Program Director

Ashleigh Hillier, PhD is a member of faculty in the Department of Psychology at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. Dr. Hillier’s research interests include increasing our understanding of social and vocational skills of those on the autism spectrum, and how to support and develop these skills. Dr. Hillier has worked with individuals on the autism spectrum for over 15 years and currently runs a number of programs for adolescents and young adults on the autism spectrum. These include a college preparation program, a social network program, and a Movie Club. See her website for further details: http://faculty2.uml.edu/ahillier

Program Collaborators

Bruce Rosenbaum is a Steampunk Artist with his MBA from Duke University. Mr. Rosenbaum has quickly become an authority on Steampunk art and design through his Steampunk Design company, ModVic and has curated Steampunk exhibitions such as the Steampunk Form & Function Competition at the Charles River Museum of Industry and Innovation in Waltham, Massachusetts. Mr. Rosenbaum has appeared on many television shows, radio, newspaper and magazine articles including MTV Extreme Cribs, Channel 5 Chronicle, NPR, Boston Globe, CNN, Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Wired Magazine, and many more.

Adam Norton is the manager of the New England Robotics Validation and Experimentation (NERVE) Center at UMass Lowell. He is also an instructor and core member of the Artbotics program, which combines art and robotics to create interactive kinetic sculptures. He has helped develop the program since its inception in 2006, where he began as a student. Adam is a working roboticist, artist, and musician living in Lowell, MA.

Abraham Shultz is a Master’s Degree candidate at UMass Lowell. He works in the UMass Lowell Robotics Laboratory on neuron-computer interfaces. When he is not at work, he tinkers with electronics and makes art that operates at the intersection of aesthetics and neurobiology.
**Steampunkinetics: Brief Overview**

Steampunkinetics is an Art / Technology program for high functioning adolescents and young adults with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) aged between 13-30 years. The mission of Steampunkinetics is to provide those with ASD with the resources, skills, and support needed to create a unique and innovative work of art using technology and Steampunk Art aesthetics.

**What is Steampunk?**

Steampunk is an art genre that began in the 1980s and early 1990s. It includes art, books, movies, fashion, etc. centered around steam power and the Victorian era. Works of Steampunk are based on science fiction/futuristic ideas in which those in the Victorian era may have had about future technology.

**What will we do in the sessions?**

In Steampunkinetics, participants will work on projects incorporating art, technology, engineering—all within the Steampunk aesthetic. Participants will learn how to design and create a kinetic art object. This may include programming motion detectors, buttons, switches, etc. so that the art object moves / lights up / makes sounds, etc.

Much of the work will be carried out in small groups.

The sessions will be run by UMass Lowell undergraduate and graduate students with supervision from Dr. Ashleigh Hillier.

**Why is this a good fit for those with ASD?**

1) The types of projects participants will engage in will emphasize a piecemeal cognitive processing style which is a perfect match for those with ASD who excel in this type of processing.

2) Those with ASD can display phenomenal attention to detail, a skill that will be utilized in the Steampunk work they will be doing.

3) Steampunk requires highly creative minds capable of divergent thinking which pulls together previously unrelated forms and ideas. Those with ASD are known to have highly creative minds that generate unique, divergent ideas.

4) Those with ASD often excel with tasks centered on technology, mechanics, and understanding how things work.

5) The Steampunk culture itself may be appealing to those with ASD who sometimes also find themselves on the fringe of mainstream. Those in the Steampunk movement often describe themselves as Freaks and Geeks—a term also adopted by those with ASD.

**Logistics?**

Steampunkinetics is a 9-week program meeting once a week on UMass Lowell’s south campus from 4.30-6.30pm (day of the week will be decided closer to the time). The program runs in February and October. There is a $100 program fee to participate (scholarships are available for those who cannot afford the fee).

**What else?**

Steampunkinetics also provides an informal parent group which meets at the same time and place.