

## **VIEW Conference: Autumn in Turin**

November 12, 2008

From the Animated Travels blog on Animation Blogspot:

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### **VIEW Conference visitors The Hive filmmaking collective presents their credentials and contemplates transformation**

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Those in the industry are doing the best to assuage the anxiety. "We're doing another *Shrek*, another *Kung Fu Panda*, and another *Madagascar*," shrugged Shelly Page of PDI-Dreamworks in a session dedicated to recruiting.

The weather provided a fine commentary for this year's theme of the VIEW Conference: transformation. "This year there is an economic crisis," conference director Maria Elena Gutierrez reminds us grimly, bemoaning various programs and sponsors, which were cut at the last minute.

In the four years of its existence the VIEW Conference (which transformed itself from the Virtuality Conference) has much to be proud of: it is now the second largest graphic media conference in Europe. Yet there is the feeling of the razor's edge here: work in this young art is hard to come by, and the best end up... outside the country. For most of the Italian students, the question seemed to be asking not if they should jump to working overseas, but when – after graduation or after some professional experience.

Again under the banner of transformation, a panel of experts were urging us to take "visual culture" seriously. They included author Michael Rubin, whose *Droidmaker* book narrates the groundbreaking work of LucasArts computer department – and the lack of care they showed about archiving or documenting their work. "There is too much going on for any thorough discussion of what is going on," ironized Glen Entis of Electronic Arts and DreamWorks Interactive. Still, he pointed to cultural icons and iconic events such as the 1913 Armory Show, which launched modern art in the United States as making a difference. Game developer and designer Will Wright marvelled at how people are becoming content creators, and that in the future the problem would be one of "filtering" for cultural indicators.

Yet there is no better place in the world to get a handle on the historical perspective of things. After all, wherever you look in Turin, history stares you in the face. From the elaborate facades and well-ordered porticos from the 1800s, to the medieval forts and renaissance palazzos, you are reminded that recessions, even depressions are the blink of an eye in historical time. The most famous landmark in Turin, the Mole Antonelliana began as an observatory. It has been transformed into a museum of cinema.

Turin has always been an industrial hub of Italy, but successive crises at Fiat have convinced the city fathers that they need to expand their market. Three years ago, as the entire city was a construction site preparing for the 2006 Winter Olympics, the city and region began investing in incubator projects, including a virtuality and multimedia park and a rumoured cinema park. Much of the action has been around the Turin Polytechnic University. "The desire is that Turin become the Silicon Valley of Italy," Maria Elena shrugs after a long opening day, making it clear that the objective is still a ways away.

Clearly, the VIEW Conference is part of that strategy. Bringing the best of both the games and CGI community together, the conference is clearly inspiring a new generation of Italian gamemakers and students. Maybe some of them will stay in Italy.

Tomorrow: Will Wright tells us about his hit game *Spore*.

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