

Robert Cook Artist's bio robert.cook@cobaltmedia.us IG rcook1360

Robert Cook was born on January 13, 1960, in Independence, Missouri. His mother, Joan Price, an artist, married Bill Cook, an electrical engineer. Due to their influences Robert has been working at the nexus of music, technology, and art his entire life.

As a result of his mother forcing him to take piano lessons, he began playing keyboards in dance bands at 12. Soon he wanted a synthesizer to play and with a Moog out of his part-time pizza joint employee budget range, he built one from a kit one solder joint at a time. He later won his local and state science fairs using the synthesizer as a tool to discuss and demonstrate sound waves.

At 16 Robert picked up a 35mm still camera and a year later was the staff photojournalist for the local newspaper, *The Round Rock Leader*. His first year in college he won Photographer of the Year, then completed a four-year studio degree program in two years.



Dallas, 35mm Tri-X film, 1981

After college Robert was a commercial photographer in Dallas, Texas where, for example, he worked with supermodels such as Isabella Rossellini and Carol Alt for Neiman-Marcus, created album artwork for Edie Brickell and the New Bohemians, as well as architecture and editorial assignments. His artwork at the time consisted mostly of Rolleiflex square format or 8"x10" large format landscapes which caught the attention of local galleries.

While teaching photography as an adjunct and pursuing a Master's degree in aesthetics and critical theory at the University of Texas at Arlington Robert met San Francisco performance artist Jim Pomeroy. Under Pomeroy's mentorship Robert began working with early Apple and Amiga computers.



Still from digital video: *Of Burghers and Brecht: Marx, Sharks, and Survivability Projections for a Big Mac Attack*, Amiga and NewTek video capture, 1989

At 29, Robert was hired by the University of Texas at Arlington as the youngest director level hire to run their Media Center. During his time the department grew from a small technical resource for faculty into a revenue center television station, digital pre-press, photography, and leading edge technology resource for the entire university.

While running the Media Center, Robert continued to produce and direct narrative shorts and experimental video. He also produced, directed, and shot documentaries in the mountains of Mexico, southern Albania, and Greece, as well as producing, *Drive for Five*, the story of the University of Texas at Arlington wheelchair basketball team going for its fifth consecutive national title. His films won him accolades at SXSW, Dallas Video Festival, and Houston Worldfest, as well as numerous screenings on PBS and around the country.



Still from experimental *J is for Jackal*, 16mm film, 1999

In the mid 1990's Robert was hired by Southern Illinois University, Carbondale to develop, establish, and run the first Master's of Multi-Media degree program in the

United States. He took an empty basement and turned it into a fully networked lab and classroom facility exceeding the technology of SIU's information technology department leading to an overhaul of the university's entire digital infrastructure. Robert also taught 3-D computer graphics and web-design including VRML on high-end Silicon Graphics workstations, graduate courses on critical theory, as well as building the program through hiring faculty and external networking. He also continued his filmmaking in both experimental and narrative areas.

Next Robert joined SIU Medical School to work on VR based remote sensing technology for medical specialist treating rural patients. While there he connected the school with resources at the Super Computing Center at UC San Diego.

Moving to Venice, California, Robert was hired by Digital Domain to run their software development group. He was instrumental in his department winning an Academy Award and releasing a commercial version of the company's proprietary compositing software. Robert worked on over a dozen studio projects from *Oh Brother Where Art Thou?* to *Lord of the Rings*, along with numerous award-winning television ads.

Robert currently lives and works in Venice, California. He has just completed his first narrative feature, *Holiday*, and is producing a documentary on legendary percussionist Bobbye Hall, as well as developing other narrative projects.



Stills from social media video promos for documentary *MBH: Ms. Bobbye Hall*, currently in production

Robert has given talks and been published on the relations between technology and art since the 1980's at SIGGRAH, Modern Language Association, College Arts Association, Society of Photographic Educators, and the Dallas Museum of Art. His artwork has been shown in places such as Film in the Cities, The Ansel Adams Gallery, The Amon Carter Museum, Director's Guild Los Angeles, as well as being collected by the San Antonio Museum of Art.

Robert has continued to play in bands and with other musicians all his life. Currently he plays electric bass and keyboards for rock band The Buffalo Grass and upright bass for bluegrass band The Rattlesnakes.



Robert holds a B.S. in Photography from Texas A&M University, Commerce, a M.A. in Humanities with an emphasis in critical theory from University of Texas, Arlington, and a M.F.A. in Screenwriting from Pepperdine University.