

Motion Phone
by Scott Snibbe

SIGGRAPH Interactive Communities, August 1995

The motion phone is an experiment in pure visual communication. Each user sits at a workstation which displays a digital animation loop. Using a graphics tablet, each user can choose colors and drawing tools from palettes on the screen. When the user draws, the speed and location of their marks are entered into the animation loop. As she continues to draw, her marks are added into the same animation loop, allowing her to sequentially layer multiple rhythms of form and color. The non-modal interface allows one to simultaneously modify shape, size and color by the pressure on the tablet, key presses, and by using the surrounding interface. Users quickly learn to recognize and control the subtleties of motion in their hand-gestures -- information which is normally lost or hidden by most computer art and animation tools.

When the animator decides that she would like to interact with other users, she can "connect" to them by simply clicking on an icon. Her space is then filled with the motions of a second user. The two people can now communicate using motion, form and color. Interaction is unpredictable and sometimes startling. Since their marks are preserved over time, there is a sense of history to their dialogue. The resulting communication can be chaotic or graceful, but always engaging.

The tools provided to each user are primarily two-dimensional -- lines, circles, polygons. Since the animation is stored in a display list, each viewer can translate over the infinite plane of interaction, or zoom into or out of parts. With more than two users, this space becomes an immense landscape upon which many dialogues are taking place, and records of prior conversations or performances remain.

CONTACT:

Scott Snibbe
1616 East Howell St. Apt. 205
Seattle, WA 98122
Telephone at Adobe Systems: 206.386.8836
Home Telephone: 206.322.1946
Fax: 206.233.7438
email: ssnibbe@adobe.com