

“IMAGE HUNT: camcorder challenge ”

® Skip Blumberg 07/06/2005

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A CAMCORDER IMAGE HUNT is a game of ingenuity, creativity, teamwork and camcorder skills. It is also a participatory art event and exhibition that includes and engages participants, pedestrians, local art institutions , businesses, and the Delaware Valley cultural and natural landscape in general.

What is a CAMCORDER IMAGE HUNT?

An IMAGE HUNT is a video production event that is like a scavenger hunt except, instead of collecting objects, teams record images on their camcorders.

Who can play?

Anyone who owns, can borrow or rents a video camcorder can participate. Players can be skilled video professionals and video artists, or beginners. Teams can be just one individual, a family, an art or video production class, a group of friends, and a group of co-workers. An organization, a video production company, a school or media center, or a retail business can sponsor a team. Participants make up team names, like the Video Rangers, the Channel Surfers, or the Vidiots.

Is it fun to play?

Players get very excited, and their excitement peaks at the mass playback. They tune their senses up by looking and listening very carefully and experience a sensation similar to a runner's high. As an important by-product, they learn a lot about camcorder production techniques.

How do you play?

Teams receive a list of images (50 for the 2-hour game, more for the weekend game), a short list of game rules (e.g. the shortest shot is 5 seconds, the maximum total time is 20 minutes, all shots are to be logged, etc.), a time limit, and a playing area (for the 2-hour game within a few blocks of the mass playback, for the weekend game all of Lower Manhattan).

Each team records as many images as possible as the clock counts down.

Images range from challenges to your perceptual abilities (a shot of 2 people wearing the exact same article of clothing) and tests of camera skills (zoom in on a moving wheel)... to zany ideas and visual puns (illustrate this phrase: “laughing all the way to the bank”) and tests of chutzpah (get someone to gargle for the camera). Other images encourage the participants to look carefully at their environment (shots of architectural details) or require knowledge of Lower Manhattan (a shot of where the Fish Market was). Special performances and planted images can also be included in the game.

Some images are easy to get and they gain only a few points; others are difficult with mucho points. With only a few exceptions, the images can be gathered in any order. To win the players must strategize to gain the maximum points in the time limit.... should they go for many low point images or take the time to go for fewer high point images?

At the finish line, all the teams' tapes are played back at once in a multi-monitor video installation with 1 TV set or monitor for each team. This can be in a temporary tent in a downtown outdoor plaza, in an indoor plaza, or in a store window.

The tapes are themselves a sweeping art piece and an electronic audio/visual portrait of the area... with visual themes appearing sometimes simultaneously or scattered throughout the mass playback.

Points are awarded for the number of images collected with judging by notable "experts" according to objective guidelines (that the image is readily seen by the judges, not the quality of camera work or the ideas for specific shots). The decision of the judges is final. Prizes are given with fanfare and splendor.

There are 2 (or 3) games played on one weekend.

1. A Saturday (or Sunday) afternoon game that takes about 3 or 4 hours.
2. A weekend game that starts on a Friday and ends on a Sunday.
- (3. There can also be a professional hunt for production companies, media centers or TV stations.)

After the event: an installation

The teams' videos will be transferred and, with an automatic playback system designed with the presenter, presented in store windows or indoors in a gallery or Mall. The installation can be appreciated on its own, with graphic audio and visual themes and imagery that that reveals how people live and work downtown.

Has this been done before?

There have been a dozen or so sponsored Camcorder Image Hunts with from 3 to 15 teams; including at the Utah Arts Festival, the Forum Gallery (St. Louis), Austin Cablevision, the Ohio Arts Council Summer Media Institute (for teachers), the Exploratorium (San Francisco - for kids).

They are fun for the participants as well as for the audience for the playback. It also has always received a lot of media attention especially from TV local news shows.

Organizing the event

The preparation and planning are important. Prizes will be secured from area businesses so that substantial teams (in numbers and skill level) are attracted. Publicity in advance will recruit teams and spectators. The monitor array and the automatic playback will be designed with the presenter. A logistics schedule, rules, image lists, entry information, etc. will be prepared well in advance of the planned event date. Skip Blumberg will direct the event and will be available for collaboration with the presenter for preparation, planning and publicity as soon as the commission is awarded.

Goals:

1. Bring attention to the Delaware Valley and its cultural resources in a positive way. It literally makes the whole region a playground and helps everyone who participates see and know more about the place.
2. Motivate video enthusiasts to grab their camcorders from out of the closet and give them an opportunity and a reason to shoot.
3. A fun game to play.
4. A video production learning and training experience disguised as a game. It also is an exercise in teamwork.
5. To tune up and heighten the perceptual abilities of the team players as they wander around looking and listening very very carefully.
6. Players also learn about video as an art form, that camcorders can be used for something in addition to recording family events, making broadcast TV satires, amateur music videos or America's funniest home videos. By exposing video and television in a new way, participants and spectators of the installation re-think TV in general.
7. A relatively inexpensive large-scale art event (where work and expenses are delegated; i.e. the participants provide their own equipment and time).
8. Positive attention and goodwill for the presenter, the store or building that is the site of the multi-monitor installation, the places that are listed as images, and the donors of prizes.

IMAGE HUNT BUDGET

Artist Fee including prep	3500	
Office and travel expenses	<u>3000</u>	\$6500
In-kind donations:		
Monitor rental, system expenses	6000	
Printing, publicity and misc expenses	1500	
Prizes	<u>2000</u>	<u>9500.</u>
Total		\$16,000.