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Desma 157

Professor Eddo Stern

Ian Cheng Talk Response

I found Ian Cheng's *Emissaries* series to be a really compelling way to use Unity for artwork. At first, I was a little skeptical about a game that plays itself, but once it was explained, I really liked the idea. I love that the narrative is so heavily influenced by the AI and that every time it runs, there is going to be a different story and a different outcome. I agree that animation can sometimes be too predictable. Having a different narrative every time allows the viewer to interpret the work in so many more ways than they could if there was just one story. The "Oomen" in the works were also great because they were interesting to watch from afar as well as study up close in Cheng's drawings.

I also appreciated Cheng's honesty when it came to his inspiration. Taking inspiration from things like *The Sims*, *Real Housewives*, and animal cameras is not traditional or "artsy," but it provided a lot of insight into how he got the idea in the first place. The honest depiction of his process allowed me to relate to him much more as an artist and made the talk more enjoyable to listen to as well.

After Cheng finished talking about *Emissaries*, I was curious about where his work was headed next. I did not know how he could expand beyond ideas that were already really strong, but *BOB* ended up surpassing them. I loved the idea of an AI creature that would be different in every iteration and that could interact with viewers. I also enjoyed the fact that *BOB*'s body structure reflected the structure of his mind, because it makes it easier to see that each one is

different even if they are in the same gallery space being projected on different walls. One thing I wish Cheng had left in the project was BOB's water buffalo friend. I thought the idea of the interaction with another AI was compelling and cute and added a lot to the work. While I understand why Cheng cut it, I think that the added benefits about having the friend around outweighed the negatives.