The BxNU Citizens' Jury Commission: Call For A Public-Interest Arts Project On Video/Computer Gaming

Name/s of Applicants:

Xavier Velastín Vicencio

Project Working Title and Short Summary (maximum 100 words):

'Bad Art'

Bad Art will use the content from other proposals for this call in order to generate a digital artwork that challenges the trend towards homogenising new art from cultural and political leaders. It will give half of the money to the other proposals. The result will be a relatively small scale web piece that will hopefully spark conversation around the violence inherent in (self-)censorship and the normalised appropriation of artwork and personal data.

Names, institutional positions, and contact details of two referees:

Referee 1

Vic Tillotson, Talent Development Lead at the Pervasive Media Studios, Watershed.

Referee 2

Iris Colomb, Poet and Curator.

Proposal

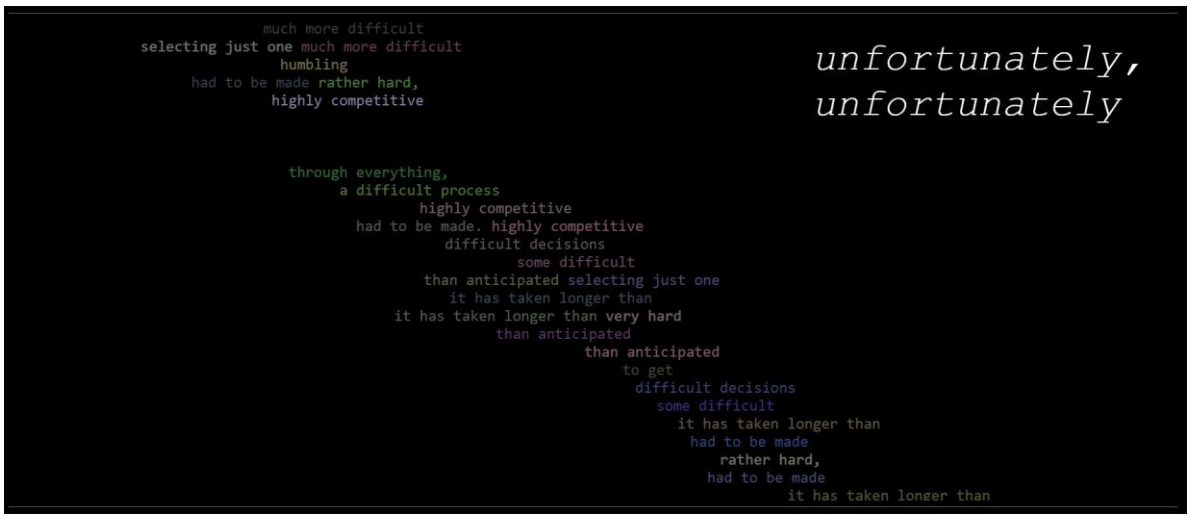
‘Bad Art’ is an anarchic digital art project that uses other proposals to this commission to create a computer game.

We are in a time where power dynamics between the real and virtual world are replicated and exaggerated, and where censorship threatens artistic expression and jobs. ‘Bad Art’ will portray and conduct acts of modern digital violence like non-consensual data collection to train AI, the political influence in arts funding, and (self-)censorship by artists and organisations in order to not get cancelled.

As mentioned, the content from other proposals to this commission will be used. As reparation for their time spent making the application, half of the commission fund (£4,000) will be divided between the other applicants. The rest of the fund will support the brief development of the game to a playable state, ideally something that can be played in a browser for free. Some ideas for features in the game might be:

1. An AI model generates video, image or audio from people’s proposals and the player can visit them in a virtual Museum of Unrealised Artworks. We could make it open for people to submit their ideas which have never gone further than a proposal.
2. Inspired by the 2013 game ‘Papers, Please’, where you play the role of a border cop deciding who can enter the country and who will be arrested by immigration. For example, statements from people’s real proposals show up and you can decide to ‘FUND’ or ‘DEFUND’. At the end, two artworks will be generated from the funded and unfunded material.
3. A trashy point-and-shoot arcade game where all of the world and enemies are made up of elements from the proposals. What’s that, a community choir? Bang!

The game itself will be relatively simple, probably just one feature/scene, although I definitely want it to invite replaying. As an example of the kind of vibe I’m thinking, here’s an interactive ‘poem’ I



made from emails that rejected me from opportunities without offering feedback.

‘unfortunately, unfortunately’: xaviervelastin.com/interactive/unfortunately/unfortunately.html

I have generally not been very interested in using AI, other than using Chat GPT to help me write this (it wasn't that helpful). However, AI generates bad art. I'm interested in using that as a lens to highlight how our risk-averse attitude towards culture encourages homogeneity – like how everything is a sequel now. To be clear, my project is absolutely not meant to belittle or judge the other proposals as 'bad' at all. Its act of making all proposals at the same level, and inviting players to participate in it, intends to reflect and encourage a dialogue about this issue of homogeneity, and on how and why certain art is funded, and the consequences of reducing culture to its perceived social or economic value.

I'm also really interested in this being a community effort – once this is published on the BxNU website, I'd love to implement ideas from the comments. My time and expertise is limited but at least if this turns out to be bad, it will live up to its name.

Budget

People

- £4,000 will be divided equally between the other artists who submitted proposals.
- £3,500 will be used to pay for me to work on this for a month, give or take a few days either side for logistics and comms.

Assets

- £500 will be used for costs related to renting servers or training AI models.