

## **John Sanborn and Mary Perillo: "Dance Ex Machina"**

The desire to access and manipulate the individual video frame has long been a dream for the media artist. The capturing of information thirty times a second, first in real-time recording, and subsequently by the digital frame-store, has made manipulation of the whole frame possible. "Real-time" layering, resizing and altering perspective became possible with the Ampex ADO and Quantel DPE-5000.

However, the "movement" associated with video recording and post-production is of course an illusion. The access to the individual frame proves this, and we have extrapolated this in three ways, as expressed by the three segments of the finished work. First, our repainting of the frames, altering, but not editing the flow of movement. Second, our merge of multi-frame animations with single-frame matted video. Finally, by our single frame editing of over 800 repainted, in-sequence animations.

With the commission received, we have created a short video-graphics/dance work. We have used a new piece of digital animation hardware called "Harry" (created by Quantel) which is a video paintbox, multi-frame animation system.

"Harry" can digitally record up to 2500 unique frames of video, which can then be called up frame-by-frame. Each frame can then be painted and altered using the Quantel paintbox, and the resulting frames can be randomly accessed and played back in any order, resulting in endless variations of real-time animation.

We recorded a dancer, who performed a looped series of movements. These moves were recorded in "Harry", with each frame modified by electronically painting the dancer and her background through the Paintbox software. We "edited" the sequence by shuffling the order of the movements in a series of playbacks, creating a graphics-based structural dance. Dance SPECIFICALLY FOR VIDEO, rather than simply recording choreography is something that we are experimenting with currently in three projects, and for Dance Ex Machina, "Harry" seemed the perfect tool. Each dance segment is an experiment in creating new (and in some cases, "impossible") choreography through the editing process.

"Dance Ex Machina" was performed by Mary Ellen Strom, and the live choreography is by her and her partner in XXY/Dance Music, Cyndi Lee. The music was created and performed (after the video was edited) by Rocky Pinciotti and Josh Collow. Our collaborators on Paintbox and "Harry" were Rocky Pinciotti and Jill Kroesen. "Harry" was made available to us by Peter Caesar of Caesar Video Graphics.