

Alina Goldwoman

I am a mixed-methods UX researcher and designer specializing in iterative evaluation of immersive XR experiences. I have 10+ years of industry and academic experience, a PhD in human-computer interaction (HCI), and a background in consumer psychology. I help users cultivate a rich sense of shared meaning through deep connections and play, and empower makers to build emotionally resonant immersive worlds at a lower cost.

Professional Experience

Founder and Immersive Architect [2026-]

OdysseyLab / Amsterdam, NL

- Crafted the **Odyssey Heuristics: 14 Dimensions of Presence** which evaluate immersive experiences through a physical, cognitive, social, and narrative lens. The framework supports 1) strategic alignment, 2) scenario building, and 3) real-time feedback on user frictions before they are baked into an immersive product. OdysseyLab shifts the evaluation process from reactive debugging to proactive calibration, helping makers save design & iteration costs.

UX Research and Design Lead [2024-2026]

Netherlands Institute for Sound & Vision (NISV) / Beeld en Geluid, Hilversum, NL

- Led an iterative **research-through-design process for *The Space Archivists*** (TRANSMIXR EU Horizon grant 2020) a **template-based Social VR game** for children to explore the NISV archive. This included co-design sessions with children and heritage professionals, concept design, low-fidelity testing, prototype testing and feedback sessions, and formal usability studies. Showcased game at Cinekid '25 festival, United XR, and other museum events.
- Co-authored several publications, including a field guide for co-designing immersive experiences with children, XR for Cultural Heritage method booklet and workbook, technical reports, and a *Heritage* journal publication.
- Supported design processes and evaluation processes of other projects, including **The Curator Studio**, the **Ai4Culture platform**, Epic-We **culture heritage "game-jams,"** and the **3D4CH online 3D cultural competence platform.**

Senior Mixed-Methods UX Researcher [2023-2024],

Cognizant Digital Studio, Amsterdam, NL

- Conducted **mixed-methods research** through stakeholder interviews, user surveys, Google analytics, and trend reports. Synthesized data through thematic analysis, and created user flows, needs documents, and analysis plans for **pharmaceutical, manufacturing, and banking industries**, as well as the **UK government.**
- Launched research democratization initiatives through workshops, and mentored interns.

Postdoctoral Researcher/Designer and ERCIM Fellow [2019-2022], Distributed & Interactive Systems Group,

Centrum Wiskunde & Informatica (CWI), Amsterdam, NL

- Conceptualized and designed ***The Co-creation Space*** social media platform for artistic co-creation as part of the TRACTION project (EU Horizon Grant 2020) through a multi-step user-centered design process, including focus groups, co-design sessions, personas, storyboards, wireframes, usability studies, and open pilots. Managed technology evaluation for the project, and authored related academic and technical papers, blogposts, and videos.
- Supported **Social VR lobby** and **Co-creation Stage** R&D, wrote grants, and mentored students in the DIS group.

Doctoral Work in Human-Computer Interaction [2014-2019], Human Computer Interaction Lab,

College of Information Studies, University of Maryland, College Park, MD

- Conceptualized, designed, and tested **StreamBED VR**, a multisensory qualitative assessment platform for outdoor stream habitats. Designed tool through user-centered process, including expert interviews, focus groups, co-design sessions, and usability studies. **Led a team of 6 developers** to build StreamBED VR in Unity, and to prototype the **Ambient Holodeck multisensory VR system** with ambient sensory stimuli (heat, humidity, wind, smell).
- Designed and conducted qualitative co-design research with children (Kidsteam) on interactive participation in music performances using cooperative inquiry. Authored related **research on audience participation** in musical performances.

Visiting Researcher and Designer [2017-2019], OH Game Lab, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA

- Conceptualized and created a **design space theme map** for game live streaming on Twitch (CHI '21) through grounded theory qualitative analysis. Mentored related game design course.
- Developed immersive **narrative design method**, and mentored masters students semester project ("Lights Out") at the Entertainment Technology Center (ETC). Ran related codesign workshops at CMU and UC Irvine to study how audience interactivity can support interactive VR prototypes for Broadway theater and games.

Research Associate [2016-2017]

Disney Research, Pittsburgh, PA

- Conceptualized, designed, and developed a **haptic sports experience** using a tactor actuator and MaxMSP.
- Developed **questionnaire on haptic experiences**. Designed and conducted quantitative research study, and analyzed using multiple regression and factor analysis. Presented findings at Disney Research, Pittsburgh.

Education

2014-2019 PhD, Human-Computer Interaction & Information Studies
Advisor: Jennifer Preece
College of Information Studies, University of Maryland, College Park, MD

2012-2014 Master of Sciences, Human-Computer Interaction
Thesis advisor: Ben Bederson
College of Information Studies, University of Maryland, College Park, MD

2005-2009 Bachelor of Arts, Music Performance
Goucher College, Towson, MD

Awards & Honors

ICIDS Conference Best Long Paper Award (2019) - \$500	Dean's Award for Outstanding iSchool Project (2016)
ERCIM Alain Bensoussan Postdoctoral Fellowship (2019)	Goldhaber Travel Grant (2015, 2018) - \$600
Ann G. Wylie Dissertation Fellowship (2018) - \$15,000	International Conference Student Support Award (ICSSA) (2015, 2018) - \$500
Research Improvement Grant (2018) - \$600	Maryland Summer Scholars Grant (2011) - \$3,000
Dean's Fellowship Award (2017) - \$5,000	Rosenberg Merit Scholarship for Music (2007) - \$2,500
University of Maryland Outstanding GA (2017)	Polinger Scholarship for Performing Arts (2005) - \$3,000
Graduate Summer Research Fellowship (2016) - \$5,000	

Methods and Tools

Research

- Mixed methods: co-design, in-depth interviews, focus groups, surveys/questionnaires, contextual inquiry, heuristic evaluation, context mapping, A/B testing, and usability studies
- Analysis: thematic analysis, content analysis, linear regression, MRA, factor analysis
- Research Tools: Qualitative coding, R, SPSS, Qualtrics, Gephi, LaTeX

Design

- Methods: bodystorming, cooperative inquiry, affinity maps, user personas, scenarios/use cases, storyboarding, paper prototypes, design sketches, wireframes
- Prototyping Tools: Adobe Creative Suite, Figma, Miro, Balsamiq
- Programming experience in Java, Python, MaxMSP, Javascript/HTML/CSS, Arduino
- Game design using Unity/Oculus Rift/Blender

Other

- Native Speaker of English and Russian. Competent in French and Italian, and learning Dutch (A2). Proficient in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and German Diction.

Personal Interests

I enjoy observing patterns that occur across nature and art. I create immersive multisensory storytelling experiences using poetry combined with smell, taste, and sound. I am also a classical singer and a vintage fashion enthusiast.