



# THE NEXT WAVE

NEIL SIMPSON talks about Flash Catalyst and the Open Screen Project with Adobe's Guillermo Torres Troconis.

**AS EXPERIENCE DESIGN** continues to gain momentum around the world in the wake of multiple new digital products and services, we are seeing the emergence of the next wave of visualisation and prototyping tools for designers, together with new opportunities for cross-device compatibility for consumers. San Francisco-based Guillermo Torres Troconis has been riding this wave as a senior experience designer at Adobe, working on Flash Catalyst and the Open Screen Project.

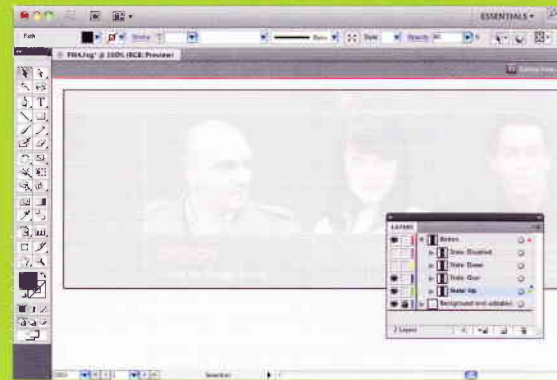
Originally inspired by the technical prowess and creativity of British photographer, Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904), Venezuelan born Troconis found experience design the perfect platform to combine his interest in art and technology, and worked at agencies including Method and AKQA before finding his way to Adobe.

With the eagerly awaited launch of Adobe Flash Catalyst as part of the new CS5 suite, due for release some time in 2010, we ask Troconis to tell us more.

"Flash Catalyst makes it easy for designers to create interactive content without writing code," he explains. "Designers will be able to bring in static designs, and transform them into interactive applications, helping them to create prototypes with the ability to leverage them into the final product. We have taken a closer look at how designers work with developers to create rich internet applications on Flex - an Adobe software development kit. Designers use Flash Catalyst to create functional designs, then provide the project file to developers who use the Adobe Flash Builder to add the functional layer."

Flash Catalyst has spent almost a year in beta, during which time schools have been using it as a way to teach the principles of interaction, before moving on to teach students Flash programming. "When you're getting started, you want to set up a basic site structure and have some navigation and basic states of your application, the focus being on having those basic elements work together. In Catalyst you can do this really fast, and can achieve a lot with simple visual interactions without needing to use code. You learn how a button can relate to different screens and different states of your application. Before Catalyst, it could be pretty overwhelming for a newcomer to have to learn about interaction and interactivity, and to start with Flash programming. We're hoping that for students starting out, Flash Catalyst is a gateway."

With all heads turning towards the future and how we will read newspapers, magazines and books, Adobe's experienced design team has been working with brand name companies like MTV, WIRED and *The New York Times* to create inspired user experiences with Adobe AIR and other platform products. "We help figure out what can be done with our technology, as well as help shed some light for the product teams on what can be included in future versions of Adobe products. For *The New York Times* we made a desktop app, which makes great use of the advanced text-display capabilities in AIR 1.5 and of the power AIR allows designers and developers to give users a better, more immersive experience than they can get from a website. Text layout, 'rag' or texture is something where the web still falls short. Print designers can't have the control they usually have to 'massage' the copy in order to make it more readable. Adobe TLF (Text Layout Framework) technology tries to improve that by improving fidelity over kerning, stem hinting, text metrics etc. 'The Times Reader' is an application that shows how you can be happy with the rendering of your text and not have to handcraft each article."



"After the 'Times Reader' was launched, we started collaborating with *WIRED* to see how we can help magazines bring to tablet devices some of that expressiveness you can get only in magazines," Troconis continues. "We wanted a technology that would take advantage of the unique features and capabilities of these devices, rather than simply repurposing the by-product of the printed page. If you see where magazines are on the web, they either fall victim to CMS (Content Management Systems) templates like Joomla or WordPress, or they try to replicate the reading experience on the web with artifices like page curls etc. Our thought is that the iPad, and other tablet devices, can breathe new life into e-reading - marrying the best of both worlds: the expressiveness of a print layout and the convenience of the web."

With Amazon's Kindle, and other tablets now appearing alongside mobiles and computers it seems that the digital landscape is shifting once again. So how does Troconis see the future of the tablet/iPad next to mobile and computer? "Some people say that the iPad is just an oversized iPhone, but I think you would be surprised at what that change in size can do. Computers and mobile phones are still not optimised for sitting and reading long amounts of text. Phones are too small, and computers are too bulky. People read a lot on their computers, but it is rare for them read a book or an article longer than three pages."



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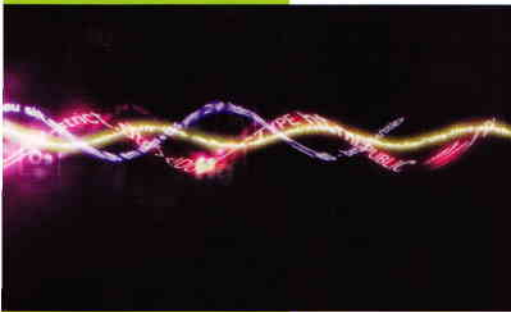
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**"WHAT ADOBE AND OTHER INDUSTRY LEADERS ARE TRYING TO DO IS ENABLE CONSUMERS TO ENGAGE WITH BRAND EXPERIENCES SEAMLESSLY ACROSS DEVICES."**  
**- GUILLERMO TORRES TROCONIS, ADOBE**



TIMELINE	DESIGN TIME DATA	Task 1	Task 2
1	ACQUA E FARINA	Homemade freshwater pizza can be best	
2	CELERY	Fresh, crisp and tasty. Elevates the	
3	GABEL AND LOFFEL	Get out your Lederhosen	
4	GARY'S GARI	The ultimate headquarters for your all day...	
5	HAPPY FEEL	Happy Feel specializes in main courses with...	
6	LETTUCE & FETA	Get with today's best! Meet our 6 Pizzas with...	
7	LABE WALLART	Labe Wallart - Available 2012 (Available only...	



Scott Dadich, the creative director of *WIRED*, agrees. "There's something different about holding a digital magazine on a tablet. It's a real live thing - you can't hold a website. With *WIRED* for tablets, you can touch it, interact with it and hold it. It's extraordinarily rewarding."

Yet what about digital convergence over the coming years? "I actually don't see as much convergence," Troconis says. "I think that the next five years will bring us a time of platform-specific content. The rise of the mobile platform introduced a need for brands to start thinking of customer interaction as a system of 'touch points'. The brand experience isn't confined to just a website, it needs to be designed consistently across channels (web, print, mobile, service). To reach your audience, you will need an iPhone app, a Kindle app and an Android app etc. Each app will have a specific set of requirements and guidelines that need to be satisfied in order to go through the approval process."

This brings us to the other aspect of Troconis' work at Adobe on the Open Screen Project, part of the Multi Screen Initiative. "What Adobe and other industry leaders are trying to do is enable consumers to engage with brand experiences seamlessly across devices. Adobe's commitment is to help designers and developers create these experiences effectively," he says. "What I have been working on is figuring out what this means from the tooling side. How can Adobe help designers create content for several

platforms without having to redo any work? For this I have been collaborating with several product teams like InDesign, Flash, Flex and Flash Catalyst."

Other partners on the project include Nokia, Intel, MTV Networks, Google and the BBC. Notably absent are Apple and Microsoft, both of which are exploring their own ideas on how cross-device compatibility will work, but there is no doubt consumers are in for an exciting time ahead. **DT**

Neil Simpson is an experience designer and writer - [neil@sixeightdigital.com](mailto:neil@sixeightdigital.com).

#### USEFUL LINKS

Adobe Labs  
<http://labs.adobe.com/technologies/flashcatalyst>  
 Open Screen Project  
[www.openscreenproject.org](http://www.openscreenproject.org)



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