



**Chicago  
New Media  
1973-1992**

Curated by Jon Cates  
with assistance from  
Jonathan Kinkley and  
Chaz Evans

November 1 –  
December 15, 2018

GALLERY **400**



***Chicago New Media 1973–1992*** seeks to illuminate the largely untold story of Chicago's role in the history of new media. Encompassing an exhibition, a series of public programs, and a comprehensive catalogue, the project produces a new art historical understanding of the artists and organizations that contributed to digital art and technology in the latter half of the twentieth century, while also tracing the impact this era had on new media artists and game developers working today.

Chicago is not often thought of as a center for new media art, technology, or industry, yet the city was home to some of the earliest and most important experiments in new media. Before Hollywood became synonymous with the film industry, Chicago was an early leading film center. Among its most prominent studios was Essanay Studios, which took its name, ("S and A"), from the first initials of its founders last names, George K. Spoor and Gilbert M. Anderson. Essanay gained distinction in the early part of the 20th century and attracted the services of burgeoning actor Charlie Chaplin in 1914.

Art and technology was fostered in the middle of the 20th century at Illinois Institute of Technology's Institute of Design, founded in 1937 in Chicago by Bauhaus artist and educator László Moholy-Nagy. The Institute of Design was conceived of as the New Bauhaus, a successor to Germany's post-World War I influential Bauhaus school that united the fine arts, craft, and design with modern industrial production. Blending a curriculum of art, design, and technology, the Institute of Design was in many ways a template for what would become the Electronic Visualization Lab (EVL) at University of Illinois at Chicago.

Founded in 1973, the EVL was a key milestone as an incubator for new media. EVL was created by chemist and computer scientist Thomas DeFanti and artist and physicist Daniel Sandin. This interdisciplinary UIC department produced many important technical and artistic breakthroughs, including in 1977 the first

dataglove, which allowed the user to interact with a computer without a mouse or keyboard. EVL faculty also developed an early graphics hardware system named the Datamax UV-1 and its software, ZGRASS. In 1992, EVL created the world-renowned CAVE (CAVE Automatic Virtual Environment) immersive virtual reality system. The lab's artistic breakthroughs also included in the mid-1970s Electronic Visualization Events (EVE) that consisted of live, real-time performances featuring computer graphics, video image processing using the Sandin Analog Image Processor (IP), and synthesized electronic music.

During the same time period, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) was educating generations of new media artists. Artist Phil Morton developed the nation's first video art degree program at SAIC, and simultaneously, artist Sonia Landy Sheridan developed the groundbreaking Generative Systems program at SAIC. Soon after, artist Bob Snyder developed SAIC's sound art program. All of these intersecting programs in the 1970s became the basis for subsequent developments in new media.

Generations of now well-known and acclaimed artists, scholars, designers, developers, curators, and organizers have since moved through UIC and SAIC. These cultural producers shaped the development of new media locally as well as on the burgeoning international stage. Apart from those mentioned, they include Jane Veeder, Maxine Brown, Copper Giloth, Jamie Fenton, and other artists from the 1970s to the 1990s, all of whom influenced and shaped the development of new media locally as well as on the expanded international stage. Subsequent generations of artists working today, such as Nick Briz, Sabrina Raaf, Jason Salavon, Ellen Sandor, and Siebren Versteeg, drew influence and inspiration from this period. Internationally, artists and computer scientists were particularly influenced by Chicago via the city's robust presence as regular hosts, panelists, and exhibitors in the SIGGRAPH (Special Interest Group on Computer GRAPHics and Interactive Techniques) conference. In video games, artists such as Cardboard



Participants in a live computer video performance at an electronic visualization event in Chicago

Computer (Jake Elliott, Tamas Kemenczy, and Ben Babbitt) paid homage to the Sandin Image Processor in their acclaimed Kentucky Route Zero series. Cardboard Computer was an important development studio in a revolution of independent games, made possible by falling costs and the wider accessibility of game development technology and software.

This exhibition explores the rich exchange between industry and academia during this heady time. Williams Electronics was a global leader in the pinball market in 1969 that expanded into the coin-operated arcade market in the 1970s. Former pinball programmer Eugene Jarvis led development for Defender in 1981, a game that became one of the highest grossing video arcade games at that time. Chicago's Midway Manufacturing, an amusement game manufacturer, was acquired by Bally Manufacturing, known for manufacturing pinball games and slot machines. Bally released a game console with video display that became EVL artists' hardware system of choice. In 1978, Midway became a global leader in video games with the license and U.S. release of Space Invaders by Japanese developer Taito. Midway/Bally was later acquired by Williams and would make some of the most significant titles in the

early 1990s video game arcades, including Mortal Kombat, NBA Jam, and The Addams Family. Downstate, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign was a catalyst for the technology that would set the stage for the explosive birth of the World Wide Web. UIUC cultivated and developed the modern day Internet as host of the government communication projects of PLATO and ARPAnet in 1971, as well as 1993's Mosaic, the first graphical Web browser and the foundation upon which today's Mozilla Firefox and Microsoft Internet Explorer web browsers are based.

**Chicago New Media 1973-1992** exhibits a range of ephemera documenting this period of industry incubation and globalization and its connections to new media art.

---

**Chicago New Media 1973-1992** is curated by SAIC Associate Professor of Film, Video, New Media, and Animation, Jon Cates with curatorial assistance by VGA's Director of Exhibitions and Programs Chaz Evans and Executive Director Jonathan Kinkley. It is presented in a partnership between Video Game Art Gallery (VGA) and Gallery 400 with support from UIC's Electronic Visualization Lab.



## Related Programs:

### Chicago New Media Symposium

Thursday, November 1  
2-4pm

### Opening Reception

Thursday, November 1  
5-8pm

### CAVE2 Demonstration with Dan Sandin

at UIC'S Engineering Research Facility (ERF)  
842 W Taylor Street, Room 2036

Wednesday, November 7  
6pm

### Pixel Art Sprite Making Workshop

with Eden Ünlüata -Foley  
Saturday, November 17  
1-3pm

### Chicago New Media Remix Night

featuring Cat Bluemke, Ali Krouse,  
and Whitney Pow  
Wednesday, November 28  
6pm

### Screening: Selections from

#### Josh Tsui's *Insert Coin*

Wednesday, December 5  
6pm

### Interactive Story/Text-Based Game Making Workshop

with Eden Ünlüata-Foley  
Saturday, December 8  
1-3pm



Back Image: Nick Briz, *Apple Computers*, 2013, Video, Courtesy the artist

Front Image: *A Volume of 2-Dimensional Julia Sets*, Dan Sandin, Laurie Spiegel, Laurie Lou Kauffman, Tom DeFanti, 1990

## GALLERY 400

University of Illinois at Chicago  
400 South Peoria Street  
Chicago, IL 60607  
312-996-6114  
gallery400.uic.edu  
Tuesday-Friday, 10-6  
Saturday, 12-6



This project is made possible thanks to major support from the Terra Foundation for American Art, and is part of Art Design Chicago, an exploration of Chicago's art and design legacy, an initiative of the Terra Foundation for American Art with presenting partner, The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation. Additional generous support is provided by The Chicago Community Trust; the Goethe-Institut Chicago; the School of Art and Art History, College of Architecture, Design, and the Arts, University of Illinois at Chicago; The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; and by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.



An initiative of  
the Terra Foundation  
for American Art  
exploring Chicago's  
art and design legacy.



Presenting Partner

