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Integrating human body moving and machine reactions

Interview

"When they are chanting together that emerges through their intercommunication"

David Rokeby
Digital artist
(Canada)

Tools

Video Transcription

I guess the reason behind the piece was that I have been working with the piece called [The Giver of Names](#) which looks at objects and talks about them. And spending a lot of time with this particular system I realized that it is a sort of subjective individual, with a very alien subjectivity that I didn't understand. But it was very consistent, it had consistency in its character, and even if it is bad use of language, it is sort of to be more like an accent, or like a "patois", a pigeon language or something. So I thought it must be very lonely, here it is, this very particular position in the world and no one wants to talk or share this information, so I kind of had this crazy idea to have a community of them, to put seven of them together so they can intercommunicate.

Full video

That is quite different from a dialogue space where it says something and it replies, or where one machine talks to another. In this case, what they want to do is to be together like a community, or that is one of their routes, to be together sharing ideas, getting into the space of realizing the same ideas and talking about it. So, one pool of the piece is where they are all chanting together saying the same things, and this is something that emerges through their communication. They are always sharing ideas and when they have completely shared those ideas, they are in the same set of mind and this is all chanting.

When you talk to one of the machines, it tries to understand what you say and it often feels. But it tries to understand what you say and then it thinks about what you have said to it, free associates, if you say orange, it may think fruit or it may think sweet, it may think round, it free associates. And then it starts talking with this new input, but that means it moves away from the community, away from the group. But then it also starts whispering to its neighbours these new pieces of information, which means the whole chant falls apart, becomes a bunch of different individual voices.

The software was all written to be as true as possible to the idea, that the chant comes naturally out of the interruption, I don't say, chant now. And it's written partly to try to understand; I read a lot about artificial intelligence like software; to try to understand what I don't understand about how we operate.

David Rokeby uses interaction in his art pieces in order to explore different possibilities within the relationship between the computer and the human being. He has been working on digital art since the early eighties with a considerable inclusion of his work in Ars Electronica and a number of other relevant international exhibitions. Rokeby lives and works in Toronto (CAN).

Interviewed by Alba Colombo (Berlinale) at Ars Electronica 2003.



community, intercommunication, chanting, sharing

Related links

[David Rokeby web site](#)

[Installation n-cha\(n\)t \(2001\)](#)

[Golden Nica 2002 for interactive art](#)

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