

Lead Artist Bios

Lance Weiler is a storyteller, entrepreneur and thought leader. An alumnus of the Sundance Screenwriting Lab, he is recognized as a pioneer in mixing storytelling and technology. WIRED magazine named him “One of twenty-five people helping to re-invent entertainment” when he disrupted the industry with the release of his first feature, *The Last Broadcast*. Weiler co-wrote, co-directed and co-produced, and ultimately self-distributed *The Last Broadcast* which was made for \$900 dollars and went on to gross over \$5 million dollars as the first all-digital release of a motion picture to theaters via satellite. The distribution methods that Weiler introduced have since become the standard for digital cinema distribution today. After the success of *The Last Broadcast*, he began to work extensively as a writer, director, and producer, developing TV and film properties for FOX, TNT, Starz and Endomel.

Weiler approaches his work from a systems thinking perspective. He often develops new methods and technologies to tell stories and reach audiences in innovative ways. For instance, he created a cinema ARG (augmented reality game) around his second feature *Head Trauma*. Over 2.5 million people experienced the game via theaters, mobile drive-ins, phones and online. In recognition of these cinematic innovations, *Businessweek* named Lance “One of the 18 Who Changed Hollywood.” Others on the list included Thomas Edison, George Lucas and Steve Jobs.

In addition to his own projects, Lance often collaborates with other storytellers. In 2010, Lance was nominated for an International Emmy in digital fiction for his work on *Collapsus: The Energy Risk Conspiracy*. In 2014, Lance was Creative Director and Experience Designer of *Body/Mind/Change*, an immersive storytelling project in collaboration with David Cronenberg, TIFF, and the CFC. *Body/Mind/Change* was recognized for its innovative use of story and code, winning the MUSE Jim Blackaby Ingenuity Award and receiving a Webby Honorable Mention in the Games and Augmented Reality category.

Since 2013, Lance has been a Founding Member & Director of the Columbia University School of the Arts’ Digital Storytelling Lab (DSL), leading the lab’s activities and helping to shape its enduring vision. The DSL’s mission, to explore new forms and functions of storytelling while encouraging cross-disciplinary collaboration, focuses specifically on the ways in which story can be harnessed as a tool to innovate, educate, mobilize, communicate, and entertain.

Weiler’s creative uses of emergent technology have made him a highly sought-after thought leader in the entertainment industry – in particular supporting companies in reshaping their media holdings for the 21st Century. He has consulted on programs and

initiatives for IBM, Twitter, Microsoft, Samsung, Chernin Entertainment, Ubisoft, Penguin Books, the U.S. State Department, CAA, Ogilvy, McCann-Erickson and others. In the process, he has helped to create, design and shape entertainment properties that have reached billions of people.

Over the course of his career, Lance has developed a unique understanding of interdisciplinary teams and how to grow businesses in an ever-shifting digital landscape. After speaking at the World Economic Forum in 2012, Lance was invited to serve on two steering committees, one focused on the Future of Content Creation and the other centered on Digital Governance.

Lance is a world-renowned speaker. He has given talks at UN and World Economic Forum events, MIT, USC, NYU, Sundance, Cannes, SXSW, Tribeca, Toronto, Berlin and Los Angeles Film Festivals, Games for Change, the Future of Storytelling Summit, VPROs Conference of the Curious and TED.

In addition, Lance has written for publications such as Quartz, GOOD Magazine, Filmmaker and IndieWire on the future of storytelling.

Nick Fortugno is an interactive narrative designer and game designer based in New York City. Nick is a Lead Artist on the Frankenstein A.I. project, and has worked extensively on interactive narrative projects in a variety of formats. He is founder and principal of Playmatics(www.playmatics.com), a interactive development company. Playmatics has created a variety of digital and real-world experiences for organizations including Red Bull, AMC (such as the CableFAX award winning Breaking Bad: The Interrogation), Disney, American Museum of Natural History, the Corporation of Public Broadcasting, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, and the Red Cross/Red Crescent. For the past ten years, Fortugno has been a designer, writer and project manager on dozens of commercial and serious games, and served as lead designer on the downloadable blockbuster Diner Dash and the award-winning serious game Ayiti: The Cost of Life. Nick is also a co-founder of the Come Out and Play street games festival (www.comeoutandplay.org) hosted in New York City and Amsterdam since 2006, and co-creator of the Big Urban Game for Minneapolis/St. Paul in 2003. Nick has taught game design and interactive narrative design for 15 years at institutions such as Columbia University and the Parsons School of Design, and has participated in the construction of game design and immersive storytelling curriculum. Some of Nick's writing about interactive narrative can be found in the anthology Well-Played 1.0: Video Game, Value, and Meaning, published by ETC-Press.

Rachel Ginsberg's work explores and bridges the space between story and experience, both professionally and artistically. Having spent years working in retail early on in her career, Rachel is particularly sensitive to the emotional nuances of interpersonal interactions, and thinks a lot about that when designing experiences of all kinds, across virtual and physical environments. As a Creative Strategist and Experience Designer for Frankenstein AI, Rachel has worked across the project to ensure alignment between the vision and messaging of this multi-year initiative and the creative, data design, and interaction design of the installation itself.

In addition to a multidisciplinary strategy practice, Rachel is a member of Columbia University School of the Arts' Digital Storytelling Lab, where she helps to design frameworks merging story, participatory culture, play, performance, design thinking, and emerging technology. She supports the overall strategic vision of the lab, working to transform prototypes into methodologies suitable to be deployed by practitioners all over the world within all different kinds of organizations. In addition, Rachel co-teaches an executive education seminar on Strategic Storytelling at Columbia University.

Over the past few years, Rachel has had the pleasure to contribute to talented teams whose work has been executed across organizations large and small, for clients like Microsoft, Refinery29, Target, Cooper Hewitt Design Museum, L'Oreal, Columbia Technology Ventures, PwC Charitable Foundation, Nike, Yale Medicine, and the Columbia University Center for Veteran Transition and Integration.

Short bios

Lance Weiler is an award-winning writer/director/producer and founding director of the Columbia University School of the Arts' Digital Storytelling Lab. His work harnesses emerging technologies and spans feature films, television, immersive theater, games, and installations.

Nicholas Fortugno is a designer of interactive narratives and digital and real-world games. His work includes the blockbuster game Diner Dash, award-winning e-comics for AMC, and interactive story projects for Disney, HBO, A&E, and BBC.

Rachel Ginsberg's work bridges the space between story and experience, professionally and artistically. She collaborates regularly with the Columbia University School of the Arts' Digital Storytelling Lab on projects across story, play, emerging technology, and impact.