



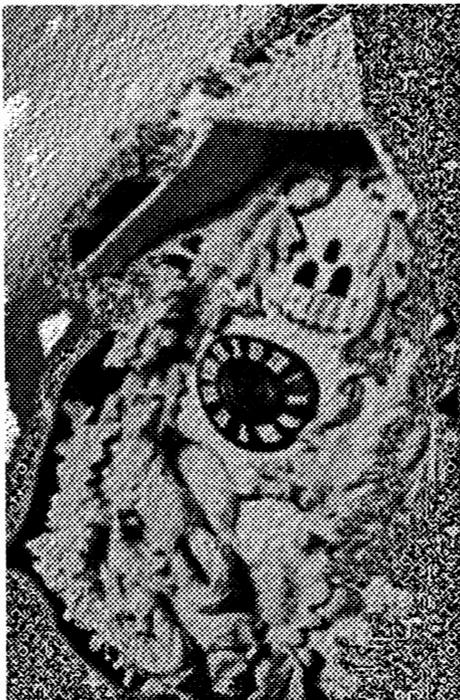
August, 1994

Volume Two, Number Seven

TRIMPIN

by Einar Ask

Born in the Black Forest, educated in Berlin, and with a work history so long he only uses the last ten years so that it will fit on his two page resume, Trimpin looks very comfortable sitting in his Wallingford studio. On the shelf behind him are mechanical dolls. Above him hang horns which are perhaps 15 feet long, and around them are timpani drums. A wooden shoe with a mallet and a solenoid mounted inside rests atop one of his mechanical inventions for driving an acoustic piano -- 88 solenoids with felt tips which press down on the keys.



It was in this studio in 1989 that the "America-Holland Line" performance occurred, in which two acoustic pianos were played simultaneously via Satellite connections. One phone line carried audio, while another carried MIDI. Trimpin invited about 12 people over to sit in his

CyberArtist

studio and listen. In Holland, a couple hundred people attended the performance. This was different in concept from the Electronic Cafe experiments, in that, as usual, Trimpin created acoustic music on both ends, not electronic, although his machines were triggered through MIDI.

That same year he created "Floating Klompen" in which a bunch of clogs like the one on the shelf were set afloat on a pond, clicking in response to a sequencer or interactive human control.

He has also created water percussion instruments that are as beautiful to look at as they are to hear. One can be found at the Museum Technorama in Switzerland just outside of Zurich.

Most of Trimpin's work these days is for museums and galleries. In the past about half of his pieces were for music festivals where he would make an interactive musical installation and then come in and perform on it.

At age 10 Trimpin started music lessons. He even had his own workshop as a boy and was always building interesting things. He collected tube radios and at one point took the cases off several of them, stacked them, and hooked up a pulley system between the knobs so that by tuning one radio, he would effect them all. He was always interested in kinetics.

From his early years as a boy Trimpin has been interested in the aspects of spatialization of natural sounds. He had to develop his own machines to drive acoustic instruments which were mounted in different locations in a room. This was before computers, and so to drive rapid sequences which could pan quickly about he would

punch out disks which would affect hammers in a manner similar to a player piano.

Other than computers, which are used only as a tool to distribute data to his acoustic instruments, electronic musicians won't find that they have equipment in common with Trimpin. Trimpin works only with acoustic sounds. No amplification, synthesis, speakers or any other unnatural manipulation of sound is allowed.

In order to feed his passion for acoustic sound spatialization Trimpin has had an extensive and broad education. He had formal music training from 1958-1970. He had an apprenticeship in school for Electro-Mechanical Engineering from 1966-1973, and he holds a Masters degree in Sozial Pädagogik/ Music and Art from Berlin, where he lived for 10 years.

He moved to Seattle in 1979 because he wanted access to Hi-Tech junk. At that time in Germany he was not able to find the right sources for electronic parts, and it was hard to find used computers. Here in Seattle he found junkyards and shops that carried just what he needed. Trimpin showed me a photo sensitive controller he had built using parts out of a card reader from a computer.

At our next meeting, Trimpin will talk with us and share some slides of his installations. If you would like to see Trimpin perform, you can catch him at the Random Access show at COCA on Saturday, August 6th. ☿

**AUGUST MEETING:
MONDAY, AUGUST 1**

**THE ART INSTITUTE
OF SEATTLE
ROOM 608 (!)
2323 ELLIOT AVENUE
7:30PM**

**AUGUST'S GUEST:
TRIMPIN**

Guest editorial by Tom Vigal

The phrase "Information Superhighway" has been getting thrown around so casually lately you'd almost think it actually exists now. Sure, there's the Internet, there's multimedia, there's the Next Big Thing just around the corner, and yeah, I'm really excited and all; but right now most of the technologies that are supposed to be converging seem to me to be running on (prepare for a bad metaphor made worse) different levels of the "Information SuperViaduct". A good percentage of the efforts to merge different technologies so far would have gotten those doing the merging a reckless driving charge if this really were some kind of highway.

Enough whining, I'll cut straight to the fluff. I can't speak for your brain, but mine has been anticipating the merging of disparate technologies for so long now that it bangs things together that don't have anything to do with each other. In these days when computers have remote controls and synthesizers have floppy disk drives, and everything has some kind of mysterious expansion port, crossover confusion between analog, digital, magnetic, optical, RF/Serial/IR, etc. flourishes like connectors on the back of a VCR. Ever since Chance the gardener tried to make some hoodlums disappear by changing channels and Scotty spoke into the Macintosh mouse, I've had a nagging awareness that this sort of thing goes on all the time, whether or not it's recognized.

Sometimes there's a real misunderstanding of the technologies involved. More often, for me, it's just a momentary blurring of the distinction between machines and media that clears itself up after a few seconds. The result is something that could be called "Technological Synesthesia", or the faulty

interpretation of one technology in terms of another. I usually recognize it by the feeling of inspiration I get followed almost immediately by a whack on the forehead and a longing for the future. Well, ok, it's only toys, but...

Does This Ever Happen To YOU?

- ☒ You try to listen to the car radio and cassette player at the same time ala television picture-in-picture.
- ⊙ While vacuuming the carpet, you avoid getting too close to the CD's stacked on the floor for fear the vacuum's motor will erase them -- then you remember.
- ☒ You try running the video output of your VCR through a digital reverb unit to see if it makes the images produce trails, which it doesn't.
- ⊕ During an audio recording session, you try to look good for the microphone.
- ⊕ You like the smell of baking cookies that fills the kitchen, so you look for the volume control on the oven so you can crank it up. You wonder about the best format for recording the smell.
- ☒ You reach for a floppy disk to put in your VCR. Realizing your mistake, you reach for the hard drive, since the show you want to record is more than two hours.
- ⌚ Your alarm clock goes off and while still groggy, you attempt to silence it with a midi "all notes off" message.
- ⚡ During the credits to a rented movie you want to find out who did the music. You look for and fail to find the "Text Search" button on the remote control.
- 🎵 After becoming addicted to the random-play feature of your CD player, you look for the random-record button on your VCR.

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10802 47th Avenue West
Mukilteo, WA 98275-5098
Voice: (206)355-6000
Fax: (206)347-7757

Steve Turnidge
Publisher and Host
CompuServe: 72250,3205
Internet: steve@rane.win.net

Bob Moses
Production Manager
Internet: bobmoses@pan.com

Bret Battey, Researcher
Internet: bret@eskimo.com

John Beezer, On-Line Czar
Internet: bisquik@eskimo.com

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★ While pondering conventional synesthesia, you suddenly get a flash of insight and wonder what technology might allow you to actually see colors and hear sounds. 🐺



Mr. Einar's Neighborhood



CyberArt - Here we are now, entertain us.

What's in a name?

I've been a "musician" for years. I've been labeled Industrial, Techno, Experimental, New Wave and sometimes Electronic Musician. I prefer the latter because it doesn't restrict my product to a particular style.

Recently I've been creating visual art and now I'm going through the same labeling process. I hope I continue to be called an Electronic Artist. I like that. It seems all encompassing. A generic name.

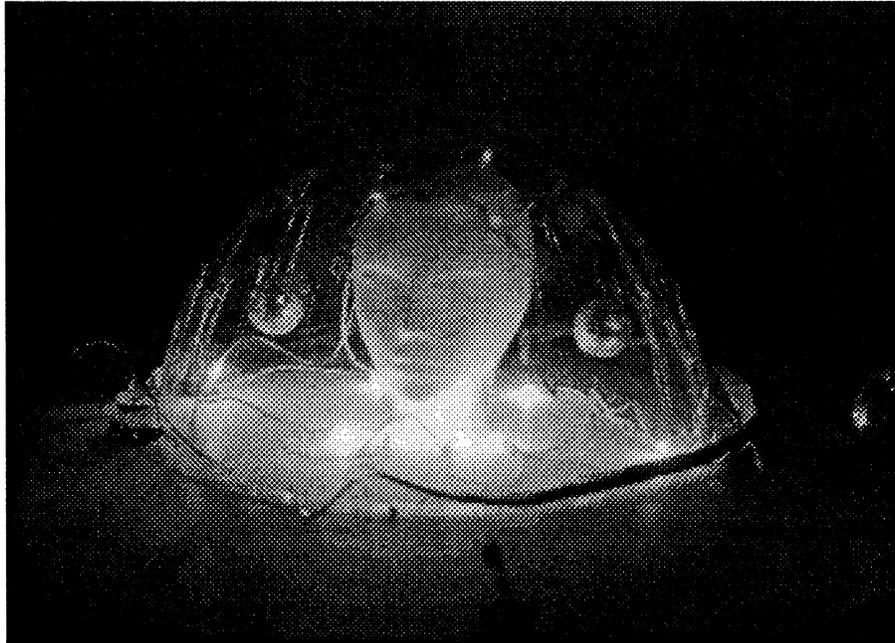
For your own reference, call me whatever you like, but I'm worried about being called Cyber.

Interactive Art or a new toy?

The other night at the Belltown Pub I had three pieces set up for public viewing and interaction. In creating the "Dreaming Head" series I called up things I had learned in art classes all the way back to grade school. Balance, Texture, Color, Materials - all were important considerations in the visual aspect of the pieces. I wanted them to be interesting to look at, thought provoking, fun, mysterious and I wanted people to be drawn closer. They had to draw people closer because each of the three Dreaming Heads was interactive.

Because all the pieces were electronic in one way or another (they all had motors and lights) there was a lot of hardware that we

in the know could look at and figure out. I was hoping that they would be just complicated enough to make them enjoyable to the average NWCA member. But I overheard some discussions about the pieces that at first made me laugh, and then later on made me realize a caveat of electronic art.



Mostly water, really.

My art was being described in cold, empirical facts and statistics. "This piece has a 2" LCD TV, a motor, a microphone, LED lights on a blinking circuit powered by 9V alkaline batteries, etc..." I was startled to hear something so close to my heart described sort of like a "bunch of wires." I had been thinking of it as art, not an empirically measured or described object.

It's like giving a tour at the Munch Museum and stopping before "The Scream" and describing it to your group as "some wood that is cut into four pieces, nailed together forming a frame, then covered by a piece of canvas. The artist then takes a stick with camel hair on it

and applies a pigmented substance..."

Or it's like describing my wife as being "mostly water, really". It's a true statement, but it can't describe my own perception of who she is "inside" or her emotional value to me.

Ignore the man behind the curtain.

I have a suspicion that CyberArt might be having this problem all over the world as more of you build interesting, thought provoking reflective pieces for and about our new digital society. If the art is to be invisible even to some in our midst, will it be apparent to people who don't know the magic behind it? My particular art is designed for folks with no technical background who

might get that childlike grin on their face as they slip on a magic glove and touch the dreaming head.

So I'm back to magic again. Having friends who are far beyond me in technical proficiency describing my "art" to others was amusingly like having someone explain to a fascinated kid that the quarter did not really come out of his ear - it was in the magician's hand all along.

We can describe the wires, lights, switches and other hardware in the context of the piece as a whole and how it ties in to a perceived message that the artist intends, but we should be careful no to describe the

EINAR



art object as merely some hardware. It robs the viewer of any chance of viewing the art as a mysterious puzzle, and thus might remove or alter the desired mood of the piece.

The Emperor's Clothes

I know that a lot of us -- including me -- like the technological stuff about CyberArt, (In Red Dwarf terms, it's like the cat and his love for "shiny things") but if you're looking for hi-tech in my stuff I issue a warning that disappointment is a distinct possibility.

I enjoy spending nothing, or as close to that as possible on very low grade technology and then throwing elements together in a previously unheard of way in order to make my artistic point. Still, I noticed that even insiders tended to see way more technology in my Dreaming Heads than there really was. Instead of realizing that what was set out for inspection was about \$5.00 worth of Radio Shack and thrift store parts, some viewers thought there was some invisible high technology inside. This is a success in one way because it is

causing the viewer to imagine, but I even heard people describing to each other what it was that they couldn't see. This leads me to believe that when you present "Cyber" Art to a crowd you run a risk that they stop looking for art in the BIG PICTURE and start looking for something with a remote control and a wow factor of about 9.

I know this happens on different levels with other forms of art. I used to take my own black & white photographs, and do weird things in the darkroom that got some fascinating comments from people, and in that situation people would see intention behind the result that I had not intended. It's a common thing with art. It's subjective. I do it all the time when I read things into poetry and get a completely different message than the poet intended.

But with this electronic art, I don't find the missed communication to be the same. People who are specifically looking for "CyberArt" seem to be naturally focused on material, technology and basic hardware. I'm having trouble getting

past form, and into content. Are there any other visual electronic artists who might be having similar experiences? Can you offer me some advice? I think what I'm experiencing is a result of tremendous hype about this whole "Cyber" thing.

And so, therefore, I am uncomfortable with the term "CyberArtist" and prefer "Electronic Artist" and "Electronic Musician".

Location, location, and humorous conclusion.

Perhaps if we can ever find a place to house "CyberArt" for the public to view regularly we should have two rooms. One for art, and one for a science and technology fair. With tongue in cheek, I suggest that maybe we could locate it where our intended audience might be -- next to "The Future Shop" or "Plato's Pocket". ;)

BTW, I read the CyberArtists list so you wired types can respond to this there, otherwise I'm on CompuServe.

See ya,

Einar

CompuServe 71774,640 🐉

The Information Backroads

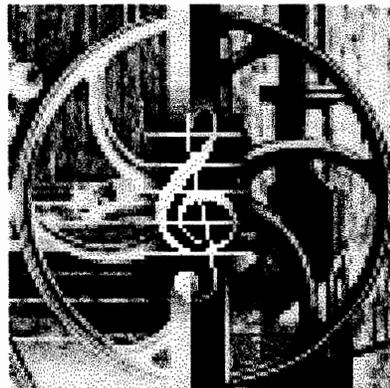
*By Bob Moses, Northwest CyberArtists
Production Manager*

Where do we go from here?

It seems that each month I get more and more excited about what this group is up to. When we started Northwest CyberArtists 2 1/2 years ago we thought we were creating a humble little forum for artists and technical people to get together once a month and share information. As it turned out, we've become a nationally recognized force in the world of new media. In the past few months we have been recognized in Mix magazine, Men's Journal magazine (a spin-off of Rolling Stone), Business Week, the Seattle Times, National Public Radio, and other places. As Seattle gains more

and more attention for it's contribution to the interactive multimedia craze, Northwest CyberArtists is gaining attention as one of THE happening groups in this area that is making this happen. Who knew?

I'm not mentioning this to swell our



collective ego, or to show off. I believe all this attention brings serious opportunities and responsibilities that we better think about. We are now poised to work with virtually anyone we want, and we are capable of influencing business, government, and art at the highest levels. The question is: what do we do with this power? Do we sell out and do an MTV event, or do we work with non profit special interest groups to get their message across to the main stream? (I've been approached by both of these opportunities in the past weeks). Do we focus on art, technology, government policy, education, or something else? Who runs the show? Who pays the bills, and collects the money? We are no longer

BACKROADS  **6**

How to join the on-line CyberArtists List:

send email to listproc@u.washington.edu. Leave the subject line blank and include only the following in the message body:

subscribe cyberartists yourname

How to join the on-line Electronic Cafe interestgroup List:

In order to be part of the ecafe list, you must send email to listproc@u.washington.edu. Leave the subject line blank and include only the following in the message body:

subscribe ecafe yourname

Call me at work if you have any problems getting signed on. Please pass this on to all others interested in the Electronic Cafe.

Edward M. Galore,
lemaire@cac.washington.edu,
(206)543-5970

Gentlemen composers James Richard Cobb III and David McKnight Brunn have formed a strategic data-aesthetic partnership named ALIEN-INCARNATE. They provide film music, sound design, voices and storytelling to producers of new media. Several live performances are being scheduled for fall 94, most notably Bumbershoot, Monday September 5 at 7:30 pm on the Wild Stage. Both composers will continue with separate solo ventures.

RANDOM ACCESS NOTES

AUGUST 6 Bay Area electronic musician Mark Traule performs an industrial lullaby on the powerglove Seattle's Trimpin plays Contraption IPP 71512 8:00 PM - 11:00 PM at COCA \$5 general, \$2 COCA members

AUGUST 13 POWER DOWN: Closing Event "Roland Barker's Alchemical 9" Tense, undulating moebius strips of interlocking samples 8:00 PM - Midnight at COCA \$5 general, \$3 COCA members

COCA is located at 1309 First Avenue, two blocks south of the Pike Place Market downtown. Gallery hours are Tuesday - Saturday, 11:00 AM - 6:00 PM, \$3 general, COCA members free. For more information, call 682-4568.

COMPLEXITY

A new journal on the science of complex adaptive systems

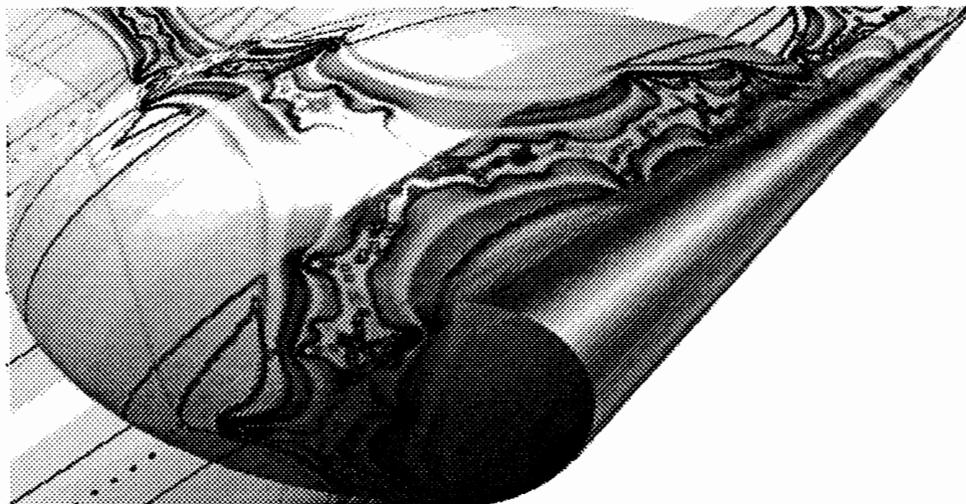
Complexity is an international publication covering all aspects of the science of complexity in a readable, topical and informative way. Each issue will contain concise, up-to-date survey articles, refereed research papers, tutorials, commentary, technical communications, and book and software reviews. *Complexity* will serve as a medium of communication for professionals and students of complex adaptive systems from the fields of physics, biology, chemistry, economics, anthropology, computer science and linguistics, as well as other traditional areas where complex behavior occurs. An essential function of the journal is to interrelate these fields by focusing on the development

and application of common techniques, and to promote discussion among scientists and engineers concerned with applied problems.

We invite submission of papers to *Complexity*. Please contact:

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BACKROADS FROM 4

a simple group of people that hang out a few hours each month. We're at a crossroads, and we must think about what we are and where we're heading.

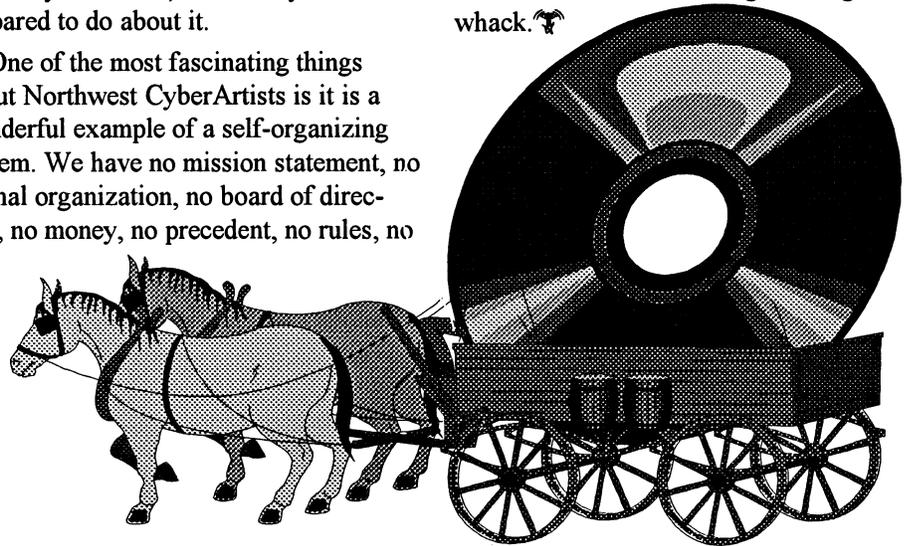
I have a vision for an organization that consists of several "divisions": a technology research center (a cooperative of engineers, technicians, programmers, etc., that create technology for artists or other people), a media center (providing facilities and resources for artists), a performance hall/gallery (providing space for artists to share their work, for groups to meet, and for us cyber-types to just hang out), and an educational facility (to teach people what we discover, especially kids). Each division is self-sufficient (i.e. each one supports itself by seeking out sponsors, winning grants, performing contract services, and so on), but they all work in close harmony. I'm probably being naive, but I think it would be pretty damn cool to set something like this up.

There are several barriers to instantiating this vision in reality. First, we need interested, dedicated, people with enough free time to implement it. We need a

business plan, funding, a space, equipment, and so on. I've thought a lot about this and I think we could actually cover all the bases with the people and resources at our disposal. The only thing missing is TIME. I have a full time job, which I enjoy, so I'm not able to put out a lot of time to set all this up. But I suspect that there are people out there who would be able to pick up the ball and run with it. If you think you're one of those people—please contact me (bobmoses@pan.com). Tell me your vision, and what you are prepared to do about it.

One of the most fascinating things about Northwest CyberArtists is it is a wonderful example of a self-organizing system. We have no mission statement, no formal organization, no board of directors, no money, no precedent, no rules, no

plans, no nothing. We're just a group of cool people that get together to share information and collaborate on projects. What we have accomplished so far, and the things we are capable of doing in the future, are mind blowing. The challenge is to harness the energy that exists in this crowd and put it to good use. All this interactive, multimedia, cyberfluff, net-surfing hype needs a heart and soul. As a group of people joined by a shared inspiration, and the world's attention, the ball is in our court. Let's give it a good whack. 🐾



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10802 47th Avenue West
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