formatted, not in a bad way just in a sense that templates are available it's making it easier to publish. So that then the coding requirements recedes, it is more like editing.

I was working with, a good example, this last workshop we did for Oculus Rift. So we weren't using film for that, we were using animation and in order to get stuff into this 3D world. You know this 3D viewer so you can sort of navigate side to side and move towards things and if you stare at something you can activate it. So were using Unity which is a programme for designing 3D games we're now using Unity to create a 3D world. And it is kind of complex but we've got, kind of people who are, theatre guys and filmmakers, photographers starting to use basic Unity. And of course it's part of a day so its super difficult complex 3D, so the thing is you've got rain, up and down rain you want sort of griminess, you can control the sort of degree of griminess. It's very complex but you know what, you don't need coding to, because the coding's all very behind. You just need to learn how to operate it.

Judith Aston

If you could workshop with, with Oscar, as part of the developing. With part of the cross over development process of that documentary.

Mark Atkin

Oh not at all no. I mean he made it. He just finished it and then he, sort of very much at the last minute. He sort of entered it into the Expo as an interactive project. So pretty much two or so days before so we just looked at him and though oh god, this looks amazing. We didn't even have an Oculus to view It on so we got the, weird so of what it could look like it 3D. And obviously it was such a hit, people were there constantly all the time, remember he was there all the time as well so, if anyone had any questions about it they could just directly... though the interesting thing about that is that Alan Rusbridger who is the editor of the Guardian, he had a look at it and then he did, immediately ...made you think what the future of news was going to look like.

So that thing also about intimacy, when you're in a 3D immersive world. That level of intimacy is like 100 times, increased. Because you're sort of there, standing next to amazing events. In that case the event was this, well it's a son trying to understand his fathers role in the assassination of political

prisoners during the Pinochet regime. Very, very, very intense. There is, if you Google immersive journalism, you’ll see the sort of experiments that a woman called Nonny de la Peña is making in America. With a similar sort of creative 3D world, much more detailed and she, when you’re talking about prisons for instance wants to, all of the data that we know about Guantanamo bay, use interviews with people who have been there in order to go there and experience it for ourselves.

So in that sense you can go to places that, and experience it in a way that you can’t go there, you can’t go there. Through virtual reality you can, you understand things a hell of a lot better so one of the things that she did that we had at Sheffield was *Project Syria*, which starts in a street scene in Aleppo with some explosion. The audio is recorded there, they used thousands of different, sort of news from YouTube to sort of create the environment. They scanned people’s faces in so that actual representations of people are there, So then you sort of witness this terrible scene and then your transported to a Syrian refugee camp. So all these things that are going on in the background that we can use, that are sort of, that you can’t imagine terribly well, you’ve sort of somehow been there. That means that your level of empathy is massively raised. And you care a hell of a lot more.

Marc Vanderwalle

She did something [unclear?] She was in Brussels a year ago. Years ago and we were talking about her projects, she said it’s really going well because people feel very involved, they’re really experiencing some of the things that happen with the story. So to a journalist it’s very important of course to have your book, to feel and to make them feel what they should have felt, it’s a strange thing.

Heidi Gronauer, ZeLIG, Italy

And it sounds like, what you’re telling them it’s also, its more like finding something to get people, sensational ... that you greatly experience what you experience.

Mark Atkin

Sensorial.

Heidi Gronauer

Sensorial right. You create this, sorry! And the interesting thing, I think is that it's not all you make the experience for experience sake. But it's a project like, that really gets people involved who wouldn't look to it or wouldn't bother about it. So it has really, it still remains at the quantum part, finding a story that really attaches and changes people. This is the stuff I find interesting, it's not just like games, you use the gaming format to get people...

Judith Aston

It can be another way in just as documentary it's not supplementary but it's another way of treating, I mean ascent Oscar Raby's piece is documentary.

Rolf Orthel

There is a fresh border there also and it is believability that you can enhance the effect. With results. And when I see documentary stuff, I want it to be believable. So when you do too much to it, I'm gone, I leave the room, I don't watch, I switch. So there is another side to this, trying to enhance the effect, the best ends and all that, well I may think I won't want that. It's me.

Judith Aston

It's not about the style its how you chose to treat it, you can be as naturalistic across any, but you can be naturalistic across any medium. You can be very poetic and take artistic license, that's about the integrity of the maker rather than the platform.

Rolf Orthel

Sure.

Mark Atkin

There was something that Mandy was saying about, how the graphics were a bit rugged. So, and that's you're talking about memory from a long time ago

were talking about a fractured personality, somehow represented in the environment through navigating and the things that you see.

Jon Jerstad

Can I just ask you something? In your Powerpoint there was a really interesting slide which I just didn't have mental speed to keep up.

[To enhance the speeds, of the slides?]

Do you have a pill I could take?

I was quite interested in some of those slides, some of us were just a little, you were doing a very good job to be on time.

Mark Atkin

I was really, I was going way too fast! I do apologise. But this is the perfect opportunity to elaborate on anything you were questioning. I don't think, I'm not sure, I don't know...

Jon Jerstad

You were a little bit more detailed on the productions on. Because those things were interesting for everybody but there are also a few things that...

Mark Atkin

I think that what I was trying to do was get elements of a process that really last quite a long time. And try show some of the building blocks that we use to try building something that's actually quite complex. And I really don't want you to feel terrified but actually if you go through those processes one by one and spend a long time on each one of them. By the time you get to the end you've built something complex without even realising it. And in fact it isn't really complex its just what your doing is just tapping into normal human behaviours and that becomes quite instinctive and natural in the end. But it's just how do you tune into those things in the end.

Because ultimately what I was trying to say is you need to allow yourself to go into that space and one of the best ways of doing that is to imagine scenarios in which that is being used. Those are difficult questions because those 5 stages of interaction that I mentioned. Almost everybody starts right in the middle at first time engagement, just assume that somehow or other people are going to find out about it. In the old days it was somebody else's job to do that, well it kind of is but the thing is that, that job doesn't really work any more, they still do it, its kind of ineffective. So now actually you need to do it.

Delegate

What you said is a possibility for example 5 steps...

Jon Jerstad

Well for instance various diagrams and interesting things that you were beginning to touch on and I got the impression of a complexity but not too much. You know how looking through it documentary training I'm not afraid of being terrified.

Judith Aston

You wouldn't be doing what you are doing would you.

Mark Atkin

That's a good point yes, I work with Penny Woolcock who is a great British filmmaker and I worked with her on a project and she said that she's one of those people who walk steadfastly towards trouble.

Judith Aston

Well you're dealing with real lives and you're trying to send them to an audience and that's a terrifying thing to do.

Yes I would also argue that part of the creative process is to put yourself a little bit outside of the comfort zone. Yeah, difficult.

Jon Jerstad

Well this is my question because we sometimes say that we are digesting something on behalf of the audience so we go through a process to make something more available, an experience or a. So we, interactive there becomes kind of questions there. I mean they have to do this process all of which effects could be unavailable, I realise it's not, I don't think that, that's really the case we need a strong story but. If we move it towards the games and where you have multiple lines of action at least observational documentaries are a little bit easier to imagine. It could be interesting making observational documentaries with different plots.

Mark Atkin

Well I mean in that scenario you could decide that you're going to follow one character very carefully through the process and see it through their point of view. Or you could do it through somebody else's eyes. But you don't need to do that I mean part of the sort of the thinking through that process is working out what is necessary and what isn't necessary.

Heidi Gronauer

Yeah we are running out of time we have to switch to the groups so I wanted to ask do you have some slides for... I don't know.

Mark Atkin

Yeah I suppose so I mean I spent years and years homing and evolving a kind of process, that in the end if you, I think its so distilled and compressed that if you try and take that and then apply it without, it's not 100% going to be affective. Its sort of, these are the sort of the number of sort of benchmarks. It's, what I am trying to say is its rules of elements in a process that takes a period of time, if you without, without using those carefully building blocks and think thinking that goes into them, it doesn't necessarily make any sense, it could be slightly misused, is partly what I am trying to say.

Jon Jerstad

Becoming more skilled with how to collaborate with you.

Mark Atkin

That would be nice. And so I don't quite know what to say, they won't make 100, they won't make 10 cents just by themselves I don't think. They will make some kind of a sense and you could use them. But I would invite you to come to a Crossover Lab one day. I'll give you all my cards and good luck.

Thank you. (Applause)

And I would also encourage everyone to come to DocFest but...