Reports from SIGGRAPH 2002

Conference
eTech & Art
Courses
Papers
Panels
 New in 02!
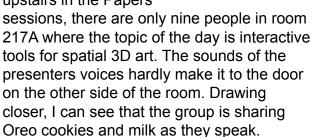
Exhibition

Interviews

Life at
SIGGRAPH

Reports from
SIGGRAPH 2001

Birds of a Feather: InSpace

by Wendy Ju

July 24, 2002

In contrast to the ballroom of hundreds upstairs in the Papers sessions, there are only nine people in room 217A where the topic of the day is interactive tools for spatial 3D art. The sounds of the presenters voices hardly make it to the door on the other side of the room. Drawing closer, I can see that the group is sharing Oreo cookies and milk as they speak.

This Birds of a Feather session on InSpace is a gathering of people who, in the words of organizer Steven Schkolne, "make new media for creating new visual constructions." It's a pithy topic, very much tied to the heart of SIGGRAPH's joint interests in technical inventions and artistic expression. Steven Schkolne, a doctorate student from Caltech, discusses his work on Surface Drawing, a set of tools that track the artists hands in space to create three-dimensional ribbons of color in the virtual environment. Brown University's Dan Keefe recounts his experiences with his own system, CavePainting, and shows views of his three-dimensional creations off his laptop. Takeo Igarashi from University of Tokyo demonstrates his explorations of interactive techniques for three-dimensional graphics by drawing clothes for a 3D teddy bear. And Sheriann Ki Sun Burnham closed the session with her presentation of her work that transitions between various images by replacing colors of specific value ranges.

In this intimate

Birds of a Feather sessions are attendee-organized meetings on shared interests, goals, technologies, environments, or backgrounds.
Birds of a feather sessions at SIGGRAPH 2002

setting, group members comment thoughtfully on each other's work and discuss new directions worth exploring. The tone is distinctly unlike the brisk proficiency exuded by the Papers presenters or the determined self-promotion of the working artists in the Art Gallery. "This is an important piece for me," contemplates Keefe as he shows dicusses the process he used in creating a richly textured sketch model of a woman playing guitar in a chair. "I learned a whole lot making it." Supportive murmurs ensue.

In some ways, it seems like the group members have troubles distinguishing their interests from those of the larger SIGGRAPH community. "We wanted to bring people together who are creating free-form geometries," said Keefe. "Creating mediums," corrects Schkolne, "because a lot of people here are creating geometries." However, the key differences seem to lie in the difference between invention and design. Igarashi's teddy-bear dressing system, for example, does not perform any feats that could not be accomplished with other modeling tools, but is astonishing in its intuitive elegance of interface, in the apparent ease with which Igarashi can transfer two dimensional designs onto the three-dimensional surface. It was hard not to compare the system to the complex demonstrations of cloth modeling demonstrated by the folks who created graphics for "The Clone Wars" earlier in the conference. The clothes on Yoda look somewhat better, but is probably several orders of magnitude more complex than the applet that dresses the teddy bears.

The shared interest in the fuzzier aspects of tool design--form and fit, rather than mere functionality--is palpable throughout the comments and discussions. "The Papers don't really address whether something is easy or intuitive, just whether it's possible," opines artist Jen Gray. "There's not enough people looking at that connection between the human body and image-making in a direct and immediate process."

This page is maintained by
Jan Hardenbergh
jch@siggraph.org

All photos you see in the 2002 reports are due to a generous loan of Cybershot digital cameras from SONY