

# Art demands a new breed of programmer

BY MIKE LEGGETT

**A** NEW kind of computer programmer is coming into being who combines the traditional skills of tight, efficient code-writing with the ability to work flexibly with constantly evolving artistic projects.

Gideon May is one of the new breed. "As the demand for programmers able to write code for multimedia projects increases over the next few years", the visiting Dutch code-writer said in Sydney last week, "their ability to succeed will be related to their ability to work in close collaboration with the full range of other specialists engaged in a project."

"I don't think that there will be a place for just one director who is in control and who delegates everything."

May has spent several years dividing his time between writing code for commerce and industry and working in collaboration with media artists from around the world.

Currently he has two main projects. A long-term engagement for a software company has him seeking the Holy Grail of colour calibration between designers and dyers in the large Dutch textiles industry, and he is also completing development on the media artist Bill Seaman's new work, *World Generator*.

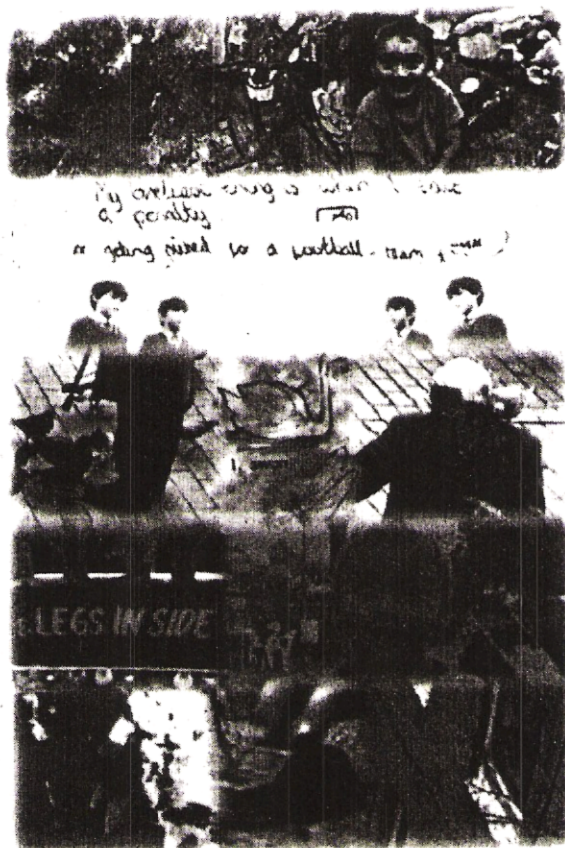
"Bill is very open to other ideas, to get inside a project. He is also very curious to see to what extent I can enhance a project to make it more open. There will be a stand-alone version and an Internet version that will permit other people to hook into the *World* and contribute through interaction," May said at last week's new media conference organised by the Australian Film Commission, which brought together artists and technologists working at the cutting edge of multimedia.

Seaman recently returned to the US after living and working in Sydney since the late 1980s, during which time he produced two widely exhibited works - *The Exquisite Mechanism of Shivers* and *Passage Sets*.

May has worked with several

## Childhood brought into focus

### *The Twelve Loveliest Things I Know*



### Interactive Art Film by Chris Hales

Multimedia ... examples of the anthology style.

other artists including the Hungarian Agnes Hegedus, whose work *Handsight* is on show at the Museum of Contemporary Art at Circular Quay, and utilises a Sony data projector and a Silicon Graphics (SGI) computer with a positioning "eyeball" interface held in the hand to explore the 360-degree virtual interior of a transparent sphere.

The Centre for Art and Media Technology (ZKM), a research and development facil-

ity in Karlsruhe, Germany, has been the location of much of May's collaborative work. The director of its visual media unit, Melbourne-educated Jeffrey Shaw, was recently in Sydney at the current *Burning the Interface* exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art.

At a public lecture there, he described how the centre provides a well-equipped environment, where international artists are invited to make new work with computer specialists,

**C**HRIS Hales's *The Twelve Loveliest Things I Know* is an example of the anthology style that many fine artists working in multimedia are concentrating upon. (Sydney artist John Colette's *Fifty Words for the City* follows a similar structural premise.)

From a central scene - a child's heavy-footed running through sand - other images become subtly visible. It's possible to click on these images to retrieve sound and vision portraits of the "loveliest things", described by children, their recorded voices betraying varying degrees of pleasure and excitement, from the cautious to uncontained glee.

The photographs, too, are of children in moments of unrestrained bliss - and these images are mounted alongside others - children's drawings or photographs evocative of childhood.

They are not animated in the sense that the images within them move, but the pictures do scroll automatically in their windows, placing the emphasis on different parts of them and promoting greater scrutiny by the viewer.

There is a repeating soundtrack of a simple piano theme, which changes in style slightly according to the image - for example the piano becomes fair-ground calliope when a merry-go-round image is on screen.

Hales also spoke at the AFC's Language of Interactivity conference.

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