JORDAN SPARKS

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

2024

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Who Am I?

Jordan Sparks – M.A., B.F.A.

- **Multimedia Artist, Designer, and Educator**
  - Graphic Design, Video, Interactive Media, and more.
  - Research on Multimedia/Games for Social Change
  - Taught 15,000+ students in Ontario and Internationally
  - Founder of Shining Spark Entertainment Ltd
  - Friendly Neighbourhood Sparky-Man

- **Graduate of Toronto Metropolitan University**
  - Master of Arts (Media Production)
  - Bachelor of Fine Arts (New Media)

- **Notable Employers:** Humber College, Hand-Eye Society, Royal Ontario Museum, TSN, TMU, and more!

Jordan Sparks
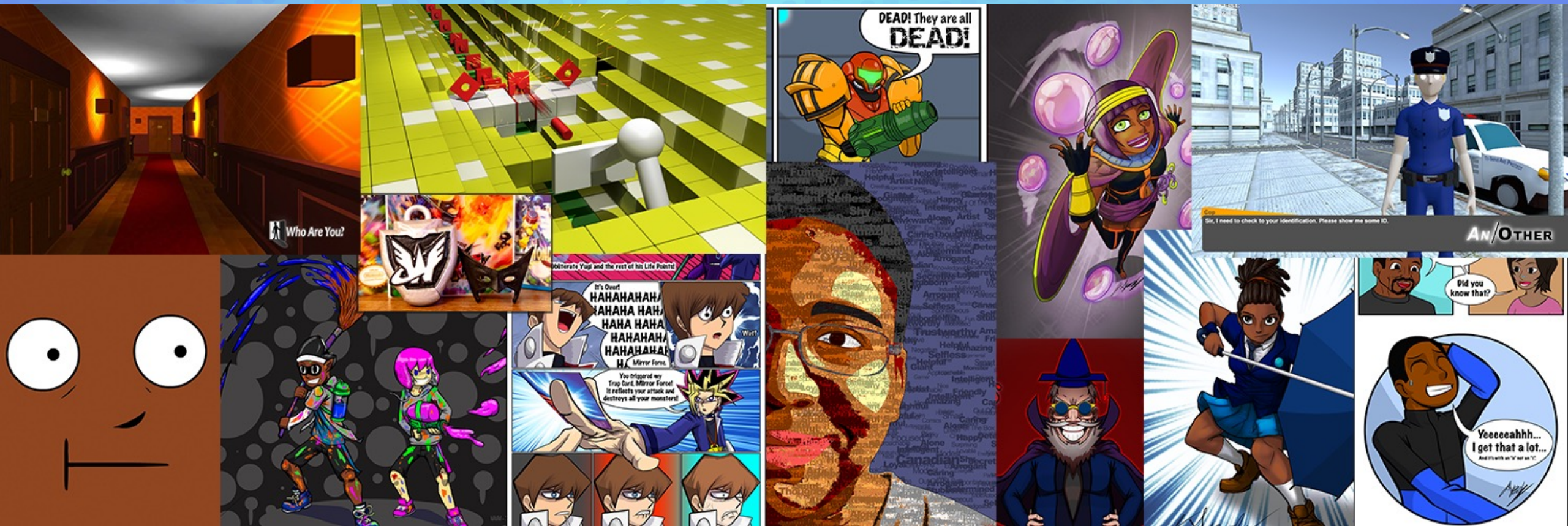
Portfolio: GrindSpark.com

MULTIMEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Spark Comics

2009 – Present

My longest ongoing project, Spark Comics is my self-published original web comic series. Drawn in a comedic and non-sequitur format, Spark Comics has long been my creative outlet to experiment and evolve my artistic and storytelling skills with random stories in genres like parody, comedy, politics, and personal experience. Over 100 pages of Spark Comics have been published.

In addition to being shared widely on various social media and art channels, it also resulted in the development of the Spark Comics website that has served as its main hub and the later creation of the *Spark Comic Jam* event at my Shining Spark Entertainment studio. Spark Comics has influenced many of my other projects and products.

You can read Spark Comics at SparkComic.com
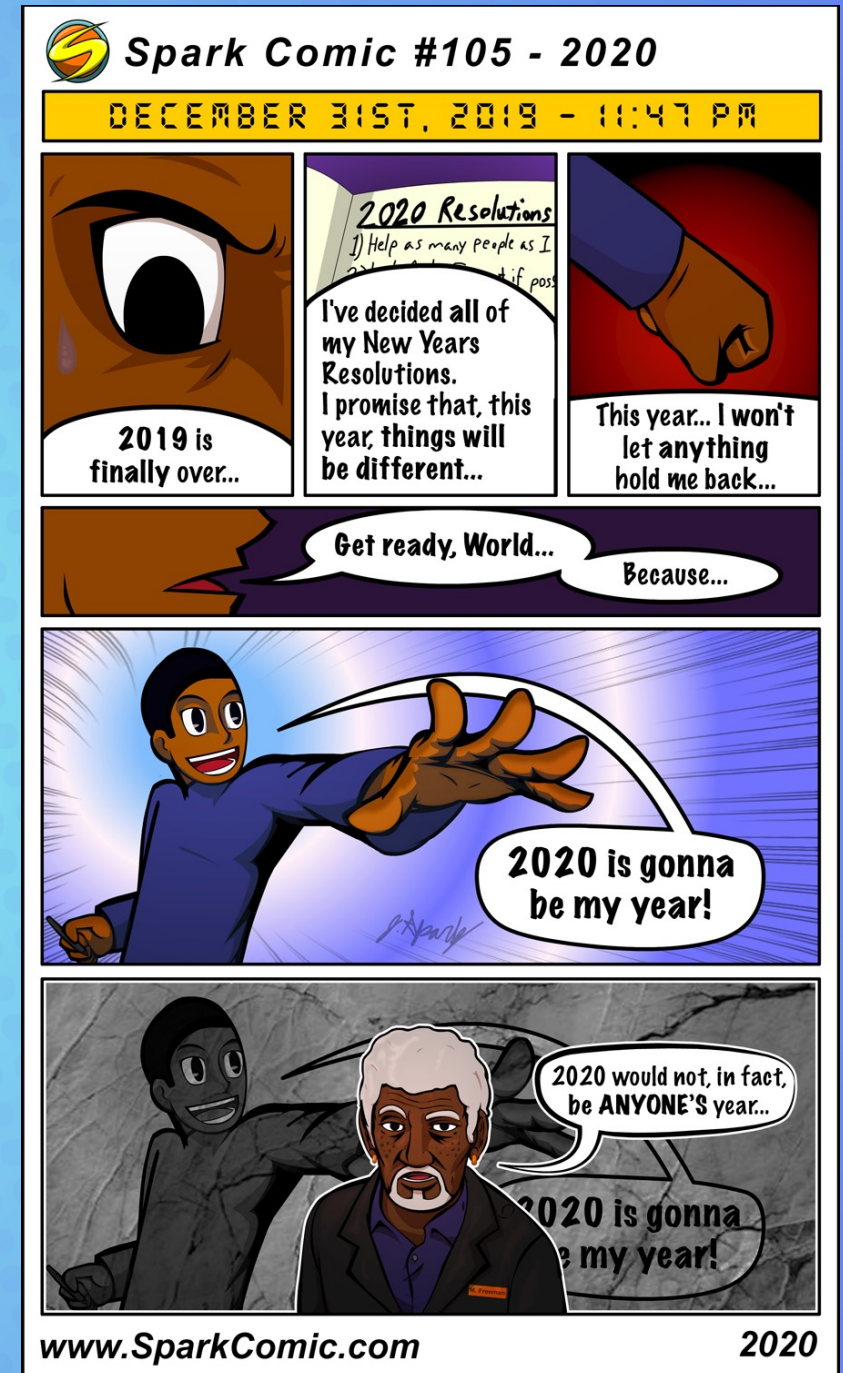
Online Broadcasting

2015 – Present

In 2015, I was contracted by Canadian TV Network *TSN – The Sports Network* to set up their online broadcast capabilities for Twitch streaming in OBS and made a graphic broadcast layout for their shows.
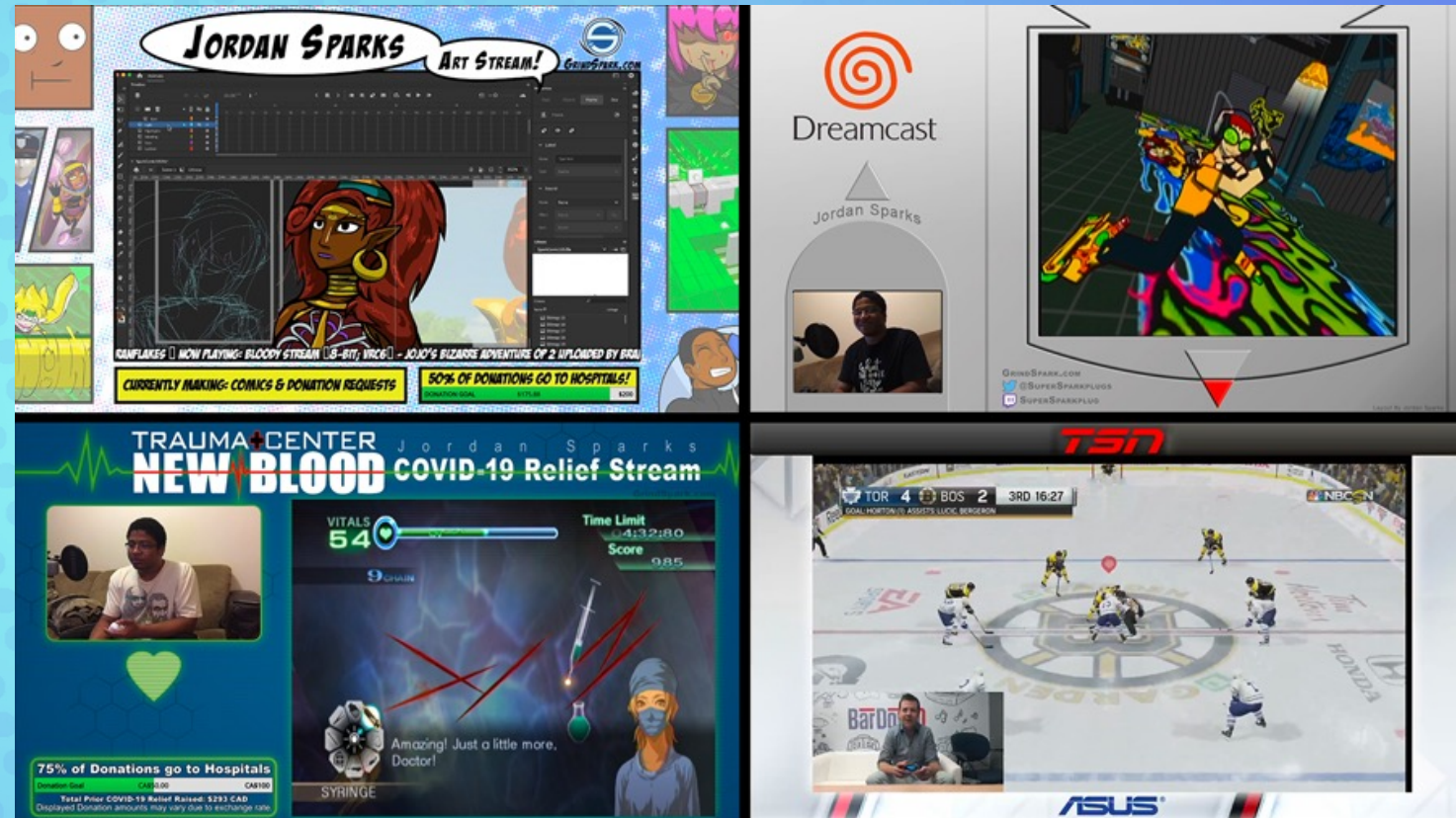
In 2020, I began streaming on my own with a series of Charity Streams raising money for UHN Hospitals and the Black Legal Action Centre at the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic. I make unique graphic layouts for almost every show.

Since then, I have performed many live personal broadcasts, trained others to do so, and broadcasted major live events professionally for the Hand Eye Society (HES) to the benefit of the global Video Game Community. My broadcasting expertise has also enhanced how I teach online for Humber College and other clients.

My Twitch: https://twitch.tv/supersparkplug
HES: https://www.twitch.tv/handeyesociety
Graphic Layouts: https://imgur.com/a/ENFQvBW

Multimedia Researcher

2010 – 2015

Shortly after enrolling at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU, formerly Ryerson University), I was hired as a Research Assistant for the CIM2 & RML Multimedia Research Laboratory, a TMU research hub led by Dr Ling Guan. I supported computer engineers & experts on many projects involving Computer Vision, CAVEs, VR, AR, Medical Imaging, Robotics, and other advanced Interactive Technologies.

Among my many tasks, I created graphics, digital designs, and 3D models. Most notably, I was also the Director and Video Editor for all of the lab's documentation videos detailing their many research projects. These videos marketed their projects to the public and businesses for funding.

I held this position for almost my entire time studying at TMU until I graduated. This role greatly influenced my outlook on research and technology.
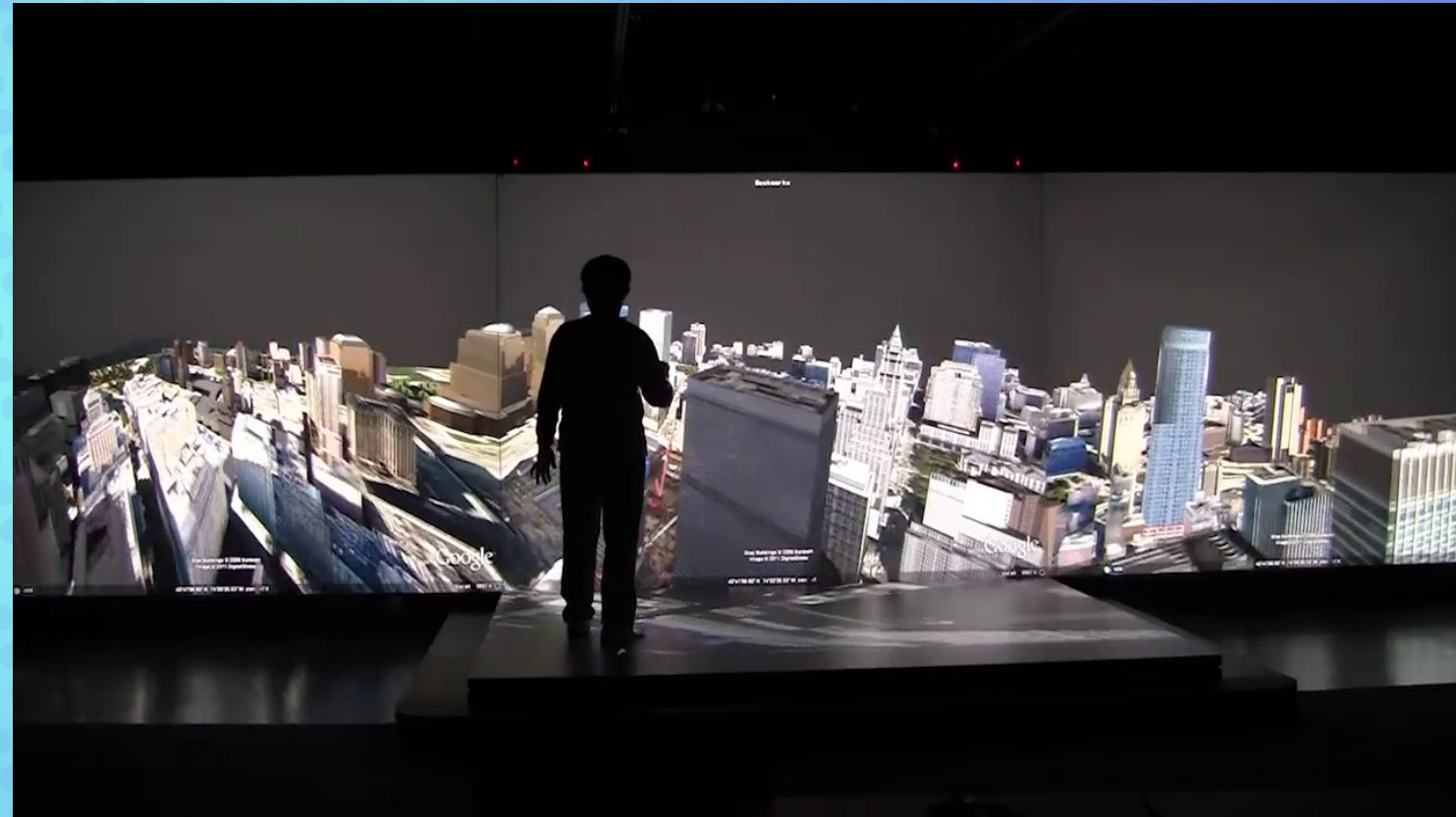
This is a Virtual Reality CAVE with moving walls and is currently interactively navigating a city in Google Earth.

Prop Design

2017 – Present

Inspired by the popular anime *Yu-Gi-Oh!*, I recreated one of its most iconic items, the pyramid-shaped Millennium Puzzle.

Developing the digital model from scratch in Autodesk Maya, I 3D printed and polished this recreated prop with assistance from my creative colleague Tyler Freedman, The result is a very large and accurate, yet lightweight prop that can be wearable with a string. The creation & documentation of this project leveraged my skills in Digital Design, Product Design, 3D Printing/Modeling, Prototyping, and Photography.

I have been 3D Printing since 2012. However, the Millennium Puzzle project began my love of Prop Recreation. Today, I custom recreate props from other games, movies, TV, and artifact data for fun, education, commission.
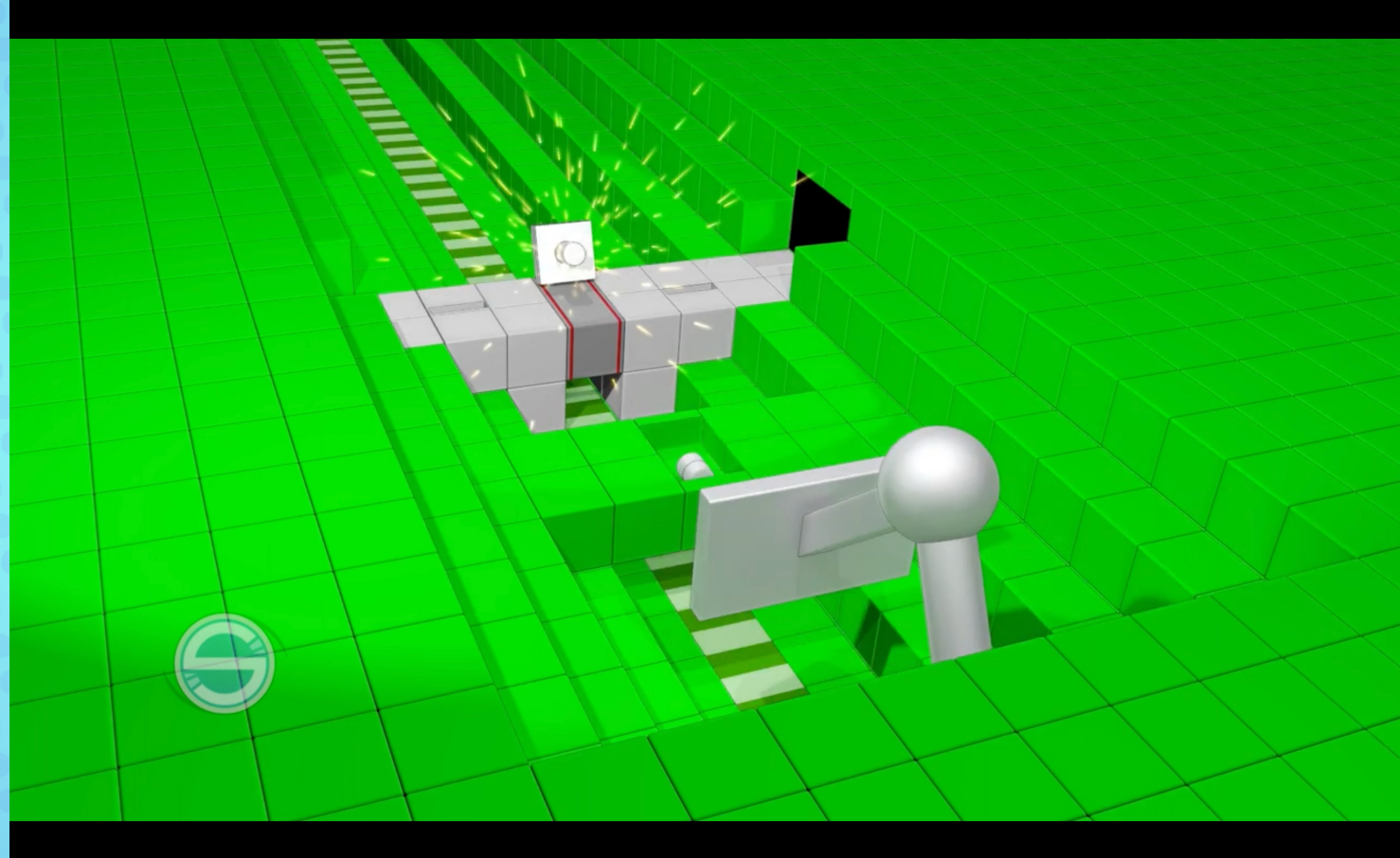
Rebuilt To Scale

2019

Inspired by the musical Nintendo game Rhythm Heaven, I developed a high-definition 3D animation that adapted its iconic 'Built To Scale' minigame.

Created in Autodesk Maya, I also used Render Farms to render the animation over several passes and composited it in Adobe After Effects and Premiere Pro to achieve a colourful art style.

This project became rather well known amongst the Rhythm Heaven community and I was invited to recreate a short part of it for their Rhythm Heaven Reanimated project featuring animators from around the world.

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wyt1Le2XcDc
Collab (3:48): https://www.newgrounds.com/portal/view/768527

All 4 One (Animator)

2018

I was contracted by Cherrydale Productions as their new <u>Motion Graphics Animator</u> for their award-nominated web series All 4 One.

Working with a diverse range of studio staff and producers, I not only performed animation duties for 3 episodes of All 4 One, but also used my expertise to completely redesign their graphics & animation pipeline to be far more efficient than their previous animation process, making production much faster and easier to adjust for revisions.

Episodes
17: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Y7IkJXJLfQ
19: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CF7J6wEuUE
20: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vomZqiK7G8c

INTERACTIVE HIGHLIGHTS

An/Other

2015

An/Other is a short game for social change about a typical day…

Presented without context to most players, An/Other was developed as my Thesis project to earn my Masters of Media Production, alongside an 80-page thesis paper, to adapt extensive cultural and social science research into an impactful short story game experience.

An/Other was immensely popular; gaining wide recognition through game exhibitions and features by major news outlets such as the Toronto Star & CityNews. Additionally, I am regularly asked to talk about An/Other as a guest lecturer at Canadian Universities and Colleges to this day. An/Other is my most well-known game project and a shining example of my 'Games For Social Change' research.

Game: https://grindspark.itch.io/an-other
Trailer: https://vimeo.com/151628342

An/Other was covered by multiple major Canadian news outlets. Canadian news station CityNews broadcasted a TV report (above) exclusively about An/Other at the Toronto Comic Arts Festival: Comics X Games exhibition in 2016, which is being showcased behind acclaimed Journalist Ginella Massa as she discusses the game for a national audience.

Civic Story

Civic Story is a 3D Visual Novel video game by my studio, Shining Spark Entertainment. As a Political Education game, Players learn about Canadian Civics & Politics and how it impacts us all over a lighthearted, accessible, and relatable 8-chapter interactive parody. As a new Civic Education experience, Civic Story is designed to increase civic literacy and inspire people to vote.

In addition to conceptualizing Civic Story, I managed its development as the **Director, Producer, Designer, Animator, 2D Artist, and Voice Actor** alongside my diverse team. Development included research with Doctors, Scholars, and other experts to inspire our content on how politics affects different fields. Discussions are ongoing with educators on potentially applying Civic Story to classrooms.

Civic Story has shipped and is currently for digital sale on Steam & Itch. For more info, go to:

https://ShiningSparkEnt.com/civicstory


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FEST Technology

2020 – Present

As the COVID-19 pandemic shut down art spaces & plunged the world into despair, I was hired as the Director of Technology at the **Hand Eye Society (HES)** to lead the non-profit online. In the process, I invented **FEST (Festival Event Software Template),** an online event platform solution based in the Twine open-source game engine and Twee.

FEST let HES and other arts orgs to safely run interactive virtual festivals seen around the world, such as Super FESTival, Wordplay and more, providing valuable exhibition opportunities for local and international artists. CanZine and the Toronto Comic Arts Festival ran their events on FEST, resulting in over $150,000 in product sales.

I direct FEST's development and curate HES festivals. It's been used for 10 events. You can find an archive of Super FESTival 2022 below.

Super FESTival 2022:
https://handeyesociety.itch.io/super-festival-2022
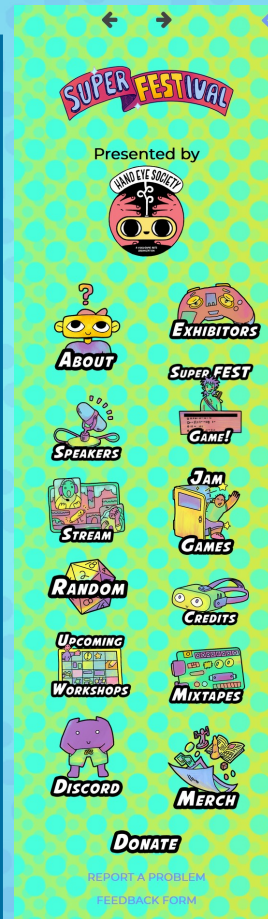
This is a sample from Super FESTival 2022. FEST also hosted Super FESTival 2023 in November 2023

Who Are You?

Who Are You? is a short interactive psychology test where players answer questions in the form of doors, providing an indication of their psyche. However, the journey through the game is just as, if not more, meaningful than the answers.

Who Are You? was developed in Unity as my Bachelor's Thesis project at Ryerson University to earn my Bachelor of Fine Arts in New Media. It was developed in collaboration with University of Toronto professor Jacob Hirsh to apply psychology research to games. It was featured in several Toronto game exhibitions to highly positive reception.

Game: grindspark.itch.io/who-are-you
Trailer: https://vimeo.com/91913992

Sparky Konga

2013

My first independent game was a musical tech demo based on the DK Bongo controller.

Using the open-source tool Pure Data, I hacked the controller and engineered a new software interface called "Sparky Konga" that allowed the DK Bongos to work with a wide variety of software. I then applied this interface to Unity to create an interactive audio-visual experience. It premiered in the Maximum Exposure 2013 art exhibition as my first gallery piece.

Once finished, I released the Sparky Konga framework for free for anyone to use.

Github: github.com/SuperSparkplug/SparkyKonga
Video: https://vimeo.com/63044764

Welcome to Sparky Konga! An accessible audio-visual experience being developed for the Nintendo DK Bongos.

TEACHING HIGHLIGHTS

Game Maker's Union

2012 – 2015

I was greatly involved in the student community at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU, formerly Ryerson University) and was involved in helping several student groups. I was prominently involved in the Game Maker's Union (GMU), a game development student group at TMU, where I took leadership of the club and pivoted it into an Educational organization. I organized and marketed all GMU workshops and events and instructed some of them. I was also directly responsible for the GMU's direction, planning, management, industry outreach, and community presence.

As a result, between 2012 – 2015, this club of originally 8 students became an inclusive community of 500+ members that also included students from TMU and other institutions. The GMU won awards from the Students Union for our successful events and high level of student engagement. The GMU still exists today without my involvement.

Jordan Sparks teaching one of his popular 3D Modeling workshops in Autodesk Maya to a full computer lab of students coming from various institutions & academic backgrounds. Jordan organized, designed, and instructed this and other workshops for the Game Maker's Union.

Royal Ontario Museum

After graduating, I was hired as the first Makerspace Technician/Educator at the Royal Ontario Museum. I maintained Makerspace Equipment, collaborated with teachers, and led digital learning lessons. I was responsible for teaching complimentary lessons based on history, art, science, Indigenous knowledge, games, astronomy, geology, archeology, paleontology, and biodiversity from a creative and digital learning methodology that related the ancient past and science to modern technologies. I also designed the curriculum of several programs and did some IT services.

I taught lessons in the Museum, at schools, and remotely. I had excellent rapport with both students and teachers.

As the lead Makerspace Technician/Educator, I had the most hours and experience with the position prior to my departure from the Museum. I had a record of teaching over 5000 students across Ontario through this position.

© Royal Ontario Museum

Jordan Sparks taught over 5000 students for the Royal Ontario Museum. He would teach both in the Museum as well as travel to visit and teach in schools & venues across Ontario. Pictured Ontario students are from the **Hack The ROM** program, where Jordan instructed his original curriculum to teach kids how to make Indigenous inspired video games with Scratch & Twine.

Freelance Consultant

2011 – Present

Since my student days, many organizations have sought me out to consult for educational programs, teach workshops, or provide lectures for local and international clients in-person and remotely. I now do **Professional Freelance Consulting** in Art, Tech, and Education. My past clients include Interactive Ontario, TMU, Ladies Learning Code, ICTC, TSN, and others.

My responsibilities with vary depending on the client, but I tend to develop original curriculum and teach multiple subjects for audiences from all walks of life. Subjects include Game Design, 3D Modeling, Programming, History, Tech/Safety Training, and more.

I also guest lectured to share my Multimedia & Games For Social Change research at various institutions, such as **Sheridan College, University of Toronto, and TMU.**

Jordan Sparks teaching Unity game development to Black youth for Interactive Ontario. This program was taught in Toronto and Ottawa. This photo is from the Ottawa program. He was also a member of Interactive Ontario's Black Youth Action Plan Advisory Board.
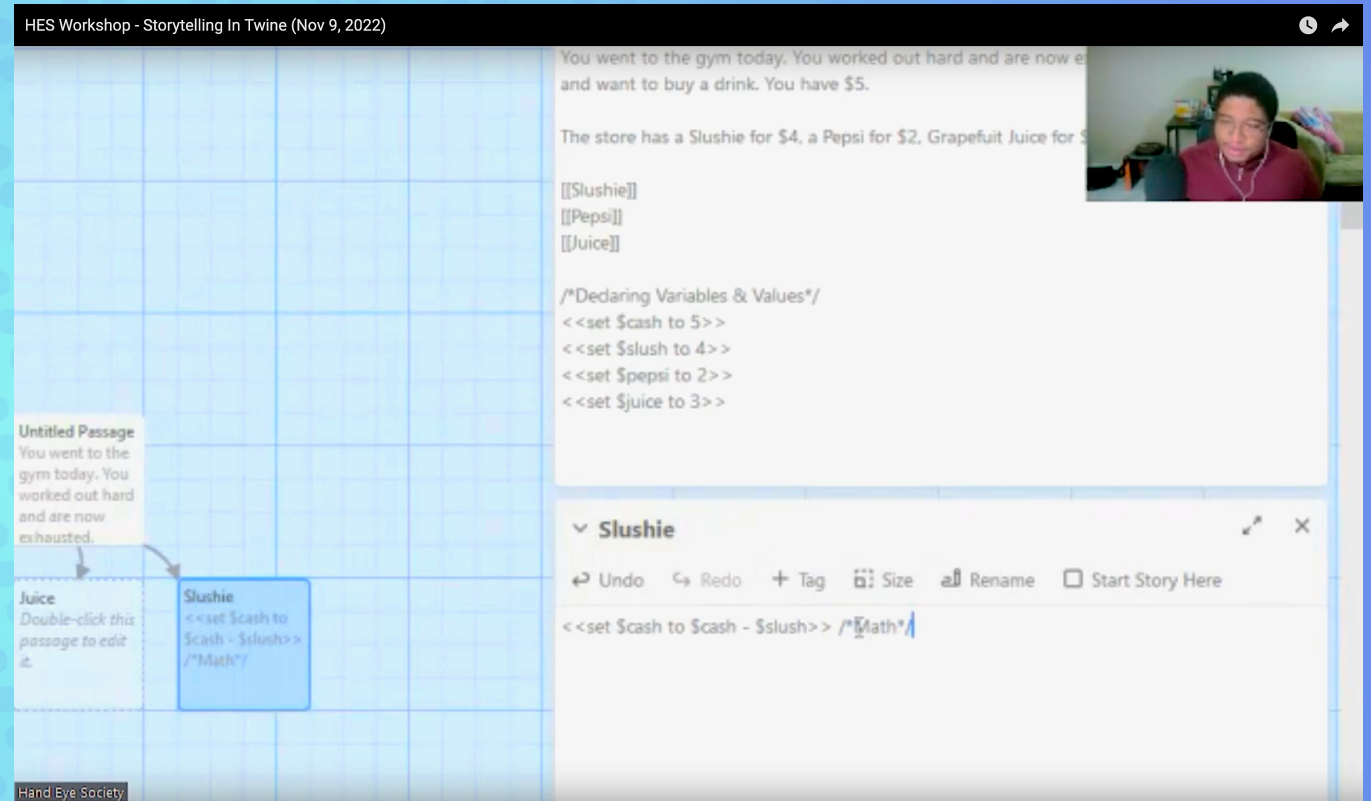
Hand Eye Society

2017 - Present

From 2017 - 2020, the Hand Eye Society (HES) contracted me to assist with games programs across Toronto. I led several workshops, summer camps, and an Artist Residency.

In 2020, I was promoted to **Director of Technology & Workshop Coordinator**. Since then, I've played a pivotal role in their operations. I shifted all Programming, Workshops, and Festivals online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and established new initiatives, such as Broadcasting. I lead & curate most of our events/festivals with my team, mange many game & media industry stakeholders, and invented FEST. I also lead the Futures Forward program that mentors early-stage game studios.

My contributions greatly expanded HES' range of programming and and widened its role in the greater Game and Arts Community.

A screenshot of Jordan Sparks teaching his *Storytelling In Twine* Online Workshop on how to create interactive stories in the Twine game engine. Jordan oversees the planning and organizing of the Hand Eye Society's workshop programs for the community. He teaches several of the workshops, such as this one, while also arranging for Hand Eye Society Staff and other developers in the game community to instruct other offerings. Workshop students for our online workshops come from across Canada and all around the world, such as the United States, Europe, and South America.

Humber College

2020 – Present

As 2020 ended, I was hired as a **Part-Time Professor** at Humber College teaching the GAME 160 – Game Production 1 course in 2021. There I designed original curriculum to teach project management, art, design, and UX principles, and concept development to hundreds of Game Programming students entirely remotely using online streaming technologies and Blackboard.

In 2022, I also began teaching GAME 314 – Professional Practice as the Game Industry Liaison and Career Coach for this job seeking course. In this course, I teach various

I have received praise from both students and faculty on the enjoyable and engaging nature of my classes and my teaching method.
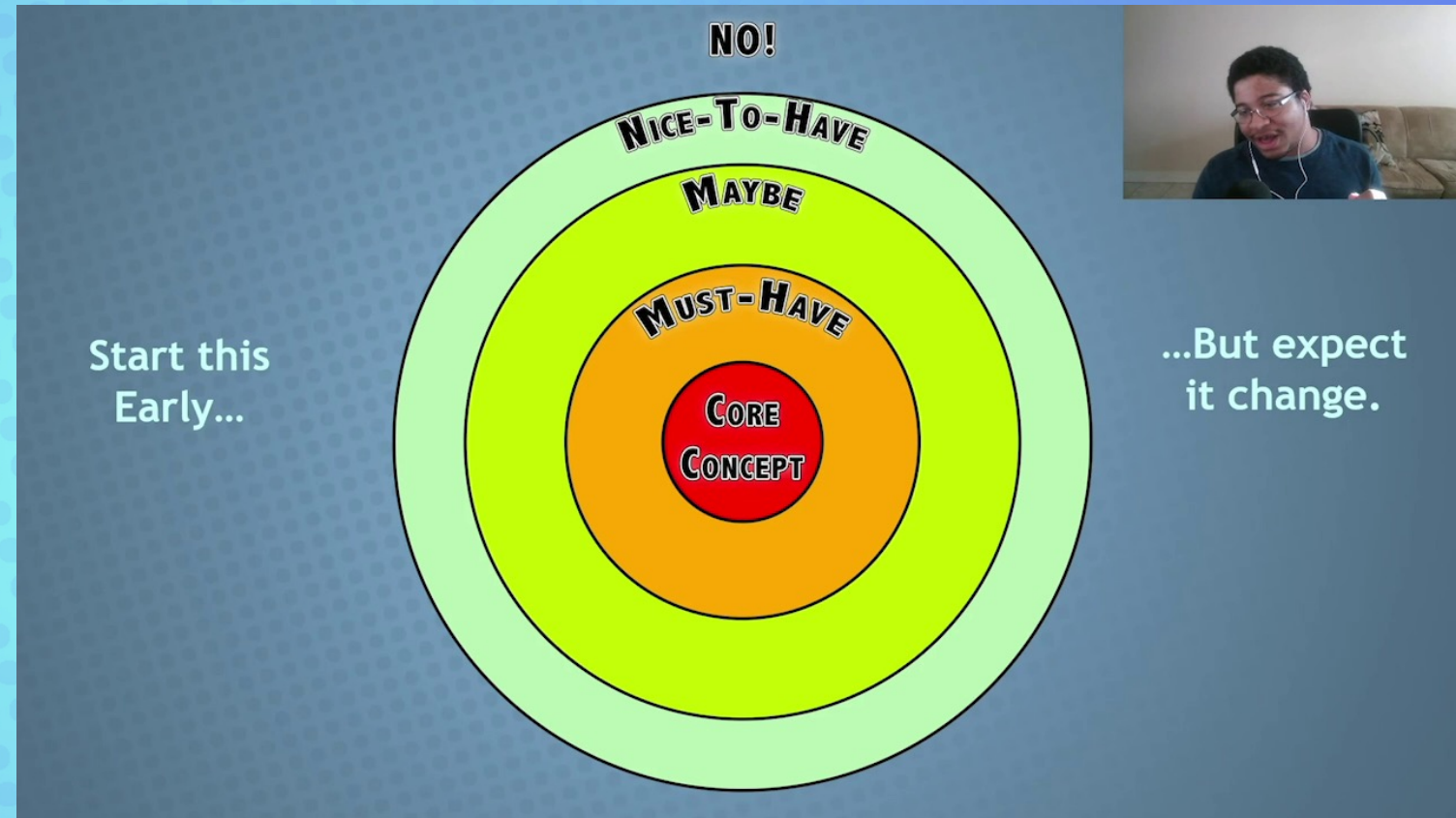
A still from one of Jordan Sparks' Humber Lessons in GAME 160 - Game Production 1. In this lesson, Jordan explains the importance of project management skills and uses a categorized diagram to help students manage and prioritize their game project features. He goes over many other creative production concepts over the 13-week online course which he broadcasts over Blackboard and/or MS Teams using Open Broadcast Software (OBS). While most students are in Ontario, some students attend online from countries such as India, Hungary, and Japan.

The Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television

2020

In late 2020, I was unexpectedly contacted by the Canadian Academy of Cinema & Television. Through unknown means, my reputation in Educational spaces had become known by their curation team and I was invited to be a panelist discussing the subject of Mentorship, alongside other guests from across Canada, in recognition of my skills as an educator.

The Panelists and I answered questions on a live broadcast about our careers as mentors & educators for an online audience. The event has since been archived online.

Mentorship Panel:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emjMZX8rj1g

Subjects I've Taught

- Visual Design
- Graphic Design
- Video Production
- Animation
- Photography
- UX Design
- UI Design
- Game Design
- Prototyping
- Pre-Production

- Project Management
- Basic Programming
- 3D Modeling
- Media Ethics
- Sound Design
- Online Broadcasting
- Communications
- Business Communication
- Career Development

- Creative Writing
- Research Practices
- Museum Education & History
- Technology for Children & Seniors
- Digital Fabrication
  - 3D Printing
  - Laser Cutting
  - Vinyl Cutting
  - Tool Safety

Software Programs I've Taught

- Adobe Creative Suite
  - Photoshop
  - Premiere Pro
  - After Effects
  - Lightroom
  - Animate
  - Illustrator
  - InDesign
- Microsoft Office Suite
  - Word
  - Excel
  - Powerpoint
- Google Apps
- Autodesk Maya

- Gimp
- Clip Studio Paint
- Unity 3D
- Twine
- Scratch
- Audacity
- Logic Pro
- Cura
- Wordpress
- Open Broadcast Software (OBS)
- … And more.

Education Client List

I have taught/lectured at and for many institutions, organizations, clients, and nonprofits in various capacities, including…

- Ryerson University
- University of Toronto
- Humber College
- Sheridan College
- Conestoga College
- Yorkville University
- Royal Ontario Museum
- Hand Eye Society

- Interactive Ontario
- Toronto Public Library
- Toronto District School Board
- Peel District School Board
- Moose Cree Education Authority
- Ladies Learning Code

- Susan O'Connor
- Black Youth In Tech Education
- Ontario Science Centre
- SKETCH Toronto
- Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television
- … And More.

THEY SAID WHAT?!!!

Testimonials

"I found Jordan when I was looking for a Twine instructor to help my game-writing students [at The Narrative Department] learn the ins and outs of the software. Writers are notoriously tech-averse! But Jordan worked his magic. With kindness, humor, and PATIENCE, he walked our students through Twine, and showed them how it's done. I now have proud students showing off their playable stories to each other - and we have Jordan to thank."
- Susan O'Connor, Award Winning Video Game Writer (Bioshock, Tomb Raider) and Lead Instructor at *The Narrative Department*

"Thank you again Jordan for hosting the [Futures Forward] program. You clearly put a lot of effort into making Futures Forwards work and the feedback you gave to each question I feel went a long way in helping everyone. I'm really grateful I got to spend 7 weeks with you and everyone else here - wouldn't trade this experience for the world."
- Meghan Marina, Participant in the Futures Forward 2023 Training program by Hand Eye Society & Ontario Creates

"Jordan Sparks is a thoughtful, insightful, and inspiring Educator."
- Jason MacIsaac, Professor at University of Toronto

"I have worked with Jordan on a multitude of projects, the latest being Season Two of our web series - All For One - where he signed on as one of our dedicated graphics artists. Jordan always rose to the occasion and did phenomenal work, hitting every deadline and keeping open communication. I look forward to collaborating with Jordan whenever possible."
- Wil Noack, Producer at Cherrydale Productions

"Jordan showed us from day one that not only was he good at his job, but he likes it. He's really passionate about the subjects he teaches and that made me like the course more."
- Anonymous GAME 160 Student from Humber College Student Surveys (2022)

"What I enjoyed the most about this course was how relatable the professor was... He always presented things in a very creative and fun way. I will not forget about this course as I continue to grow and, if I could, I would take this course over and over again."
- Anonymous GAME 160 Student from Humber College Student Surveys (2023)

In Conclusion…

I do **A LOT** of things. However, it is precisely this wide range of skills, knowledge, and expertise that makes me qualified to work on your next project. So, whether you're developing amazing new engaging digital content, experiences, lessons, technologies, or initiatives… You should **hire me**, because you know you want to! ☺

Jordan Sparks

Portfolio: GrindSpark.com

Contact Form: https://grindspark.com/contact/

Studio: ShiningSparkEnt.com