

Chicago

Biographies of an Interactive Life-style

February 22 - March 17, 1985



Phil Morton:
Self-visualization collage

Walter Phillips Gallery for the production, presentation and exhibition of contemporary art.

Introduction

In the arena of the larger culture, eccentric milieus often suffer (or could it be "benefit") the misrepresentation and mystification of their art. The video/computer community in Chicago, which has been dedicated to analog and digital electronic visualization for more than a decade, is such a case. For its constituents, the result has been a general recognition of "The Chicago Community" as an entity, with a delayed and only partial understanding of that community's contribution and art. The ambiguity has been caused by a sensibility (there) that is not restricted to the art historical discourse alone; what is required to break through the ambiguity is a more rigorous comprehension of the structural and discursive context that exists in Chicago. The purpose of this project, in the exhibition and subsequent analyses, is to articulate the idiosyncrasies of the Chicago milieu and so to initiate a better evaluation of its productions. This intention begins with this presentation of the career production of four artists (the "Biographies") and a detailed look at the larger community (the "Chicago Survey").

Just as the Chicago community has shown no preference to function strictly within the art discourse, it has little interest in the usual aspects of popular culture that have seduced so many other video/computer artists. They *are* interested in producing self-teaching tools, in developing innovative systems and high-level, interactive graphics languages that can be used with populist (i.e., accessible and affordable) technology. They do make this effort to expand their media; but they are equally committed to personal research and to making their own art. For them, the restrictions of any one discourse is a miserable prospect. The community's desire is artistic; its perspective is social; its language is technological and scientific; its forum is educational and discursive. The ethical system that has evolved from this sensibility is based on continuous interaction amongst artists, scientists, technicians, educators and students. Technological and educational research and practice is integral to artistic production. This is not, however, the romanticized, collaboration of art and technology — most of the Chicago artists manifest a merged identity of these various capabilities.

In Chicago there is an interactive milieu comprised of individuals with varied backgrounds and expansive personal interests, who share a common life-style and commitment to video/computer art. It is not surprising that such a milieu would represent itself with informational tapes about innovative materials and tools alongside personal artistic works. It all has equivalent value in the creative enterprise of video and computer art in Chicago, or what they more correctly identify as Chicago electronic visualization.

Lorne Falk



Copper Giloth

Biographies of an Interactive Lifestyle

The biographies provide specific insight into not only the career production, sensibilities and concerns of four individual artists, but also the nature of their life-styles. The biographies prescribe the eccentric, merged capabilities of many of the artists in the Chicago video/computer community and the basis for appreciating and evaluating the work of this milieu. Years after the Chicago community had pioneered and established itself in the interactive life-style of the Electronic Age, museums, galleries, publications and television stations around the world have been presenting their art to audiences that are realizing that they, too, live in an electronic domain for which no historical reference is relevant.



Studio: Copper Giloth

Copper Giloth. Uses microcomputer graphic systems, plotters and video to make drawings and animated video tapes; designed the PAINT system for the DATAMAX UV-1 computer and the RT1 PAINT System for a VAX 11/70 running UNIX with an AED frame buffer; designer of interactive systems, specifically paint, animation and artist's work stations since 1980; Chair of the SIGGRAPH '82 and '83 art exhibitions; former Vice-President and manager of applications software design at Real Time Design Inc.; consultant designing paint and animation software, documentation, text fonts, utility programs, demos and educational materials for Datamax UV-1 and Astrocade Zgrass computer systems.

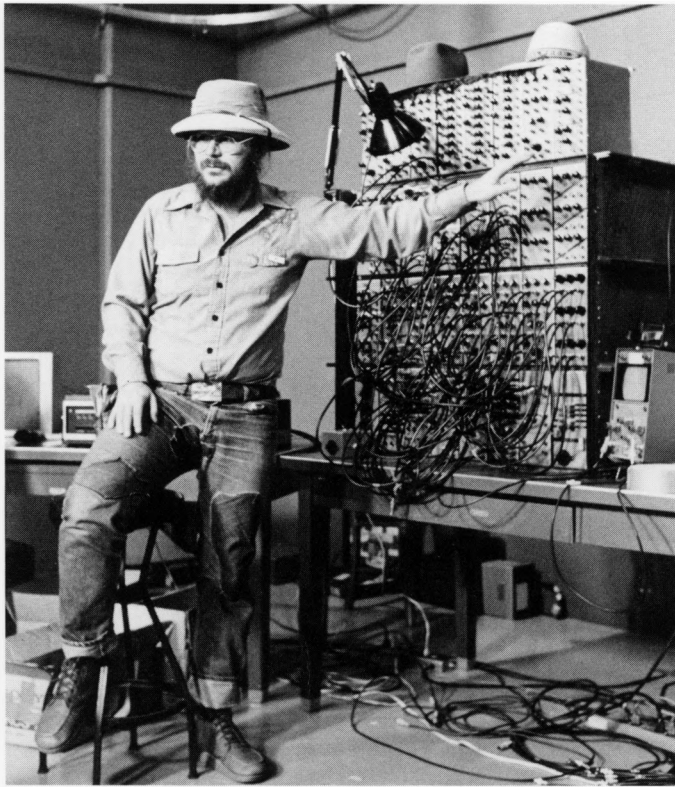
Works include: Calculated Sequences (1984); The UV-1 Paint Tape (1981); From Video Games to Video Art (1981) As I Said (1980); Feedback, Voice, Trees (1980); Variances (3) (1980); Skippy Peanut Butter Jars (1980); Childhood Logic (1978).



Phil Morton: self-visualization collage

Phil Morton. A neuroelectronic artist with digital computer language literacy in ZGRASS and BASIC; patch-programming literacy with analog computers; does real time performance; television program maker; philosopher; recreational vehicle designer; former Associate Professor at the Art Institute of Chicago; builder of high-speed, general purpose analog video computer; desires deep space travel opportunity; currently researching interactive neuroelectronic A/V instruments; sole owner of Video Research Consultants (dedicated to real time aural and visual performance, yearly contract with SIGGRAPH conference); lives with and through the medium conversationally.

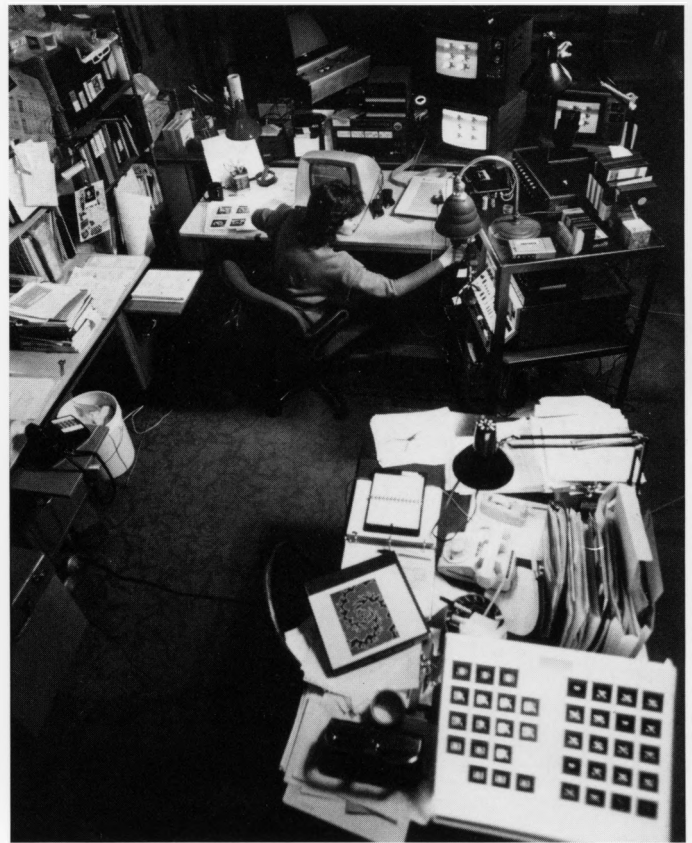
Works include: Target/Siggraph '81 (1981); Reef No. 1 and Reef No. 2; Program No. 9 (Amateur TV) (1979); Program No. 7 (1979); Data Bursts (1978); Wire Trees with 4 Vectors (1978); Reference Carrier (1978); Siggraph '79 Sampler (1977); Program No. 1 (1977); General Motors (1976); ReScanning Eve 1 and Eve 88 (1976); Colorfull Colorado (1975).



Dan Sandin and the Image Processor (realized 1973)

Dan Sandin. Inventor and designer of electronic instruments for visual performance and personal growth; developer of educational facilities and programs related to electronic visualization; degrees in nuclear physics; inventor of Image Processor, which has been copied more than 20 times (plans furnished if you send a self-addressed envelope capable of holding 100 pages; engaged in development of a new video synthesizer, the "digital image processor" (DIP); involved in three dimensional computer imaging utilizing integral holography and integral photography; co-developer of Circle Graphics Habitat, a short order educational media house.

Works include: Wandawega Waters; EIA Tape with Spiral 5; 3 Views of Water; Spiral 3; Poop for the N.C.C.; Sistets Bay Christmas Morning and Afternoon; Rylin Christmas Dance; 5 Minute Romp with the First Image Processor Tapes.



Studio: Jane Veeder (photo: Chip Dodsworth, 1983)

Jane Veeder. Does real-time computer graphic performances live, recorded on video tape, or residing in EPROM supporting interactive conferences; freelance graphics consultant; software engineer on team that developed a graphics environment and paint program as simulation software aimed for custom hardware to accompany IBM PC; animation artist-programmer and software engineer at Real Time Design Inc. and member of ZGRASS Project which developed and elaborated the UV-1/Zgrass Computer Graphics System; artist in residence, Chicago Council on Fine Arts and Chicago Board of Education, Bureau of Telecommunications and Broadcasting.

Works include: Floater (1983); Warpitout Document (1982); Montana (1982); Target Siggraph '81 (1981); Surface Tension (1980); Siggraph Sampler 1979 (1979); Program No. 9 (Amateur TV) (1979); Program No. 7 (Revised for TV) (1979); Loopcycle (1978); Belly/Hands (1977); Program No. 1 (1977); Feedback Face (1977); S-Tape (1976).

Chicago Survey

1. Information Videotapes Survey

Video and computer graphics are excellent mediums for the communication of the technology and methods of video and computer graphics. The generation of informational materials has been part of the activity at the University of Illinois since 1973. Early support for research in real time computer graphics came for the purposes of generating low cost educational materials. The methods used to produce the tapes depart from conventional educational media production techniques. The realtime feedback inherent in the systems designed by Dr. Tom DeFanti (G.R.A.S.S. and Zgrass) allow the content expert to create complex, animated, graphically clear communications by interacting with the visual event until satisfied.

The tapes in this survey are largely created by individuals on trivial budgets to communicate things that are hard to communicate on paper.

Works in this survey include: How TV Works (Sandin, Morton, Sykes); 5 Minute Romp Through the Sandin Image Processor (Sandin, Morton); Poop for the NCC (GRASS System) (DeFanti, Sandin, Morton); Spirit of Zgrass (Veeder); Waveguide 1: Black and White Video Waveforms (Gilothe, Molnar); and Star Wars Computer Graphics (Cuba).

2. Electronic Visualization Events Survey

The E.V.E. events were performed by students and faculty of the University of Illinois at Chicago and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. They represent very early (perhaps the earliest) live performances in the musical tradition utilizing computer graphic image generation.

Most visual media cannot be created in real time. The completed visual work in pre-electronic media required accurate activity over time, as in painting, or delays in processing, as in photography. This is equivalent in music to playing a Bach fugue on a piano and not being able to hear the music until the pianist is finished. The distinction between real time and stored time creation is profound. Most human activities are performed in an environment rich in immediate feedback. Try driving a car with your eyes closed.

Electronic media offer for the first time the possibility of live visual performance.

The electronic Visualization Event Survey contains:

"EVE AURA" (A document of I.E.V.E.)	1975	20 mins
I.E.V.E. EDIT (an edit of live performances)	1975	60 mins
E.V.E. 2 EDIT (an edit of live performances)	1976	60 mins
E.V.E. 3 EDIT (an edit of tapes played)	1978	60 mins

3. Interactive Installations Survey

Most visual art is passive. The audience of a performance or the viewer of a painting is constrained to observation. Very little action on the part of the viewer is relevant. Most of our experience and understanding of the universe is based on active manipulation of the changes that happen from that manipulation. Electronic media (video and computer graphics in particular) make possible the creation of interactive visual spaces where the viewer-participant is an active element in the experience, i.e. a player.

The tapes in this survey are documents of these environments and, because of the one way passive character of videotape, can not communicate the essential elements of these works.

Works in this survey include: A Collection of Image Processor Based Installations 1975-84 (various players); The Two-Way Event from Electronic Activity Under Art Surveillance, 1977 (Morton and SAIC Two-Way Telecommunications Class Students); From Video Games to Video Art, 1980 (Gilothe, DeFanti); Warpitout Document, 1982 (Veeder).

4. Live Performance Survey

Most of the performances recorded on these tapes are not documentaries of 'performances' in the conventional art/video art world sense, but are recordings of the signal output of some electronic visualization system configuration for which performance is the source of live, but not necessarily spontaneous, input material. For example, dance functions as a source of dynamic forms. Other works document theatrical performances where electronic visualization functioned interactively as one of the 'characters'.

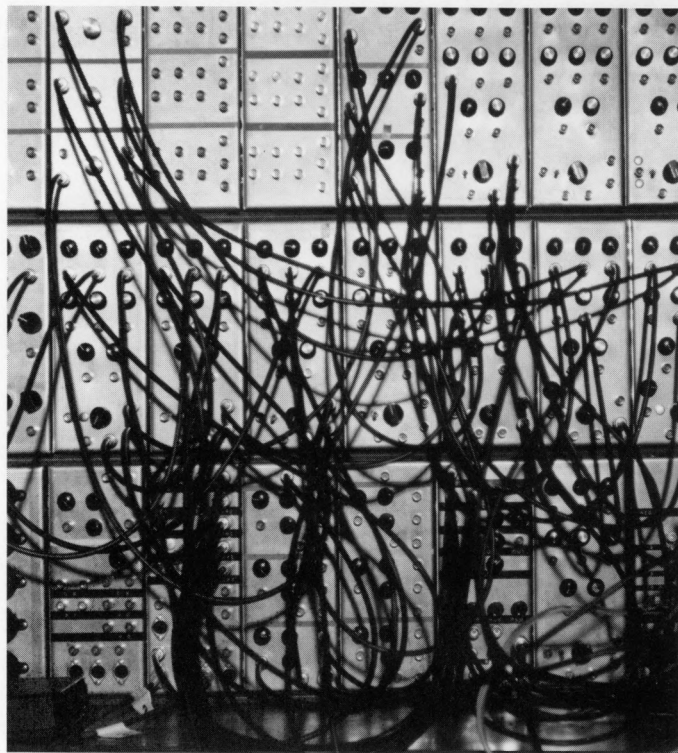
Works in this survey include: 7 Second Interval, 1979 (DeJong, Mandenberg); I Dream of Dreaming, 1981 (Sykes); and SRAMRAP, (Barbier, Browning).

5. Additional Personal Electronic Visualization Works

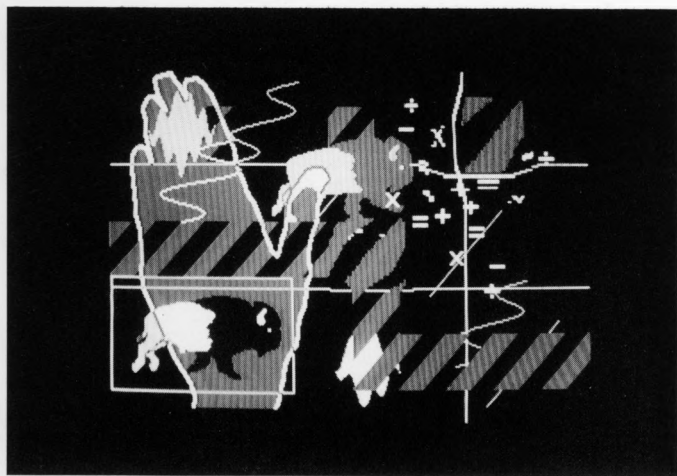
The personal examples of Chicago electronic visualization works are largely characterized by a number of unique factors:

- use of personal or institutional (UICC EVL or SAIC) tools rather than rented time with 'professional' video tools.
- many artists using the same tools to produce personal works exhibiting a wide variety of control/production strategies and perceptual results.
- comparative lack of outside support from either artworld or government sources.
- long 'production' durations, with some artists creating in 'research-time' instead of 'production-time'.
- Smart-Art: given the Chicago hard/software development, many works (videotape and otherwise) are built around innovating with the yet-to-be-explored formal capabilities of a generalized system; an obvious interest in control structures both specific to a given work and in general applied to the artist's creative environment, i.e. development of hard/software exploration and production tools for personal and shared use.

Works in this survey include: collected works of Bob Snyder; Works by Beth Berolzheimer, Lynn Blumenthal, Arturo Cubacub, Joanne Culver, Frank Dietrich, Susan Farner, Mike Fausner, Wayne Fielding, Rick Frankel, Lisa Fremont, Karl Hauser, Johnnie Hugh Horn, Post Jaapma, Paras Kaul, Charles Kesler, Daniel Klepper, Barbara Latham, John Manning, Michael Markowski, Mark Mckernin, Zsuzsa Molnar, Stuart Pettigrew, Dana Plepys, Ed Rankus, Maggie Rawlings, Joe Reitzer, Sally Rosenthal, Barbara Sykes, Janice Tanaka, Guenther Tetz, Marilyn Wulff.



The Image Processor



Jane Veeder, *FLOATER*, 1983 (photo: Jane Veeder)

A project organized by the Walter Phillips Gallery,
The Banff Centre, Box 1020, Banff, Alberta, T0L 0C0.
Tel. (403) 762-6281.



The Banff Centre