MNEMONIC NOTATIONS V
Australia, 1992–1996 (a continuing project)
PHILLIP GEORGE, RALPH WAYMENT

Phillip George
Ralph Wayment

mnemonic /ni'monik/adj 1 assisting or intended to assist the memory 2 of memory – mnemonic n

notation /no'tashan/ n (a representation of something by) a system of marks, signs, symbols figures, characters, or abbreviated expressions

Mnemonic Notations continually attempts to reveal a notion of the 'fluidity' of time, through its ever-changing and evolving nature. This continual processing and transformation of the serial/parallel images reveals, within each manifestation of the work, aspects or marker points that help denote where we are in time. Time is viewed as a transformative agent across the works presented. The ongoing process that constitutes this work emerges from reflecting on the correspondences between mind, memory, our experience of the land and the social constructions of religions and philosophies that have a major impact on our memories and perceptions of the world.

In *Mnemonic Notations* one looks to the painterly to see the interface – the imagery is the interface. Remembering is the palette and image bank of the work. The visitor into the installation will not find a button to press. There is no 'correct' move to make, there is no particular start or end, questions are not always answered nor resolved.

Circumstances of production
Mnemonic Notations V uses many reproductive technologies: painting, photography, digital manipulation, CD-ROM, animation, video and object-orientated programming, all of which are integrated into an interactive installation for Burning the Interface. The original *Mnemonic Notations* is a series of images by Phillip George. These images have been developed from one computer file that has been continuously modified and occasionally down-loaded to make art works in various media.

In the interactive *Mnemonic Notations* by Ralph Wayment the images are no longer separate, individual works, but links in an interactive structure of endless circular or spiralling chains based on the Buddhist doctrine of creation by cause. A participant's route through the work is now defined by the interaction between human and machine memory and results in changes to both.

Artists' biographies
Philip George trained as a painter at the National Art School, Sydney, graduating with a Diploma in Art in 1979. He received an MA in painting and digital imaging from University of NSW College of Fine Arts in 1996. A practitioner of Chinese yoga since 1985, he is currently Lecturer in digital imaging at the University of Western Sydney at Macarthur. **Ralph Wayment** studied and worked as an archaeologist in England until photographing mammoth skulls got him hooked on photography in 1978. He studied photography in London and ran a commercial studio (in Sydney) until 1985 when he started experimenting with digital imaging as a way of further realising a picture. From 1991 he worked both commercially and as an artist producing interactive works that explore the processes of memory and the role of the audience as participants in the work.

V.O.L.V.O./AIRBAG

Amsterdam, Netherlands, 1995

PAUL GROOT & JANS POSSEL *Publisher, Editors, Screen Design:* Paul Groot, Jans Possel *Animation/Graphics:* Sander Hassing, Mari Soppela, Martin Loquet, Joost Meerman, Igor Teeuwen *Interaction design:* Paul Groot, Jans Possel, Yariv Alter Fin *Sound design:* Richard Cameron and DJs *Production:* Paul Groot, Jans Possel, V.O.L.V.O. *Contributors:* V.O.L.V.O. Pochi, Chris Remie, and many others.

V.O.L.V.O. is the name of the unique three-man art and performance group which has

Paul Groot

Jans Possel

conquered the Amsterdam club circuit with their song *Airbag*. Their audio CD, with twenty re-mixes of *Airbag, Can Save Lives*, received rave reviews and acquired a steadfast group of fans and cult status. Now the V.O.L.V.O./Airbag CD-ROM has appeared with live performances, interviews and contributions from the band's extensive circle of artist friends, including films by the multi-talented Yariv Alter Fin.

This CD-Rom attempts to delve deeper into the unique personalities of the three V.O.L.V.O.s: Pinky, Richard and Lennart. Rather than showing the latest multi-media licks and tricks, it harks back to something that never existed: the romantic interactivity of an electronic film of one hundred years ago. In the centenary year of cinema, this music-loaded disc offers an imaginary trip through a landscape where the rattle of film projectors unveils the world of V.O.L.V.O. This CD-ROM is the third to be included in *Mediamatic*. But it is different from its predecessors. While highly experimental, it is less technologically advanced and more intimate and filmic. But take care: interactivity has never been so integrated with your mouse. Cherish your mouse and let it dance as you explore every area of your mouse pad.

Circumstances of production

This CD-ROM was made at the initiative of Paul Groot and Jans Possel, combined with the relentless efforts of V.O.L.V.O. and friends, all of whom contributed their work and time. Mediamatic Interactive Publishing provided office and equipment time for the production. Further financial resources were found by selling advertising space on the CD-ROM.
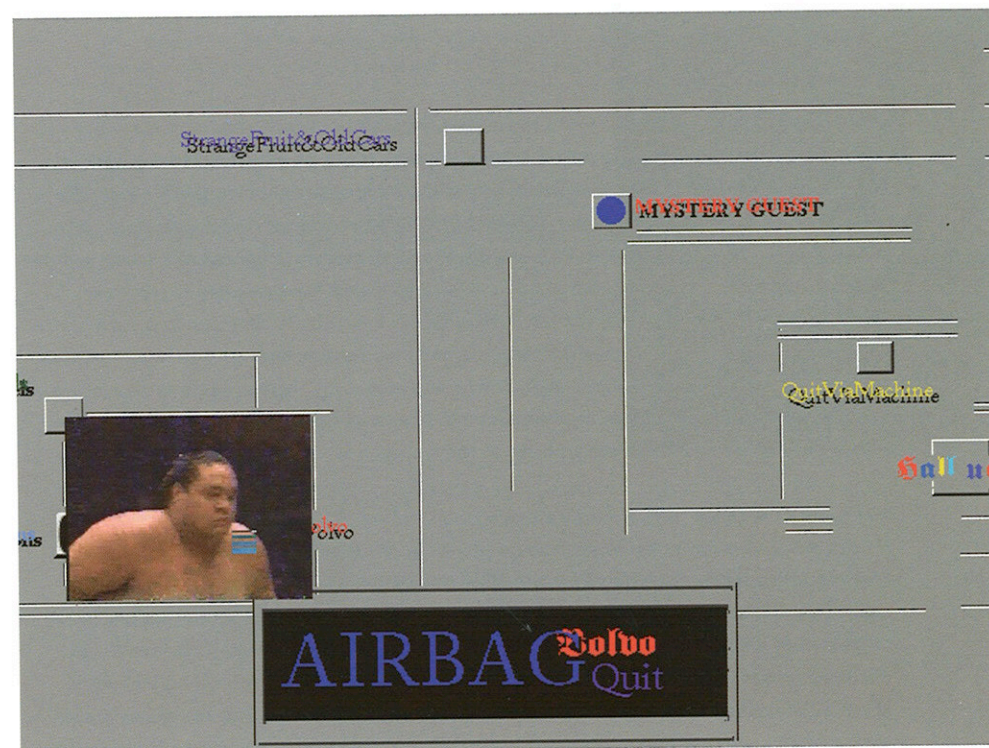
HAIKU DADA — HAVING FUN WITH JAPANESE CULTURE

Australia, August – December 1993

FELIX HUDE

Scripting/Technical/Concept: Jeremy Parker   *Original music:* Malcolm
Kilpatrick   *Voice/Research/Japanese language:* Kirsi Hiltula
Japanese culture consultants: Mark Bullock and Reiko McCloud

Felix Hude

To my western mind, Japan is a lot like Mars: are those canals I see? Who built them and
what sort of pyjamas do they wear? All very important questions,
but ones which may reveal more about me than them. Japan, like
Mars, is worth a look and is doing a marvellous job of polarising us. And it goes both ways.
What is Japan making of the west? All countries tend to import culture out of context and do
weird things with it. Japanese idolise golf and we idolise Zen. New meaning is eventually
found and things get absorbed, but not before human folly does it's dubious best. Like
children in the playground on the first day of school, we bumble through with what common
ground we can find, disagreeing on significance and approach. There are sure to be hiccups.
You can think of *Haiku Dada* as a cultural hiccup. Are those canals I see? I've never been to
Japan, but neither had Orson Welles been to Mars.

Circumstances of production

Haiku Dada was made as my major student project at the Swinburne School of Animation
and Interactive Media, Melbourne (now located at RMIT) in 1993. It took five months to
complete and was primarily a one-man show although produced in conceptual and technical
collaboration with lecturer Jeremy Parker. As all of the artwork was original, the major cost
of the piece was time, reference books and Valium. It was done on a shoestring budget of
about $2,000. Original music and voice overs were donated free. The interactive was made
almost wholly on paper and in Macromind Director. The sound was recorded and doctored in
SoundEdit 16.

Artist biography

After completing an engineering degree in 1976, Hude decided engineering was a bad idea
and took up cartooning. From 1978-1991 he lived and worked extensively in South and
South-East Asia. In 1993 he completed a Graduate Diploma in Animation and Interactive

Media at Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne. Multimedia productions by Hude
include *Abu & Anu Interactives* for the Malaysian National Science Centre, Kuala Lumpur, a
CD-ROM on the Antarctic food chain, and animations for educational videos on Indian culture
for high-school students. *Haiku Dada* won the Best Interactive 1993 at Swinburne Animation
Interactive Media Centre, Melbourne, and has been exhibited at multimedia festivals in
Melbourne and Perth. Hude is currently working on *Thou: The House of Unravelling*, a CD-
ROM about thinking.

IDEA_ON>!

Australia, August 1992 – June 1994

TROY INNOCENT

Prime collaborators: Ollie Olsen (Third Eye), Elena Popa, Dale Nason, Jeremy Parker

Troy Innocent

Idea_ON>! presents the manifestation of fragments of my own personal reality in what appears to be a living, breathing world. The approach to multimedia rejects traditional flat user-interface design, and offers the user many different forms of engagement through four 'new realities', each prototyping different aesthetic, structural and communication-based approaches to virtual space. It is interactivity for interactivity's sake, experimentation with what is possible, experience-based as opposed to information-based. Things may happen without user interaction, more obscure exploration may be required to find hidden places, or responses given by the objects and beings will vary, often following a surreal kind of logic. Visiting the *Idea_ON>!* installation can be likened to visiting a sacred site where spirits and myths reside. The information space inside the computer becomes a dreaming or meditational space, a manifestation of the subconscious where the objective contents of thoughts are stored for others to explore and experience. Similarly to traditional societies having a shared body of myths and legends which make up their perception of the universe, a world like *Idea_ON>!* jumbles together many things towards a prototype of a dreamlike, surreal, communal cyberspace in which people dream, create, imagine, and play with thought and form.

Circumstances of production

As an artist's project, *Idea_ON>!* was produced when resources were available, primarily with the artist's own funds. *Idea_ON>!* was originally conceived as part of studies undertaken at Swinburne University of Technology in 1992. It began with the conceptual design of each of the five worlds and a series of small-scale test interface designs. As animation was produced and creatures designed, the interface evolved to its current form. One year into production, *Idea_ON>!* began to be exhibited, and further developments occurred based on observations of people playing with the project. The entire project was created on mid-range Macintosh computers using off-the-shelf software, such as Director, Infini-D, and SoundEdit.
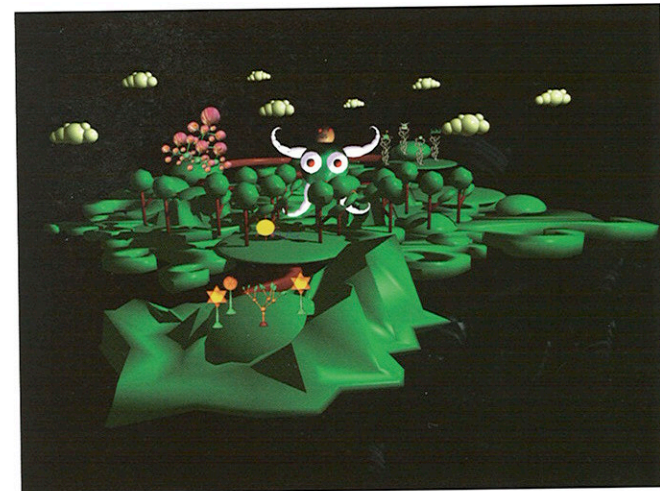
Artist biography

Troy Innocent is a Australian computer animator/multimedia designer, who began experimenting with electronic art in 1989 as co-founder of the Cyber Dada group. Primarily concerned with synthetic space and new interactive language, he has developed a unique personal style of computer graphics and iconography. Innocent has exhibited both animation and interactive multimedia works internationally. The *Idea_ON>!* installation was exhibited at ISEA'94, Helsinki, and Siggraph 94, Orlando, Florida. He is currently developing a new CD-ROM/online project with the support of the Australian Film Commission, and undertaking a Masters of Interactive Multimedia at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne.

MANUSKRIPT (artintact 1, ZKM Karlsruhe)

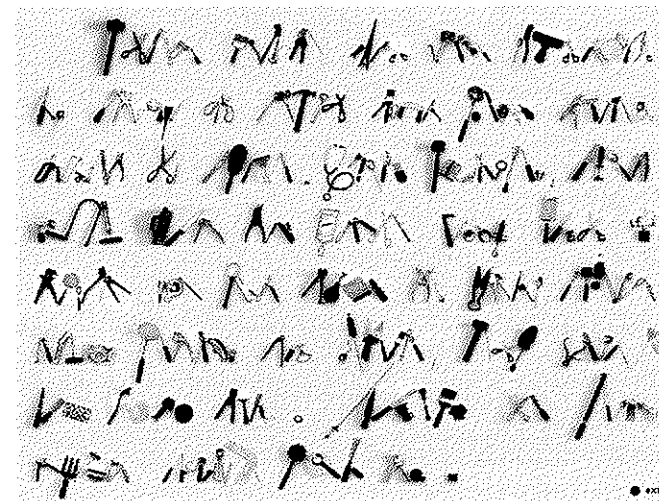Switzerland/Germany, 1994

ERIC LANZ

Eric Lanz

In *Manuskript*, Eric Lanz... uses photographs taken from his collection of tools and images shot for [his video] *Les Gestes*. The interactive process is no longer cited, it is rendered effective. The ironic distance the videographic version allowed for disappears completely to make way for the direct research and consultation of the data via itineraries which are inspired, simultaneously, by the cinema, by writing and by reading.

Zooming in from one stage to the next, we go forward into a first block of unidentifiable graphic elements. Then we decipher lines, then the signs that compose them and finally these signs turn out to be the images of tools. Placed against a white background, meticulously lined up and grouped together, like so many letters making so many words, they seem to simulate the hieroglyphs of some strange script. It is possible to run along a line to choose a particular tool, a bit like a finger running over a page. But the line turns out to be endlessly readable, like videos in a loop. The page of the catalogue extends beyond the screen, or rather, the very notion of the page is called into question.

The chosen tool is selected by clicking on an icon, and this opens a window in which the use of the tool is presented. This is the confrontation between the sign and the object, between the eye which interprets and the hand which executes.

Hypermedia allows for a non-linear access to stored information, and invitation to wander and to combine various different media... Eric Lanz's appropriation of this technique is paradoxical... He gives the impression of standing back from the critical position of the lesson about technologies, the better to develop a kind of internal resistance, holding the technical possibilities in reserve, playing with them on a low key, in a minimal mode, almost against the grain.

Anne-Marie Duguet, 'artintact 1: artists' interactive CD-ROMagazine, ZKM Karlsruhe, 1994, pp 97-98

72

Artist biography

Born in 1962, Eric Lanz lives and works in Düsseldorf and Geneva. Solo exhibitions by Lanz have been held at Kunstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, Germany (1995), Videoart Locarno, Italy (1994) and Kunsthalle Fribourg, Germany (1993). He has participated in many group exhibitions, including Manual Devices, Art Frankfurt, Germany (1995); MultiMediale 4, ZKM/Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, Germany (1995); Operativ, Kunstlerhof Buch, Akademie der Kunste, Berlin, Germany (1995); Et passim, Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland (1994); Artifice 3, Saint-Denis, France (1994); La revue virtuelle 10, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France (1994); and De la Romandie, Fotomuseum Winterhur (1993).

AN ANECDOTED ARCHIVE FROM THE COLD WAR
United States, August 1993 – December 1994

GEORGE LEGRADY

Prime collaborator: Rosemary Comella. *Lingo and Director work:* Paul Tompkins *Photoshop processing:* Andrea Schwartz, Judy Sitz and Easter Bonnefield *Programming:* Jim Burton *Scanning and image preparation:* Adrian Fernandez *Quicktime movies:* Gordon Saint-Clair from Big Zig TV

George Legrady

Digital interactive media require metaphor-based, organisational models by which to conceptually situate the viewer and to provide a way of accessing and understanding data. By knowing 'the story' or metaphor, the viewer can successfully navigate inside the interactive program. As a result, these metaphorical environments promise to be the key site for innovative developments in defining the interactive viewer's experience within the digital environment. *An Anecdoted Archive from the Cold War* is an interactive CD-ROM and computer-media installation project. This non-linear narrative features early 1950s East European personal and official Communist material in the form of home movies, video footage, objects, books, family documents, Socialist propaganda, money, sound recordings, news reports, identity cards, etc. These items, in the form of over sixty stories, have been arranged thematically in eight rooms superimposed on the original floor plan of the former Workers' Movement (Propaganda) Museum in Budapest – the original contents of which have been in permanent storage since 1990. *The Anecdoted Archive...* reflects my particular history in relation to the Cold War. Born in Budapest in 1950 near the end of the Stalin era, I left with my family to the West during the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.

Circumstances of production

The Anecdoted Archive of the Cold War was produced in 1993, for the inaugural exhibition *In/Out of the Cold* at the Center for the Arts, Yerba Buena Gardens civic centre museum. The project was independently funded which meant that all production contributors worked on a voluntary basis. I received a $5000 WESTAF grant which was used to purchase hard drives. A San Francisco State University Advanced Computing Faculty Research budget paid for the pressing of the laserdisc. The first version was produced on CD-ROM with all videos on laserdisc. *The Archive* was fine-tuned and some interactive components redesigned in the following four months after watching hundreds of spectators do things with the program we never expected.

An event at the train station in Hegyeshalom, (the border town)

Artist biography

George Legrady received an MFA from San Francisco Art Institute in 1976 and since 1996 has been Professor of Electronic Media at Merz Akademie, Stuttgart, Germany. Legrady has been the recipient of a number of awards, including Artslink, NEA/Soros Foundation Grant (1995); a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship (1994); grand prize award, Voyager Co, Interval Research (1994) and Prix Ars Electronica, Honorable Mention, Linz, Austria (1994). Legrady's interactive installations have been shown in many exhibitions internationally, including in the Mcsarnok Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, Hungary in 1996; and in 1995 at the Lyon Biennale d'Art Contemporain, France; Photography After Photography, Siemens Kultur Programm, Munich, Germany; Foto Biennale, Rijksmuseum Twenthe, Netherlands; George Legrady Digitalogue Gallery, Bergamot Station, Santa Monica; ISEA'95, Montreal, Quebec; and in a solo exhibition at Rovaniemi Art Museum, Rovaniemi, Finland.

A DIGITAL RHIZOME
Australia, January 1993 – February 1994
BRAD MILLER
Prime collaborators: Bill Seaman, Lloyd Sharp, Julia Miller

Brad Miller

A rhizome as a subterranean stem is absolutely different from roots and radicles. Bulbs and tubers are rhizomes. Plants with roots or radicles may be rhizomorphic in other respects altogether. Burrows are too, in all their functions of shelter, supply, movement, evasion, and breakout. The rhizome itself assumes very diverse forms, from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretion into bulbs and tubers… The rhizome includes the best and the worst: potato and couchgrass, or the weed.'

Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus Minneapolis*: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, pp.6-7

A Digital Rhizome is a computer-based screen-and-mouse interactive that mediates a metaphor – that of Deleuze and Guattari's 'rhizome'. Passive viewing and interrogational games are probably the two extremes of a continuum. *A Digital Rhizome*, as an interactive CD-ROM, is somewhere in between. It involves a series of interlinked manipulated images through which the viewer/user can create their own contextual structure. There is no systematic hierarchy, although hierarchical 'islands' may be sustained within a rhizome. Connectivity functions as a structure of individuation since at any given moment the 'centre' of any rhizomorphic structure is the individual's position in relation to that structure. Distinctions between artist and viewer disintegrate as the viewer participates in authorship, a end-searcher in the search itself.

Circumstances of production

The production of *A Digital Rhizome* entailed approximately a year at The College of Fine Arts (UNSW) working through about 100 graphic files from the previous two years of image generation, using an Amiga A3000 and a DCTV video capture device. These images were converted from HAM to PICT reworked with Photoshop and ColourStudio. They were arranged into interlocking cards within Hypercard with additional HyperTalk programming support by

Lloyd Sharp. The cards were not arranged in any particular order. During the card reworking stage Miller simultaneously worked with 3D animation and modelling applications and video (QuickTime movies) capturing software to build a series of digital video sequences.

Artist biography

Born in Sydney in 1961, Brad Miller studied Electronic Engineering and Graphic Design at TAFE, received a BA in Visual Arts at Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney, and is presently a candidate in the Masters of Fine Art (Research) program at The College of Fine Arts, University of NSW. Miller works as artist, tutor, and is a researcher at the Key Centre for Design, Computing, Architectural and Design Science at The University of Sydney. His current artist project is the creation of a CD-ROM entitled *A Planet Of Noise* with writer McKenzie Wark in association with The Australian Film Commission and the Australian Network for Art & Technology.

BLAM! 1

United States, April 1995 – September 1995
NECRO ENEMA AMALGAMATED: Eric Swenson and Keith Seward
Other contributers to BLAM! Rita Ackermann, Richard Kern,
Victoria Lynne Golos

'What makes you so *special*?' you ask. It's this : we know and understand that if

Necro Enema Amalgamated

subversion is a form of action transcending the separation between art and politics, that dogs delimit the boundary between human animal and gorilla man. We wait for a sign of life to peek out from underneath the covers of today's traditional, licensed revolutionaries.

The social position of the Necro-Enema-phile thought process has been defined by the pervasive contradiction of **fascistic** thought: the most highly developed critique of modern life has been made in the world's most highly-developed countries – countries where the complete disintegration of a unified sense of a cohesive value-laden lexicon **no longer exists because of the ultimate success of Necro social policy and manifest Enema destiny.** The forces of revolt exist, but without revolutionary perspective or verve. **Pathetic milk sops on every Avenida de las Revolución!!**

Circumstances of production

Using borrowed funds (i.e. credit cards with interest rates approaching 15-20%), Necro Enema Amalgamated has succeeded in running up a debt of nearly twenty thousand dollars in order to cover the production costs of BLAM!

...BLAM!s 1 and 2 were made on shitty old Macintosh computers. It doesn't matter which kind. All that matters is that for a minimal sum, we made the ultimate contribution to humankind... and we love flowers.

Artists' biographies

Eric Swenson has stood against the blindness and complacency of the world in his roles as multimedia designer, programmer, author, consultant and **propagandist** for years. As art director, producer, publisher, **designer**, and programmer of the highly controversial CD-ROM

entity **BLAM!**, he has **announced** a program of **blood and terror** in a self-revelation of such overwhelming frankness that few users have the courage to believe it. Currently, the **light-heartedness** with which Mr Swenson fulfils his duties as a principal of **Necro Enema Amalgamated** is perhaps even more frightful than his **threats** themselves. That such a man will **go far** toward realising his ambition, and above all – will find millions of **willing tools** and **helpers**, is a phenomenon the **world** will ponder for centuries **to come.**

Keith Seward has paranoiac **delusions** about being surveilled by the FBI and stalked by former love interests. He considers **BLAM!** a projection of his inability to communicate via such **socially acceptable** means as 'words' . Please do not **exacerbate** his morbid sensitivity by **making** any attempts to disturb His **Extroverted** Reclusiveness. **Rubberneckers** will be met at the end of the driveway by a **shotgun** snarling, 'Get off my property!' Noli me tangere.

PALOMAR, LE REGARDEUR ACTIF (Palomar, the Active Viewer)
Canada, June 1994 – October 1994 (in French, updated with partial English translation in December 1995)
NEUROM-X: Joseph Lefèvre, Èric Mattson and Alain Mongeau
Sound conception: Martin Hurtubise, assisted by Stéphanie Claude and Marc Leclair *Contributing artists:* Frédérick Belzile, Jean François Cantin, Eric Desprez, Martine Boyon, Le Pont Bridge, Nous (Hugo Brochu, Éric Martel, Natalie Lamoureux), Éric Raymond, Raymond St-Jean, Henry See, Duncan Swain

NeuROM-X

The CD-ROM was created within the context of the multimedia art exhibition *Palomar, le voyeur captif* organised by Zone Production from 5 October to 6 November 1994 in Montreal, Quebec. It was distributed as part of a special edition that the cultural magazine *Vice-Versa* dedicated to the exhibition.

The idea of the CD-ROM was to conceive a series of environments loosely representing the sensibilities and the ways of feeling and seeing that guide the works of the twelve artists involved in *Palomar*. We worked closely with most of the artists. Some of the environments were built from scratch, with material explicitly conceived for the CD-ROM, while others used fragments of the artists' sources of inspiration or of the works themselves.

Group biography

Dedicated to conceive innovative interactive projects, NeuROM-X is a young company composed of a team of creative experts, with theoretical and practical backgrounds in communications and the arts. NeuROM-X intends to develop a different approach of artistically effective communication, creating interactive products that blend effective communication with aesthetic value. Its members have been working with computers for many years and are responsible for art works that have been seen and prized internationally. NeuROM-X draws upon this experience to invest in a niche market where an aesthetic quality is demanded to communicate an interactive content.

NeuROM-X have been involved in the following projects: *Palomar: le regardeur actif CD-ROM* (1994); *Camera Panoptica* multimedia installation (1994); *ISEA'95 Portfolio* artistic catalogue on CD-ROM, Montreal (1995); ISEA'95 Web Site, computer-graphic design, Montreal (1995); and *Dark scarring practice*, CD-ROM demonstration, Montreal (1995).
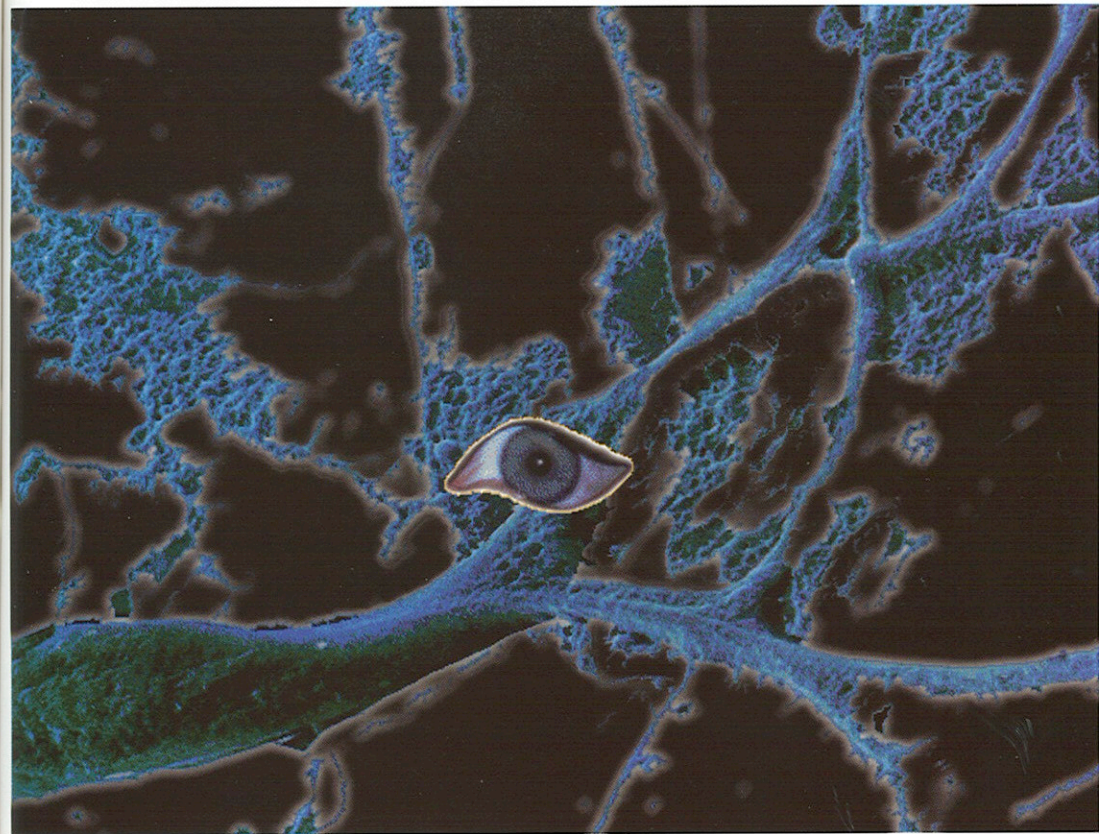
BOY

United States, January – August 1994

NINO RODRIGUEZ

Prime collaborator: John James Long

Nino Rodriguez

A young woman searches for her early childhood. The fragments collide and tenuously connect. She struggles to reconstruct her history. A hesitation, and she starts again. Emotional truth provides little solid ground. A narrative erupts and immediately dissolves. Her desire for meaning imperfectly masks uncertainty. She re-examines her memory and assembles a new past. A participant watches the young woman speak. Her words fill the space behind her image. There is no more room. Her words disappear and begin again. The participant intervenes. The woman's image is gone, but her voice persists. The participant interrupts. The young woman is here again. She repeats herself, but what follows is new. Another intervention. Another repetition. Another path. The young woman's stories are divided into over one hundred short moments. The order she tells them is determined randomly. Our desire to pull meaning from the whole interferes with an awareness that the pieces follow each other arbitrarily. The encounter both portrays and reproduces the uncertainty of memory. Her desire to find truth infects the participant's desire to comprehend. Where traditional media transform memory into nostalgia, we are discovering what interactive media will manufacture from our desire.

Circumstances of production

I thought I'd make a digital environment out of a group of people's memories. John James Long and I made a booth and carted it to random places begging people to talk to us. We conceived these interviews as mobile performance art. I ended up with a pile of video and couldn't afford the hard discs to store it, so I concentrated on just one person. I switched between editing pictures and writing HyperCard scripts for three months. To finish the piece, I got computer equipment from family, friends, and the good people at Visa and MasterCard, some of whom I still hear from regularly.

I was three and I don't really remember anything except... My mom says I used to do it all the time. I remember when I was a boy. I want to have a history. Whether it's true or not - to have that in your memory is significant. I guess recurri... ...over like... I remember s... ...on the steps telling sor... ...Maybe the things I rem... ...oments. I've thought ab... ...and I don't keep others a... ...ow why it is... That's it. I... ...s. Better to have a kind ...story at all. I remember se... ...throw picture frames a... ...ened. I remember th... ...wasn't shitty too but not as ostensibly shitty 'cause he was like away doing jobs and stuff. ...me sitting by myself on the stairs... I don't remember that point. A parent doing the same traumatic thing like...

Artist biography

Nino Rodriguez is twenty-eight, and he's lived in Los Angeles forever. He never practiced piano enough, and always played the music no one likes to hear. Music theory still nags him even after earning an MFA in Film and Video at UCLA. Since 1988, his short videos, films, and digital media have shown at the Dallas Video Festival, the International Film Festival in Rotterdam, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and other places too. Nino's won prizes in five countries, and people said intellectual things about his work at The Robert Flaherty Seminar. Nino works for a huge software publisher, sees his friends sporadically, and spends his nights wondering if he leads an artificial life.

LOVERS' LEAP (*artintact 2, ZKM Karlsruhe*)
Germany/USA, 1994 – 1995
MIROSLAW ROGALA
12-D Design Environment: Ludger Hovestadt
Mind's-eye-view perspective and software: Ford Oxaal

Miroslaw Rogala

Lovers' Leap is an interactive multimedia environment, a work inspired by two remotely-separated sites: the city streets of Chicago and a Jamaican place called 'Lovers' Leap' sited near a military radar installation scanning the sky. Conjunction and displacement collide in this moment in which emotion and technology are juxtaposed.

Lovers' Leap was created and produced in two forms simultaneously – as an interactive installation and as a CD-ROM. In the CD-ROM version, where the viewer is not limited by the size of the public space, the hand controls a 360-degree navigation in all directions within Chicago's alien cityscape. Photographs of a busy street crossing in Chicago were processed with specially developed software to create a totally novel perspective. Various speeds of 'travelling' are possible. On stopping, a random video sequence of Jamaica appears. The CD-ROM adaptation shifts the emphasis from the physical transformation to the cognitive one. Material space is replaced by the interface.

Control strategies assume either dominant or submissive roles. Power and strength depends on where we position ourselves within our environment. As the viewer's awareness of the control mechanisms grows, so does the viewer's power. Each viewer will create a new and different work depending on their involvement, understanding, and transformation into a position of power. Many will leave without claiming their power. Such also happens in matters of love.

Additional grant support was provided by the Goethe Institut, Chicago; the German-American Arts Foundation; and the Oskar Friedl Gallery, Chicago, United States.

Artist biography

Miroslaw Rogala has received international recognition as a multimedia artist. A native of Poland, he has MFA degrees from the Academy of Fine Arts (Krakow, 1979), and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (1983). His primary accomplishments have been interactive multimedia installation/performances which incorporate synchronised multi-channel video and electronic sound with live music, dance, and performance. He resides in Chicago, where he is on the faculty of Columbia College and teaches interactive multimedia art and CD-ROM technology. He is a recipient of a 1995 International Award for Video Art (Germany) and has work in numerous public and private collections around the world.

ANTI-ROM

Great Britain, October 1994 – February 1995

SASS: Andy Polaine, Andy Cameron, Joe Stephenson, Luke Pendrell, Rob Le Quesne, Sophie Pendrell, Tomas Roope, in collaboration with practitioners across a range of disciplines

SASS

Anti-rom was intended as a critique of the poverty of contemporary multimedia. In particular it was intended as a critique of those CD-ROMs which fail to go beyond traditional linear form – the kind of CD-ROM where shiny 3D buttons are grafted over packets of pointless information – the automatic vending machine type of CD-ROM where you can press a button and have whatever you want, as long as its Coke or Fanta (and there's no Fanta). We asked ourselves whether this poverty was an intrinsic aspect of interactive media per se – or whether it was caused by a poverty of imagination thus far on the part of interactive producers. Does a CD-ROM have to be banal and boring, or is it rather that crucial formal aspects of interactive media (how it operates as a language, what forms and figurations of rhetoric it makes available and most importantly of all, what kinds of spectatorship it offers) are barely understood by any of us? Taking the advice of Alexei Gann, theorist of the Constructivists, we chose to take concrete problems as the point of departure. The concrete problem was a simple one – how can a CD-ROM be made to work successfully at the most basic level? That is, how can it be made to engage a spectator so that he or she doesn't walk away within the first few minutes? We were not the first to look at this issue. Gerald van der Kaap's *BlindRom* was a great source of inspiration to us, and the Japanese computer game industry has spent the last 15 years coming up with ingenious and lucrative solutions to this question. *Anti-rom* was an experiment. We wanted to make something which worked in its own terms. We found ourselves operating within a profoundly non-linear paradigm, a paradigm of ambient interactivity, ritual activities, and of representations which were circular, repetitive, without syntax and without closure. It was hard not to think like a modernist. It was hard not to find an 'essence' of non-linearity, a truth of interactive media – some approaches seemed intrinsically more suited to the nature of the medium than others. We found it was almost always easier and more successful to make things which were playful, rather than purposeful, things which were open-ended rather than closed-off. Much has been made of a supposed natural relationship between interactive media and liberty. For
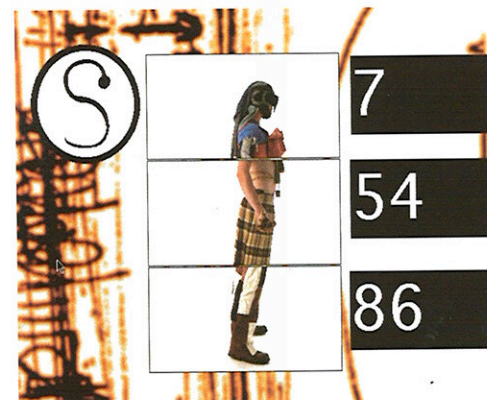
techno-libertarians, interactivity is something that gives individuals more choice, that takes mediation out of the media, and empowers all as free consumers in the marketplace of signs. Liberty, in this sense, is the defining illusion of interactive representations. By engaging with interactive media, this illusion, the illusion of liberty, crumbles. An interactive experience can be as tightly controlled as any other. In its form of spectatorship however, an interactive representation is always to some extent immersive, throwing the viewer inside the time of the representation. This corresponds to the linguistic category of the imperfective aspect1, and it is from this that a linguistics of interactive media may develop. *Andy Cameron*

Circumstances of production

Anti-rom was made in response to an Arts Council of Great Britain research grant of £4,000, given to research the artistic opportunities presented by new non-linear technology. We reckoned an experimental CD-ROM would be more useful than a report. We used Director on Mac 650s and 840s, mastered it on a borrowed WORM burner and pressed 1000 copies, all of which were either given away, or distributed at cost price. None of the group has a programming background and all have either taught at, or graduated from, the BA in Contemporary Media Practice at the University of Westminster.