{ Bits of Us.

With provocative magic and real-time online collaborative video editing tools, the revelatory power of family images is exposed in the BITS OF US game of chance, spontaneity, and collective filmmaking.

BITS OF US / A Game of Photographic Memory

'Knock hard. Life is deaf.'
Canadian Surrealist Painter Mimi Parent

Family photographs contain stories. The medium has the power to exhume ghosts of memory to defy, confirm, and foreshadow events in generations of family lore. BITS OF US invites players to use new real-time collaborative video editing tools and computer algorithms to explore and merge family images, exposing their revelatory power in a collective film of family photographic memory.

{ Concept

Since its invention by Kodak in 1888, the camera has been the family's primary instrument of self-representation. Yet, despite enormous changes in the institution of family itself and the speed and simplicity of digital capture in the 21st century, pictorial conventions of family imaging have not been significantly altered since paintings from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

Photographic versatility with digital connectivity in email, texting, twitter, etc. now also allows us to keep all communication short, sweet and extensively distributed, editing out the complexity of human relationships and nuanced sense of self. There is no time, space or custom to describe missing a deceased parent, envying the accomplishments of a sibling, or regretting a missed opportunity. In the wake of these absences are robot companions and mathematical calculations of consciousness.

BITS OF US amplifies human experience and self-reflection with family images, consistently recognizable across avalanches of technological evolution and seamlessly adopted into any viewer's personal family narrative. The game of chance and spontaneity showcases a cutting edge, shared real time video editing space, as well as the artistic rewards for participants' collaborative discovery of universal meaning.

{ Audience

BITS OF US entertains players recording their daily lives with cell phones, pocket video cameras and iPads, including U.S. teens on skateboards, yuppie Europeans pushing strollers and East Asian retirees. Even if they themselves don't live a life through the viewfinder, BITS OF US is the web destination for those who harbor the results of previous generations obtained in front of a camera in vast archives of photos, negatives and 8mm film reels degrading in dusty attics. Regardless of age, nationality, occupation or vocation, independent BITS OF US players and those needing technical support can use innovative web tools to unveil the resonant lore and secrets in family images.

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{ Engagement

The Surrealist games that inspired BITS OF US were intended to stimulate a creative process through collective play, a "provocative magic" toward self-knowledge and self-discovery. BITS OF US showcases a real time collaborative video editing space exploited for the exploration of shared meaning as players take an active role introducing and modifying the story elements. The game is a display of synergy, where greater gain is generated for the community than possible as a sum of players' individual efforts. Engaging chance and the subliminal mind along with computer vision and sound algorithms, BITS OF US films are freed from a conventional logic and order resulting in an introspective experience in memory and a new genre of family representation. The BITS OF US process itself is an art form. 'Experiencing the game is to win it'.

{ Treatment

BITS OF US web development integrates existing web video editing software, API extensions and services compatible with any HTML5 browser, accommodating diverse media formats in the cloud. Specific video editing functions include video/photograph upload, voice recording, frame scrubbing and annotation, mark and cut clips, and drag clip selections from "personal" timeline to "public" timeline. Leading companies presently developing online collaborative video editing software are Google (wevideo), and Kaltura (Stroome), and Intel (JayCut).

{ Game Play

STAGE 1 / INVITATION

Open call through social media and BITS OF US website/blog invites participation to explore images and an interior experience of self in memory enhanced by playful social engagement. Players register online with a personal account for storage and exploration of their collection of film, video, photography, and hand-drawn images, as well as recorded sound, voice, and music related to family memories. The BITS OF US game engages participants to see their own family images again, merged with evocative images of others in a collective film of family photographic memories.

STAGE 2 / COLLABORATION

Online collaborative play is initiated with a single image and sound recording uploaded by the artist. In spontaneous response to these, the next player adds a suggestive family picture and sound clip. Every new player adds the family picture and sound clip of theirs that comes to mind when looking at the only clip visible, which is that of the previous player. Seeing a boy walking hand in hand with his father toward a lake, a player might add a clip from the film of her aunt and cousin at the beach. The beach scene may inspire the next participant to add a video clip of a fishing trip with her father. In the audio track the recorded sound of a door closing might be followed by the sound of footsteps, the rhythm of which suggesting a short voice recording or memorable tune. Players' short films are limited to 20 seconds in length. BITS OF US gallery/museum partners integrate the participation of gallery visitors into the real time, online creative experience with coordinated events on location.

STAGE 3 / OUTCOME

When the film reaches 5 min. in length, a BITS OF US video algorithm re-edits a copy of the film matching shapes, textures, and colors, and a BITS OF US sound algorithm revises the audio track according to patterns in words and sounds, resulting in an artificially intelligent film to compare with the players' film. Players annotate their own and others' images with comments and stories. The group may decide the BITS OF US films are finished short works, use them as a starting point for an extended collaborative work, or as an inspiration for an entirely new and different work on a subject of their choosing. Gallery/musem partners host curated exhibitions of the BITS OF US collaborative works.