

PAUL FRANKLIN

My Lord and Chancellor,

Paul Franklin is an Oscar-winning creator of visual effects, who co-founded Double Negative, Europe's largest visual effects studio. Paul was born in Cheshire and after leaving high school he studied at Cheshire School of Art and Design for a year, before going to read Fine Art at Oxford University. He recalls his Oxford years as 'a time of aspiration and experiment' when he immersed himself in his sculpture course, and in a remarkable range of artistic activities including theatre and magazine design, and video editing. He also made his first films and began to combine his love of graphics with animation.

After graduating in 1989 Paul worked as a freelance in videotape editing and video graphic design. But he was also a keen gamer and in 1992 he joined the pioneering video games company Psygnosis as a computer artist, designing and creating 3D animations for a variety of gaming platforms including the then very innovative Playstation. But this time with Psygnosis was something of a double life: on top of the day job, Paul was working through the night with friends from the Royal College of Art making films. One of these was *Nine Circles*, a short dreamscape film based on Dante's vision of hell; it was noticed by the Moving Picture Co who took him on as a computer graphics animator in 1994. This gave him his opening into the film world and, beginning with *Hackers*, into the business of making stunning films without using expensive sets: in short, the world of visual effects.

Paul and a number of his colleagues later moved on to form Double Negative Visual Effects (Dneg). Dneg opened in 1998 with a team of 10; now, with over 1000 employees, it is the largest company of its kind in Europe, and its profile and reputation ensure that it needs no marketing. BU is proud to know that a number of our Media School graduates work for this prestigious company. Paul and Dneg take much of the credit for establishing the UK, and particularly London, as a leading centre for digital effects in film-making, taking it from a cottage industry to a major player on the world stage.

As Dneg's Effects Supervisor Paul leads a team of over 250 effects artists and technicians. He has been responsible for the design and execution of the visual effects in several of the last decade's most spectacular Hollywood productions, from the magical world of the Harry Potter films to the powerful impact of the Dark Knight Trilogy. Much of the later output has come from the hugely creative and influential collaboration between Paul and film director Christopher Nolan, starting with *Batman Begins* in 2004 and continuing to *The Dark Knight Rises*. This was one of three 2012 blockbusters which relied on Dneg's visual effects, the others being *Total Recall* and *The Bourne Legacy*.

Paul Franklin has received or shared in some of the highest international awards for contemporary media. His first BAFTA nomination was for *Batman Begins* in 2003; then came BAFTA and Oscar nominations for *The Dark Knight*. That film also earned him a Saturn Award for Best Special Effects in 2008. But the highest accolades came in 2009, for *Inception*, in which Paul

created a dream-world, between science fiction and reality, through the use of effects described as 'mind-bending'; they won him an Oscar, a BAFTA and a Visual Effects Society Award.

Paul is a great friend of BU, having been an external examiner and an inspirational guest lecturer in the Media School. Today the University warmly welcomes and honours this outstanding multi-skilled practitioner of the contemporary arts, and founding pioneer of the effects industry.

My Lord and Chancellor, I have the honour to present Paul Franklin, and I ask you to confer upon him the degree of Doctor of Arts, *honoris causa*.