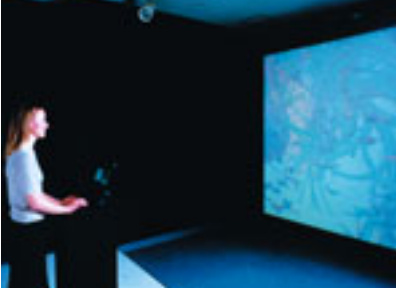


Life Spacies II



According to Noam Chomsky, human language acquisition is based on a universal grammar that is genetically embedded within the human mind of all normal children, allowing them to learn their native languages naturally and seemingly effortlessly¹. It was also Chomsky who coined the above phrase of “colorless green ideas sleep furiously.” Though this sentence, as Chomsky has shown, is grammatically correct, its meaning cannot be grasped through logic alone. Inspired by Chomsky’s sentence and based on the idea of using language as a genetic code and translating

words or sentences into visual forms, we have created an interactive system for the Internet, called *Life Spacies*² and an updated version, called *Life Spacies II*³.

Life Spacies II is an artificial life environment where visitors to the installation can create artificial life forms. The graphical user interface consists of a web page where users can write text messages to create creatures or release text characters to feed the creatures. Our specifically designed “text-to-form editor” software translates the text messages into three-dimensional artificial life forms (=creatures) that come alive on a large projection screen.

The “text-to-form editor”⁴ that translates the written text of a text message into the genetic code of a creature. The text-to-form editor is based on the idea of linking the characters and the syntax of a text to specific parameters in the creature’s design. In a way similar to the genetic code in nature, letters, syntax and sequencing of the text are used to code certain parameters in the creature’s design functions. The text parameters and their combinations influence form, shape, color, texture and the number of bodies and limbs.⁴ The constant movement, feeding, mating and reproduction activities of the creatures result in a complex system of interactions that can display the features of artificial evolution with selection favouring faster creatures. Additionally, the users’ input decisions on how to write the text messages and on how to feed the creatures also add constant changes to the system. As a result, a complex system is created that features complex interactions between creature, and creatures as well as users and creatures based on written text as a primary source of (genetic) information.

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