

item 6g: ~~statement~~ on entry

"Light Strokes" represents the results of a search I began in 1977 for a way to endow computer graphic input devices with the expressiveness of traditional artists' tools. It was obvious then that computers opened up a world of powerful new graphic possibilities. But the unchanging "brush" shapes of the early paint systems were a poor substitute for real brushes. I didn't see why artists should have to abandon the sensorimotor skills they had previously mastered in order to take advantage of these new techniques. At that time I was already fond of the effects obtainable with a Japanese sumi brush. Every slight change in its handling has a visible effect in the finished painting, so that the viewer can read the emotional state of the artist, even centuries after the sumi has dried. By contrast, the existing computer graphic input devices, designed by and for engineers, were insensitive to these painterly gestures. I was seeking then a synthesis of these characteristically Eastern and Western approaches to graphic art.

Although I was initially only looking for a way to use brushes in interactive computer graphics, I was pleasantly surprised to find that my invention allowed the use of virtually any object as a drawing tool. In fact, finger painting has turned out to be my favorite way to use the system. I find that I can get a very wide range of line widths by going from the tip of a finger to the whole side of my hand, all within a single stroke. The knuckles, palm, and fingers also provide an interesting assortment of continuously variable shapes and textures which are always available with a flick of the wrist.

Most of the time now, I prefer to paint to music. The "dissolve" effects and the ease with which the "Light Strokes" screen can be cleared greatly facilitate this process. The flow of images in time -- painting as dance -- has thus become my primary focus. Single image products are now less interesting to me than the process, which I also find to be very therapeutic.

It is also important to me to give the public access to computers in a way which shows that they need not be cold oppressive machines, controllable only by a priestly elite. I would like people to see that the computer is a tool which can serve their own human needs, ideally with ease and enjoyment.

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