

How being bad at illustration encouraged Julian Glander to make his own AI art teacher

Find out how *Julian Glander: The Movie* became the Microsoft Paint of our future overlords in this interview from Pictoplasma 2019.

GIACOMO VERSUS GLANDERCO.

ACT 1, SCENE 1.

INT. PFEFFERBERG HAUS 13, PICTOPLASMA 2019 VENUE.

The writer GIACOMO enters the basement of a German theatre in Berlin. The lights are low in a room populated by attendees of major character design festival Pictoplasma. Colouring pencils and crayons are everywhere and so are A4 paper sheets, doodled upon.

Down a flight of stairs someone is playing with JULIAN GLANDER's fun AI art application 'Art Sqool.' They're actually drawing something a bit naughty as JULIAN watches from the balcony area.

JULIAN GLANDER is a 28 year old American artist who makes 3D sweeties in graphics suite Blender. Nearby is fellow creator and occasional collaborator JERON BRAXTON, who also likes to use the software. Let's call these two the BLENDER BOYS.

JULIAN is wearing the same facial expression and MARTY MCFLY meets medium-sized GEORGE COSTANZA-esque puffy jacket you've seen him wear every day so far of Pictoplasma.

He's basically a cartoon character, always looking the same each episode.

GIACOMO LEE: Hey Julian. How long did *Art Sqool* take to make?

JULIAN GLANDER: "I actually started it right when I left Pictoplasma last year; I went to Vienna for four days to stay in a hotel room and work on what I thought was going to be a feature film.

"I thought I could sit there and write a script for a feature film, and as I started working it ended up being a video game instead. I basically made most of the assets for the game in those four days. And then spent another nine months working with a programmer to get everything put together."

[embedded content]

GL: Where did the inspiration for this game come from?

JG: "Well I was just jammed with inspiration. One thing was I had started to make these tools for myself to make sketches, because I don't really like the process of doing sketches for clients. I'm not really good at it, I'm not much of a drawer, so I thought it would be cool to have my own tool, like maybe on the iPad, where I could really quickly do things in my style. It's like a super specific drawing tool.

"As I was working on that I thought it would be better as a game than just as a thing that I used for no reason."

GL: In the game an AI teacher assesses the player's doodles. Where did that idea

come from?

JG: “I think what’s really cool about AI is how goofy and bad it is. Like how pretty much every application of it in the arts world is just an example of how not accurate or ‘un-human’ it is.

“So the game really does poke fun at AI. Because creating art is not something that is objective, obviously. It’s kind of like the art-making and the creation of art is so human that it’s the last place where you’d ever need to involve AI.

“At the same time though, I think it’s nice having the illusion of the AI partner. It’s like a constraint, I think it could help people to work better.”

GL: Did you go to art school yourself?

JG: “No, I didn’t. I went to school for creative writing. I had pretenses that I was going to be an author or something.”

GIACOMO nods. He’s kind of a failed author himself, being behind the world’s first existential K-pop novel ‘Funereal’, which didn’t make him the next Murakami or David Mitchell.

GL: Been there, done that.

JG: “I wasn’t really good at it. So I ended up picking classes to become a copywriter or something, I worked in an ad agency and that’s how I kind of got into illustration. From working underneath an art director and seeing him work with illustrators.

“I think because I grew up with *Sims* and *Minecraft*, illustrating in that 3D space made the most sense to me. But, I didn’t really think anything would come out of it. The first time I downloaded Blender, I was just goofing around. You know, I downloaded it the way you’d download any other game or thing to just kill time.”

□I'm very psyched to announce this,,,□

my debut book:

????3D SWEETIES????

?is coming out next March via @fantagraphics ?

178 pages of ???□□??????

preorder: <https://t.co/Nhav44jb0r> pic.twitter.com/tZzrMvpM3d

– Julian Glander (@glanderco) November 29, 2018

GL: And now you've made your own game for people to kill time with. You also made the music for *Art Sqool*, so I wonder if you always see yourself as a visual artist or something broader perhaps?

JG: "Well, I guess I see myself like a failed musician. Because when I first moved to New York, I was in a band and I really thought it would take off. But no, it doesn't happen for everyone.

"But it's also another fun thing to do. I'd be doing all this stuff for free even if I had to have a job at Starbucks or something."

GL: How do you make your music?

JG: "Garage Band."

GL: Visuals come first and the music comes second, would I be correct?

JG: "It depends. Most of the shorts I've been doing for Adult Swim are musical."

[embedded content]

GL: Are you using a different part of your creative brain when you make these sounds?

JG: “It’s just sitting there and finding an instrument, playing chords on it and finding what feels right. You’re really kind of grasping in the dark. You don’t really know what you’re working with. It’s magic, right?”

“Music is so hard to understand, to see how it works, why it’s doing it. But then, also, you learn things that you can apply to 3D and then back and forth.”

GL: There’s some great music in your *Inter_Faces* piece.

GIACOMO is referring to the group show centerpiece of this year’s Pictoplasma, Inter_Faces, where the audience walks down a catwalk of sorts towards a dark screen. On the screen characters created by the likes of JULIAN and others react to your movement and stir into life.

JG: “I can’t even take any credit, that music and sound work for all the characters was done by David Kampf.

*Goodbye Berlin goodbye Pictoplasma it’s been wünderbär! ??
???*

*glanderco world tour continues in Toronto this weekend with
TCAF, seeya there ?? pic.twitter.com/tGCgBd4a6E*

– Julian Glander (@glanderco) May 11, 2019

“David’s like the center of this festival. He’s so prolific. He always says something you’re not expecting. He did such a good job and I love how big it sounds.”

GL: How is Pictoplasma – and 2019 – going so far for you?

JG: “This year will be my first time doing all these festivals as both an artist and as a civilian.

Note: JULIAN didn't give a talk at this year's event, but simply showcased 'Art Sqool' at the fest.

JG: “It's been kind of nice. I like just having a base and then traveling a lot. Going to festivals all over the world, I'm really lucky to do that.

[embedded content]

GL: Have you done any events in East Asia like Jack Sachs has been doing?

JG: “No, not yet. Now you're gassing me up, now I'm thinking about going worldwide.

GL: I gave you an idea.

JG: “Yeah, I'm taking it.”

GIACOMO nods, joking how people usually do. He then sets sights on his next victim, JERON BRAXTON, the other BLENDER BOI who's been drawing a pic of BATMAN in 'Art Sqool' during the interview.

Someone after him does their own doodle and gets full scores from the AI tutor, PROFESSOR QWERTZ. The room erupts in cheers and applause.

JULIAN smiles, finally changing his expression.

END OF ACT 1, SCENE 1.

Read next: Why Jeron Braxton mixes politics with Playstation

visuals – and how he’s already the ‘world’s best animator’

<https://www.digitalartsonline.co.uk/features/motion-graphics/how-being-bad-at-illustration-encouraged-julian-glander-make-his-own-ai-art-teacher/>