

Hyperreal images from his Masters 'world creation' project helped secure Jeremy Hanna his role as concept artist with Weta workshop.

Professor Ings describes Hanna as having "high levels of creative courage".

"He understood research as something transformative, rather than simply a data gathering and processing exercise. He took risks and although this cost him time, and spasmodic moments of anxiety, he broke new ground because he wasn't afraid of the instability that generating new knowledge requires," says Professor Ings.

"World creation is a very new area in design education, partly because it is so complex and it requires illustrators who can not only paint, but who can also create and visualise complex narratives and the environments that contain them. Without a highly distinctive concept and the dedication to think into the unknown, the projects founder."

Professor Ings says AUT's approach to practice-led, higher research degrees was also important in giving Hanna the space he needed to develop his work.

"[AUT's] degrees are not cluttered with small assessments. They are designed to make space for complex problem-solving that requires significant periods of reflection and refinement. This is why candidates can complete whole graphic novels, animated films, and complex projects like [Hanna's] 'world creation' thesis –

they have room to think."

Throughout his studies Hanna also sought out opportunities to learn more about concept design and illustration from key industry players, including attending the White Cloud Workshops run by senior concept artists from Weta.

He developed a mentoring relationship with instructors Paul Tobin and Nick Keller and says they offered invaluable, honest feedback during his postgraduate study.

After finishing his Masters last year Hanna

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spent a couple of months working on some new pieces to include in his portfolio before flying down to Wellington to share his work with Tobin and the team at Weta. He was given the job a week later and now works as a Concept Artist in Weta Workshop's design studio.

The research skills Hanna honed at AUT continue to be integral to his work at Weta.

"Whenever I'm not designing, I'm researching, taking in as much information as I can about real world technologies, cultures and creatures. Discoveries made here lead to more interesting, believable designs, and the team at Weta pride themselves on taking this time to think deeply about the worlds behind their work."

Landing the role at Weta is exactly what Hanna had hoped for – an ambitious goal that developed long before he finished his studies.

"I've wanted to work at Weta Workshop for a long time. I began to look at the prospect more seriously in the last months of my Bachelor's degree and both of my postgraduate projects were conceptualised with Weta firmly in mind."

"[Weta is] well respected in the industry for their holistic approach to world creation. Their designers build intricate and believable cultures and that's the quality that I'm always trying to embrace in my work." ■

HAPPIER BY THE *ONLINE MINUTE*

Internet use has transformed how, when and where we do things. Many of us assume that too much time online will lead to an unhappy life, but recent research by AUT Business School researcher **Dr Angsana Techatassanasoontorn** has found the opposite to be true for young adults.

WHAT ROLE DOES THE INTERNET PLAY IN THE LIVES OF YOUNG ADULTS AGED 18 TO 22?

In many respects the Internet is their world. While their parents' generation may still see a clear distinction between an online and offline activity, this group goes online so frequently that the Internet is an integral part of their lives. They move fluidly between online and offline activities and the Internet is constantly in the background. It is their platform for social interaction and leisure and for many of them it is a 'life companion'.

YOUR RESEARCH FOUND THAT ENJOYMENT OF ONLINE ACTIVITIES LEADS TO INCREASED HAPPINESS. WHAT ABOUT ENJOYMENT OF

REAL-LIFE ACTIVITIES?

The most intriguing finding from this research was something we call emotional displacement: we found that the enjoyment young adults get from their Internet activities increases their happiness, whereas their enjoyment of non-Internet activities doesn't. So while they may have enjoyed a face-to-face conversation, it does not contribute to their life satisfaction, whereas an online conversation does. This is an apparent paradox that we need to investigate further.

Are you saying that the more time young adults spend on the Internet the happier they will be?

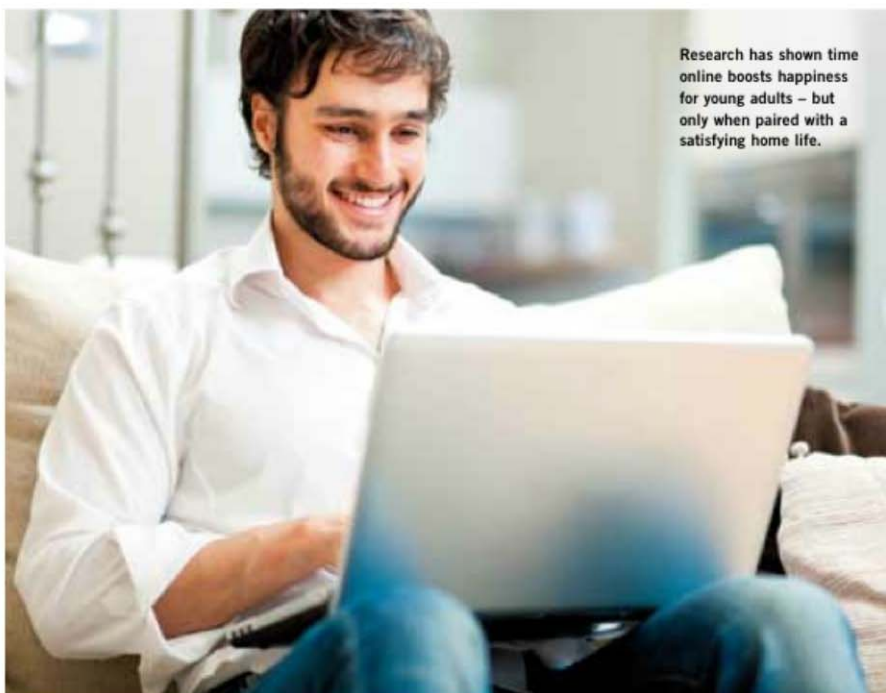
We found that more time on the Internet led to increased happiness only if it was paired with a satisfying family life. So for this age group,

strong family life is an essential 'anchor' or balance. Without it, the picture is very different. It is probably fair to guess that family support provides a context and a sounding board for negative issues that can arise online, but that is a separate subject to be explored in the future.

SHOULD PARENTS LOOSEN UP THEIR INTERNET RESTRICTIONS TO GET HAPPIER KIDS?

Not necessarily; what works well for young adults aged 18 and over does not translate directly to younger age groups. One group that we will be looking at closely in the future is adolescents aged 12 to 18. In particular, what is the effect of Internet use on their developing identities, and what are the factors that could help to make Internet use a 'positive' for them?

"We found that the enjoyment young adults get from their Internet activities increases their happiness, whereas their enjoyment of non-Internet activities doesn't."



Research has shown time online boosts happiness for young adults – but only when paired with a satisfying home life.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT BIG QUESTIONS IN THIS FIELD OF RESEARCH?

We need to get a better understanding of why we are seeing emotional displacement in favour of online activity, get a better sense of what sort of family support is needed by young adults and explore the effects of Internet usage on the happiness levels of different groups in society.

The research in this area of Internet usage and happiness is in its infancy, but as the world moves aggressively towards digital life I hope research like this will help us to manage that future well.

Dr Angsana Techatassanasoontorn and Dr Nalitra Thaiprasert (Chiang Mai University) examined the Internet use and subjective wellbeing of one hundred 18-25 year-olds in Thailand in 2012. Dr Techatassanasoontorn hopes to duplicate the research in New Zealand in early 2015. ■

Learn more at www.aut.ac/insight-internet