Emily Weil
Motion Picture

An Interactive Art Piece

Motion Picture is somewhat like a brass rubbing of a three-dimensional space. In a brass rubbing, a stick of charcoal is brushed against a piece of paper to reveal the edges of the surface beneath the paper. In *Motion Picture*, theuser is like the charcoal, and the screen is like the paper.

Motion Picture uses a video camera as an input device to create a spontaneous and expressive interface to the computer. The installation allows a visitor to interact with the piece and simultaneously view it in "real time".

As viewers pass in front of the video camera, the edge of their movement appears as a dark outline on the screen. Over time, the movement in a particular area of the installation space gradually darkens (and reveals the edges of objects) in the corresponding region of the screen. Darkened areas of the screen fade away slowly so that the image on the screen is in continuous flux between darkness and light.

Interaction with the piece is a playful process in which the viewer's movements "rub" an image of the installation space–all the edges and shapes that define that particular space–onto the screen. At the same time, an image of the viewer appears, transforms, fades, builds up again, and finally fades away.

Dark regions fade to white at a rate that is correlated to the amount of overall movement that the video camera detects. As a result, the screen refreshes quickly when there is barely any movement. However, an abundance of motion results in an image that is rich and stable. For the viewer, the amount of movement visible on the screen has an inverse relationship to the amount of movement within the installation space. *Motion Picture*, therefore, turns "motion"– all the activity that has become the hallmark of our hyperkinetic age–into a kind of still life.

The result is an evolving sketch of movement in a space over time–a record of motion that wouldn't be attainable through a photograph or a film. A photograph records a single moment; a film records a series of moments in chronological order. By contrast, *Motion Picture* offers a record of spatial and temporal change in a single, dynamic image.

Motion Picture is, among other things, an attempt to make digital media feel "organic". The piece doesn't look digital in the usual sense: it's soft-edged, shadowy, gradual rather than abrupt. It uses the viewer's body as an input device, which results in a far more intimate and even sensuous experience, compared to the standard computer interface of keyboard, mouse, and on-screen cursor.

Motion Picture does not try to deny its own digital-ness (the fact that its images result from software churning out bits). Instead, *Motion Picture* explores the ways that digital media can more be enriched by methods of input and output that echo organic forms than by "point and click."