

Dr. Rob Sherman

- ☞ Digital Experience Designer
- ☞ Writer & Editor
- ☞ Game, Web & Interactive Designer
- ☞ Cultural Interpretation Expert
- ☞ Educator & Public Speaker
- ☞ Exhibition & Environment Designer

Email: rob@bonfiredog.co.uk

Website (Business): <http://bonfiredog.co.uk>

LinkedIn: <http://linkedin.com/in/bonfiredog>

Telephone: +44 7860 474 580



With nearly a decade's experience developing narrative works across a wide variety of forms, sectors and disciplines, I have built an expert understanding of interdisciplinary storytelling, interpretative and educational practice, with a particular focus on digital approaches. I have collaborated with national and regional cultural institutions, natural heritage custodians, galleries, international publishers and universities, schools, videogame companies, charities, technology businesses, design studios and government bodies to produce work that interprets, engages, educates, explains, evokes and provokes a variety of audiences through innovative interpretative practice. This work has been conducted both as an independent artist and through my design studio, Bonfire Dog Ltd.

Selected Experience

2023 | Wonders: Pyramids Of Giza

Preloaded & Epic Games

<https://preloaded.com/work/wonders-pyramids-of-giza/>

I was commissioned to create interactive, standards-matched educational materials for Preloaded's recreation of the Pyramids of Giza in Epic Games' Fortnite franchise, as part of the publisher's schools-based outreach globally.

2023 | OnlyConnect

Apart Of Me

<https://cbronicinsanity.wixsite.com/12in12>

I provided programming support, UX, graphic and interaction design for Chronic Insanity's digital theatre project *OnlyConnect*: a play set in a fictional, near-future 'friend hiring' app, written by Maya Little.

2023 | An Etiquette For Minor Time Travel

The Alan Turing Institute

<https://github.com/bonfiredog/etiquette>

I won funding to pursue a digital residency with the Alan Turing Institute's *Living With Machines* project: creating immersive generative poetry experiences based on datasets relating to Victorian railway networks.

2022 - 23 | Nadiya

Apart Of Me

<https://www.apartofme.app/nadiya/index.html>

I provided lead narrative and game design services for the development of an app-based therapy program to help refugee Ukrainian families reconnect and heal after displacement and trauma.

2022 | Southampton Stories

Southampton Museums & Archive

<https://southamptonstories.co.uk/>

I provided audience research, UX design, interactive design and creative consultancy services to Southampton Council, helping them to improve their *Southampton Stories* web experience after a lukewarm response by test audiences.

2022 | A Master Betrayed!

East Looe Old Gaol Museum

After the award of an Arts Council England Project Grant, I collaborated with artist Hugh McCann to develop a narrative-led audio installation for the East Looe Old Gaol Museum. Visitors must uncover the truth in a fictional criminal case: listening to the testimony of witnesses, and examining curious objects hidden amongst the museum's real artefacts.

2021 | Story Machines

Exeter University

I was commissioned as Senior Lecturer to research, devise and deliver a new module for Exeter University's Creative Writing MA programme, teaching students to produce narrative and interpretative works that use digital technologies as a key means of expression: everything from videogames and digital installation art to VR experiences and interactive fiction. I also serve as an advisor on Digital Creativity to the Humanities and Social Sciences faculty at large.

2021 | Escape To Mars!

Kill The Cat Theatre

<https://www.killthecattheatre.co.uk/escape-to-mars>

I served as technical consultant, programmer and UX designer for a new online theatregame by Kill The Cat Theatre: an adaptation of their live show *The House Never Wins*. The audience participates in a sinister game, with high stakes: gambling their life savings for the chance to win a seat on a rocket leaving a dying Earth.

2021 | The History Of Newhaven Fort

Elbow Productions, Newhaven Fort

I served as lead scriptwriter, researcher and interaction consultant for several of the new A/V exhibits at Newhaven Fort, an early Victorian fortification of the South English coast; including an immersive 360-degree film exploring the fort's hidden underground sections.

2021 | Exeter Science Centre

I served as lead interpretation designer and developer for the Exeter Science Centre's inaugural pop-up event. I developed the interpretation plan, co-designed physical and digital exhibits, and provided label-writing and copyediting services in collaboration with Exeter University scientists and other artist-designers.

2021 | Pioneering Spirit

National Trust for Scotland

I was commissioned by NTS to produce a feasibility and recommendations report for digital interpretation approaches for their *Pioneering Spirit Project*, exploring the history of whiskey distilling on Highland NTS properties and estates. Recommendations included online game-based content, augmented reality wilderness tours and downloadable videogame products.

2021 | The History Of Recorded Music

Museum In A Box, The Musical Museum

In partnership with Museum In A Box, I scripted, produced and delivered three new collections for the company's platform, in partnership with London's Musical Museum. Exploring the history of recorded music from the early 19th century to the modern day, visitors can use each Box to hear the museum's famous tour guides explain the history and function of the machines in the collection, as well as an imagining of how they may have sounded in their original contexts: from a crowded Victorian steam train, to a rave in the 1990s.

2021 | The _____ Cassandra

Jane Austen House Museum, Palma Studio

<https://janeaustens.house/teenage-writings/>

I served as principal designer, writer and programmer of an online text-based game for the JAH Museum, tasked with introducing young people to Jane Austen's teenage writing and encouraging their own creativity.

2021 | Tides & Times: A History Of Smuggling On Looe Island

East Looe Town Trust, WaVE Project, PLB Ltd.

I served as exhibition designer, writer and audio designer for a new exhibition at Looe's Old Gaol Town Museum; using dramatised audio stories and immersive physical and interactive design to confront the ethics of the smuggling trade.

2020 | The Wonderful Everyday

IKEA

I researched, designed and scripted a WhatsApp chatbot for IKEA's 'Wonderful Everyday' initiative, which provided tools for self-reflection during the CoVID-19 pandemic. The bot, a cheerful persona based on IKEA's EKTORP brand, sent daily prompts for self-reflection, as well as responding humorously and supportively to user's submissions. The project ran for 12 months across IKEA's European territories.

2020 | What's That In Old Money?

The Royal Mint, Museum In A Box

<https://www.royalmintmuseum.org.uk/decimalisation/reminiscence-sessions/>

I designed and produced a new Museum In A Box collection for the Royal Mint, using fictional narratives and NFC-enabled facsimile archive material to engage care home residents with their own memories of the decimalisation of UK currency in 1971. The project was shortlisted for the 2021 M+H Community Impact Award, and has reached over 50,000 care home residents in the UK to date.

2021 | Boscobel House

English Heritage, PLB Ltd.

<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/boscobel-house-and-the-royal-oak/things-to-do/>

I served as principal designer for a re-design of English Heritage's family interpretation at Boscobel House, the site of the 'Royal Oak' and a visit by the fleeing Charles II. We constructed a non-intrusive mixed reality 'treasure hunt', using the atmosphere of the house itself in combination with interactive LED candles to enable visitors to find hidden scenes from Charles' visit. This was paired with more traditional physical exhibitions and interactives throughout the site, as well as a panoramic digital tour for tablets that I designed and implemented.

2021 | Rebellion Galleries

Nottingham Museum, Jam Creative

I served as principal game designer and writer for a series of in-gallery videogames exploring the history of civil dissent in the town of Nottingham.; part of the Museum and Art Galley's £40 million restoration.

2021 | Project knole

Bath University, Bath Spa University, Museum of Witchcraft & Magic

<http://robsherman.co.uk/knole>

I produced a practice-based PhD project, exploring the use of character-led narrative and artificial intelligence in cultural heritage settings. My academic thesis was paired with an immersive mixed-reality exhibition, where visitors could meet (and perform spells with) the simulated 'familiar spirit' of a fictional 18th century soothsayer.

2020 | County Nighthead

Research Project

<https://robsherman.co.uk/countynighthead/>

I created a web-based project exploring the structure and etymology of English place names. The work projects generated place names onto a section of Ordnance Survey map, and asks visitors to find these amongst the real names before submitting their own, fictional etymologies.

2020 | True Echoes

PARADISEC, British Library

<https://www.bl.uk/projects/true-echoes>

I served as technical advisor on the *True Echoes* project, an international archival project providing access for Pacific Island communities to digitised oral history recordings using low-cost, low-energy digital devices.

2019 | Mission: Planet Earth

National Museum Wales, Jam Creative

http://jamcreativestudios.com/index.php/portfolio_page/mission-planet-earth/

I served as narrative designer and associate game designer for this virtual reality attraction at National Museum Wales. It introduced visitors of all ages to the climate history of the Earth through a visually immersive, and interactive, 'time travel' experience.

2019 | The Lost Pubs

Personal Project

<https://twitter.com/thelostpubs/>

I designed a Twitter 'bot' that every six hours generates a fictional English pub name, based on historic naming patterns and common cultural references.

2019 | The Greek Gods & Goddesses

Museum In A Box

<https://shop.museuminabox.org/products/greek-gods-goddesses>

I designed and scripted an original collection for Museum In A Box, exploring the mythic relationships between the Greek gods and goddesses for pre-teenage children.

2019 | The Creative Courtroom

The National Justice Museum, Museum In A Box

<https://museuminabox.org/case-studies/>

I designed a new collaborative collection for Museum In A Box and the National Justice Museum, introducing schoolchildren visiting the museum to the design of the British courtroom.

2019 | The Georgian Room

Bucks County Museum, ATS Heritage

I designed and scripted a pilot interactive experience for the Bucks County Museum, using digital interactives and site-specific audio dramas to evoke the history, and varied uses, of one room in the museum estate throughout the 20th century.

2015 | On My Wife's Back

The British Library, Eccles Centre, CreativeWorks London

I received funding to undertake an artistic residency at the British Library, interpreting the tangled and complex history of Victorian polar exploration. Outputs included online games, musical performances, parallel and 'disruptive' physical and digital exhibitions, digital mapping, seminars, talks and workshops.

2014 | The Spare Set & One Night In Sherbeton

Shelter UK

<http://robsherman.co.uk/thespareset>

I produced educational and campaign materials for this national charity: an online narrative game exploring the consequences of debt default and homelessness in the UK, and a series of 'fairy tale' narratives (and accompanying Key Stage classroom materials) introducing UK schoolchildren to Shelter's work.

2013 | The Black Crown Project

Failbetter Games, Popleaf Games, Random House UK

I served as creative director and writer on a text-based online interactive narrative, published by Random House UK. The work was shortlisted for the New Media Writing Prize and the Futurebook Innovation Prize.

Public Speaking

I am frequently invited to speak on narrative practice, digital design, games design and creative cultural work. Previous venues have included the AHI Conference, the Immersive Museum Network Seminar, the Cultural Capital Exchange, the National Videogame Arcade, the MIX Digital Conference, the WordPlay Festival, the Centre for Creative Computing at Bath Spa University and the Futurebook Conference in London.

Interactive Fiction Summer Schools

British Library

I served as visiting speaker, and in subsequent years lead curator, of a series of premium week-long workshops, teaching the technical skills and literacy necessary to produce works of online interactive fiction.

Visiting Lecturer

Royal College Of Art

I served as Visiting Lecturer for the *Digital Directions* MA programme at the Royal College of Art, teaching the theory and practice of digital narrative.

Education

2015 - 2021 | Bath University & Bath Spa University

AHRC-Funded PhD (Creative Writing & Human-Computer Interaction)

'Project knole: An Autocosmic Approach To Developing Resonant Computational Characters'

2021 | John Yorke Story Masterclasses

Story For Video Games

2017 | Bath Spa University

MA Heritage Management (Shadowed/Audited)

2009 - 2010 | Exeter University, UK

MA Creative Writing (Distinction)

2006 - 2009 | Exeter University, UK

BA English Literature (1st Class Honours)

Associations

Exeter University Digital Advisory Network

Member

Exeter University

Senior Lecturer

British Library Labs
Digital Research Fellow

Royal College Of Art
Visiting Lecturer

Museum Freelance Network
Member

Museums Immersive Network
Member

Museums Computer Group
Member

South West Creative Technology Network
Member

Eccles Centre of North American Studies
Fellow Emeritus

The South West Fed
Member

Skills

Narrative Experience Design
Funding & Tender Applications
Bid & Report Writing
Writing & Editing (Technical, Academic, Journalistic, Creative, Factual, Film/Theatre Scripts)
Game Design
Creative Direction & Production
Educational & Advocacy Design
VR/AR/XR Design
Interpretative Planning
Audience Analysis/Development
Electronics Design (Raspberry Pi, Arduino)
Visual/Graphic Design (Photoshop, GIMP, Balsamiq, InDesign)
Interaction Design
Exhibition/Environment/Installation Design

Lecturing/Teaching/Workshops
SEN/Working With Vulnerable/Enhanced Needs Groups
Public Speaking
Programme Development
Bot Design
Audio Design/Editing
Archival Research
Programming (C#, GML, Javascript, Processing)
Real Time Game Engines (Construct, Gamemaker: Studio, Unity)
Web & App Design (HTML, CSS, Javascript, jQuery, XML, JSON, SaSS)
