

# A Brief History of SIGGRAPH Art Exhibitions: Brave New Worlds

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In 1981, the Association for Computing Machinery's Special Interest Group on Computer Graphics (ACM/SIGGRAPH) sponsored its first exhibition of computer art in conjunction with the annual conference on computer graphics. The 1989 Art Show will be the ninth SIGGRAPH exhibition of computer-aided art. The present effort can not be understood fully without examining the background and scope of previous exhibitions. During this short history SIGGRAPH Art Shows have become important to computer artists since they are the major sites for the exhibition of new work.

The relationship between the visual research produced by artists and that produced by scientists has always been acknowledged by the computer graphics community. Even before the first SIGGRAPH conference in 1974, artworks were exhibited occasionally at ACM conferences. For example, the 1970 ACM conference held in New York included an exhibition of computer-aided works. Some of these early computer pieces were reviewed by John Canaday in the *The New York Times*. He found them interesting but not satisfying, as indicated by the title of his article: "Less Art, More Computer, Please" [1]. Animation festivals were held regularly at the conferences. The dynamics of motion, as exemplified by computer-generated animation, has always been admired and supported by the association. Animation was regarded as the most viable use of both the technology (the medium) and the synergy (the changes in perception due to use of the machine.)

Several art-related events preceded the organized art exhibitions at the SIGGRAPH conferences. In 1977 and 1978, Joseph Scala produced fashion shows of garments created from computer-printed fabric. The design and production of the garments were a collaborative effort among a surface pattern designer, a fashion designer and computer graphics students from Scala's art department at Syracuse University. The 1981 conference included a frame-buffer demonstration using AED frame buffers and Barco monitors to display art and research from the New York Institute of Technology (NYIT), and works by artist David Em. It was programmed and managed by Julian Gomez. Artworks have been displayed as photographs on the equipment, or alongside it, at various conferences to highlight technical innovations.

In 1980 the idea for a formal art exhibition for SIGGRAPH conferences was conceived. After observing photographs and a printed fabric installation in a manufacturer's booth, artist Darcy Gerbarg suggested to SIGGRAPH officers that an art exhibition be created for the next conference. Her proposal to the 1981 conference chairs resulted in the first formal SIGGRAPH art show, Computer Culture Art Show '81. Consistent with SIGGRAPH policy on all new projects, the first art show was intentionally limited in scope

and budget. However, Darcy Gerbarg was able to obtain part of the High Art Technology show exhibited at the Library of Congress in April of 1981. It traveled from Washington to the Electro Arts Gallery in San Francisco, where Ray Lauzana directed the installation. A version of the High Art Technology exhibition was then scheduled for the July 1981 SIGGRAPH conference. Darcy Gerbarg and J. J. Larrea put together the entire show, framing all of the pieces and hanging the works. The works shown were flat, two-dimensional pieces that were easily transportable from site to site. The exhibition was mounted in the new city hall close to the SIGGRAPH conference site in Dallas, Texas. The general consensus among SIGGRAPH Conference attendees was that show was an excellent idea. From Dallas the show traveled to the Flavio Belli Gallery in Toronto, Canada. A black-and-white catalog listing the artists and titles was printed, sponsored by the Canadian Ministry of Culture and Recreation and by the Photo/Electric Arts Foundation.

The artists and scientists represented in the 1981 show included Rebecca Allen, Will Anielewicz, Bill Apgar, Michael Assante, Colette and Jeff Bangert, James Blinn, Loren Carpenter, Ephraim Cohen, David Cox, Joanne Culver, Robert Dewar, Frank Dietrich, David DiFrancisco, Tom Duff, John Dunn, David Em, Herbert Franke, Richard Frankel, Dan Franzblau, Darcy Gerbarg, Copper Giloth, Paul Heckbert, James Hockenhull, Jim Hoffman, KEEN (Fred Gaysek and John Tucker), Scott Kim, Ken Knowlton, Raymond Lauzana, Ruth Leavitt, Mark Lindquist, Dick Lundin, Ron Mackneil, Robert Mallary, Aaron Marcus, Mike Marshall, Nelson Max, Robert McDermott, Leslie Mezei, Zsuzsa Molnar, Tom Moxon, Duane Palyka, Ronald Resch, John Roy, Laura Scholl, Lillian Schwartz, Alvy Ray Smith, Joan Truckenbrod, Ralph Turner, Stan Vanderbeek, Norman White, Turner Whitted, Lance Williams, Edvard Zajec and Steven D. Zins.

The SIGGRAPH '82 Art Show, proposed by Copper Giloth, was the first art show organized exclusively for SIGGRAPH. Copper Giloth chaired the 1982 Art Show Committee, along with Joanne Culver, Louise Etra, Darcy Gerbarg and Aaron Marcus. The exhibition at the Sheraton conference center in Boston, Massachusetts, consisted of 88 pieces. A "Frame Buffer Show" was also included.

With greater resources available for the project, it was possible to publish the first Art Show Catalog. This color catalog contained a complete listing of the artworks, 22 images and introductory essays by Cynthia Goodman, A. Michael Noll and Gene Youngblood. The exhibition was described as "an exhibition highlighting the recent achievements of artists working with computers . . . the SIGGRAPH '82 Art Show celebrates the increasing access to electronic technology

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