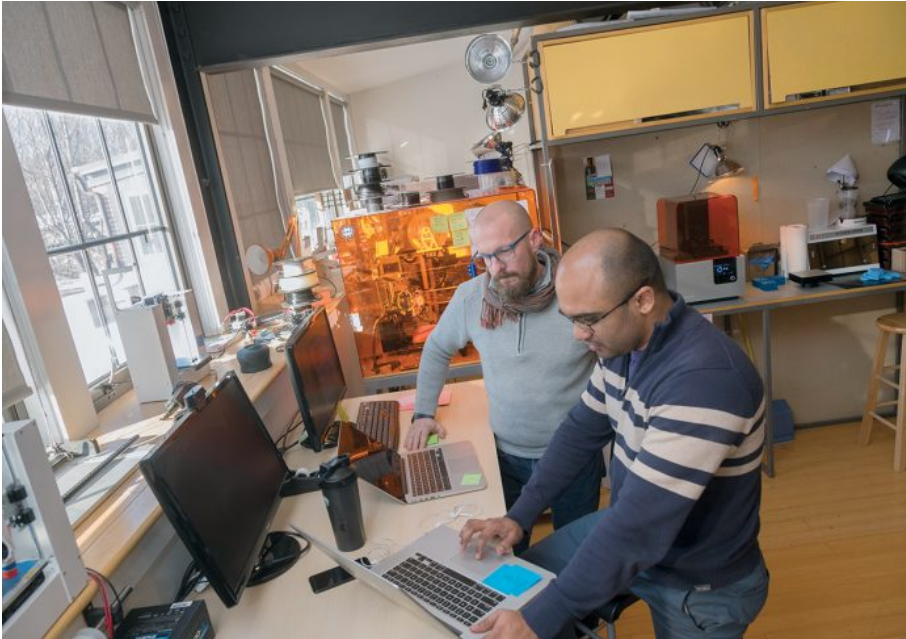


Tech a means to design end

Updated at 10:36 a.m.

By **Mary MacDonald** - February 16, 2018 6:28 am



GLOBAL DESIGNERS: Nick Scappaticci, left, co-founder and CEO of Tellart LLC, speaks with Lokesh Zope, creative technologist. The design firm is based in Providence and has offices in San Francisco, New York and Amsterdam. / PBN PHOTO/MICHAEL SALERNO

Tellart LLC had its origins in a shared studio in Providence, where undergraduates at the Rhode Island School of Design studying industrial, furniture and graphic design, as well as filmmaking, came together to work on projects and started collaborating.

Each had a different way of looking at design problems. What if data, software and other then-emerging technologies could play the same role as traditional materials in a product?

Nick Scappaticci, co-founder and CEO of Tellart, said everyone in the studio agreed the new technologies should be part of the process of design.

“We wanted to treat data, electronics and software, all of these things that were coming out ... no differently than wood, plastic, fabric and glass,” Scappaticci said.

Their reputation spread and led to a work assignment. That produced enough income for the then-students to purchase a computer, and the business was started.

Although its current projects are more intricate and varied, the business still operates under the premise that a multidisciplinary approach brings the best results in storytelling, whether the client is a museum that wants its visitors to be immersed in an experience, or a government that wants to allow people to visualize what climate change might look like.

Still based in Providence, the experience-design firm now employs 36 people and has offices in San Francisco and New York, as well as in Amsterdam.

“Digital technology and technology in general is just a means, or a material, to solve a problem,” Scappaticci said. “For any given project, we start with thinking about the content or the story and the effect the experience has to have on the audience. We form our ideas, an interactive and positive experience, and turn to technology to shape that, or make it a little more impactful, or meaningful.”

Recent projects completed by the company, working with other partners, include development of two prototypes of the Concept-I for Toyota, an automated vehicle. Tellart produced user experiences for the vehicle, working with the Institute for Creative Integration and a Toyota design team.

Another long-term project involved the design and installation of an exhibit at the California Academy of Sciences, the Color of Life, which showcases the role of color in the natural world.

Experiential exhibits for cultural institutions, including museums, have been a foundation and a core for the company since its founding, according to Scappaticci.

But at the heart of each exhibit is clear communication with the user, whether that is a child experiencing the vision of bees or a pet owner trying to understand how nutrition affects a dog's behavior.

"A lot of our work, mostly all of it, is about informal learning," Scappaticci said. "[It's] creating interactive objects or spaces that are trying to communicate some kind of lesson, giving the audience some new advantage of knowledge."

OWNERS: Nick Scappaticci and Matt Cottam

EMPLOYEES: 36 (23 in U.S.)

TYPE OF BUSINESS: Experience-design firm

LOCATION: 1 Sims Ave., Providence

YEAR ESTABLISHED: 2000

ANNUAL SALES: WND

A previous version of this story inaccurately identified Nick Scappaticci's title. Scappaticci is CEO of Tellart LLC.