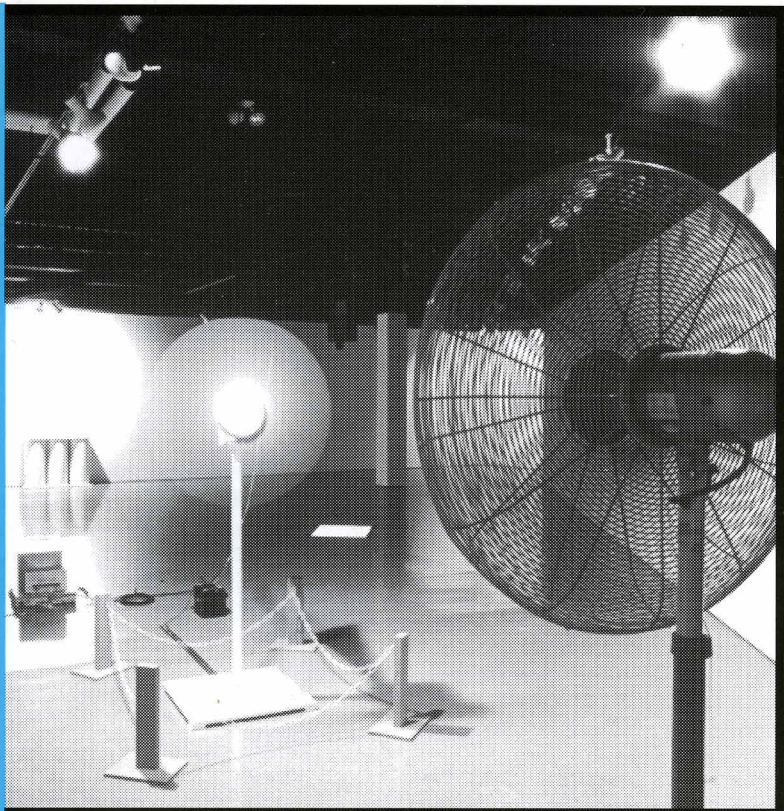


OXFORD PHOTOGRAPHY



February and March 1995

Electronic Imaging

The Artists in Residence Programme 1994 - 1996

THIS Oxford Photography publication is largely devoted to computer generated imagery, an area we have been actively promoting over the past year. Projects we have supported in association with Oxford Brookes University include an ongoing series of four artists in residence placements, a series of lectures, and workshops for those new to the medium and seeking basic knowledge.

This leaflet reports on the first placement, provides a work in progress update on the second, and comments on Electronic Imaging from Graham Ellard, Senior Lecturer in photography and multi media at Oxford Brookes University's School of Visual Arts, Music and Publishing.

Forthcoming lectures by the current artist in residence, Simon Biggs, around the theme of Electronic Imaging, begin in February and we will be providing an update on the final two placements in due course.

In 1993 Oxford Brookes University and Oxford Photography worked in collaboration to establish a series of four artists in residence placements allowing individuals to explore the use of Electronic Imaging in their work. Chris Meigh-Andrews was appointed for the first placement which ran from January to July 1994. Simon Biggs is currently 'in residence' and the selection procedure for the two further placements is now underway.

The programme of residencies has been funded by Oxford Brookes University and the Regional Arts Board, Southern Arts.

A Media of Attractions

Graham Ellard

THE use of computers has permeated almost every aspect of our culture, from the management of information to the production of pop music or newspapers and the waging of wars.

Few aspects of life remain unaffected. Computer systems have become increasingly responsible for the images circulating in the print and TV media, and have signaled for some the emergence of a 'post-photographic' form – one which unsettles the established verities of camera made images and poses both aesthetic and ethical questions. For 'interactive software' and 'immersive computer generated environments' or 'virtual reality' it is our role as reader or writer, as viewer or participant, and our perception of the real and the simulated which is being negotiated.

Amid the associated climate of euphoria and scepticism which such

technological 'progress' engenders some independent photographers and artists have begun to employ these computer systems to their own ends. These tools, or media, although informed by various histories remain in the potentially fertile and dynamic process of becoming – their significant characteristics are debated rather than received and their formal qualities interdisciplinary.

It is suggested that these media are currently at a stage, similar to that of the kinoscope in the history of cinema, that exists at present as 'media of attractions' – valued not because of *what* they are but merely *that* they are – their novelty overwhelming and assuming their meaning. Within the institutions of art, work made with such media, to make a different kind of connection, is what photography was to the artist in the early 1900's, or colour photography in the 1960's, or video in the 1970's. Each has become an established resource in an artists repertoire – seen in contemporary gallery shows with regularity which confounds earlier reservations.

In this light Oxford Brookes University has collaborated with Oxford

Photography to create four residencies for Artists in Electronic Imaging. The initiative is built in the premise that there is something of acute interest to the artist or photographer in these resources, as tools, as processes and in their products. Furthermore, that it may only be through their interrogation in reflexive work, perhaps by necessity outside the demands of commercial application, that the media might develop beyond the novelty or the attraction. It also represents an attempt to address in some way the scarcity of opportunities for artists for sustained access to the means to work in this field.

The Residencies are an example of the School of Visual Art, Music and Publishing's commitment to innovative practice across its range of disciplines and to its students experience of those disciplines. The first residency coincided with the launch of a new course in Fine Art, innovative in its integration of media areas such as photography, electronic imaging, video, and book arts with the more traditional areas of painting and printmaking, and committed to a practice mutually related to theory, it is a Fine Art

course responsive to the needs of students in a changing contemporary context.

The School of Visual Arts, Music and Publishing is distinctive in its combination of disciplines and is able to support the kind of hybrid processes or products the emerging media propose. An MA in Electronic Imaging to commence, subject to validation in September 1995, will capitalise on the School's distinctiveness by offering a course which allows students to work across fields in a truly integrated and interdisciplinary way. ■

For further information on courses in this field available at Brookes please phone (01865) 483461.

"A Sense of Myself"

Chris Meigh-Andrews

IN JULY 1994 I completed a seven month residency at Oxford Brookes University. As a resident artist my brief was very open: "to pursue professional practice as an artist utilising the process of electronic imaging", to quote from the job description.

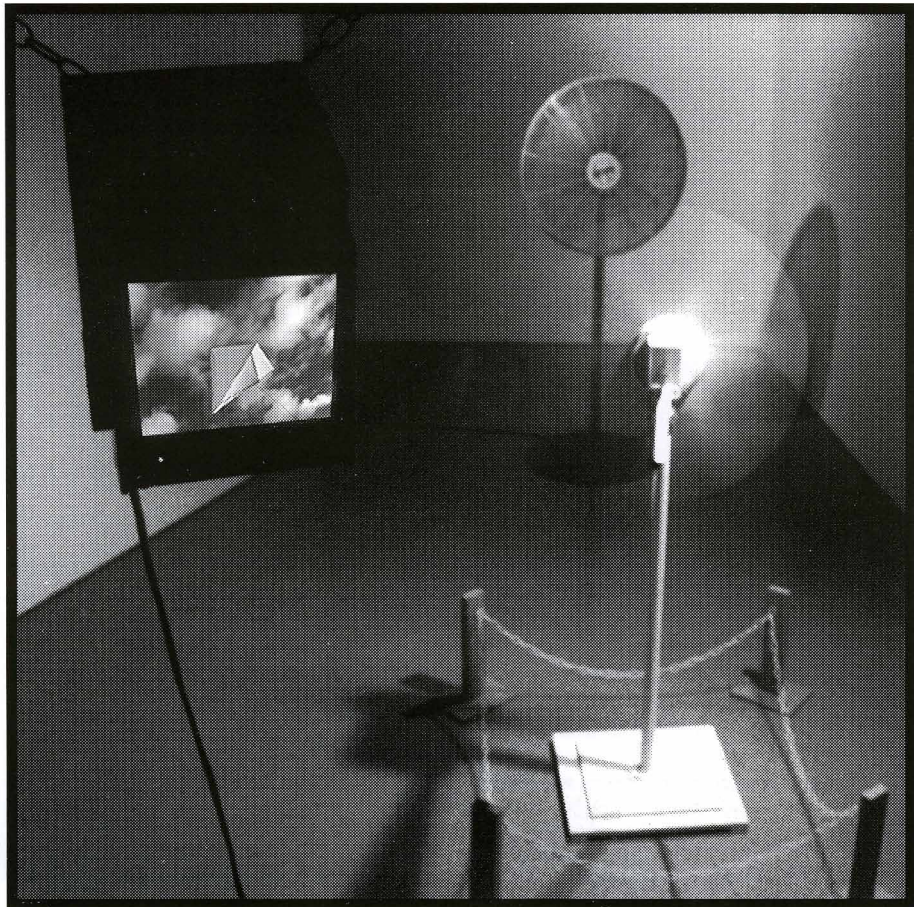
As an artist who uses technology as an integral part of my practice, I have become increasingly aware of the impact of computers on the presentation and manipulation of visual imagery in every aspect of our daily lives. There is a rapidly expanding new "landscape" called cyberspace that I want to explore in my work. The exchange of images, information, sounds, data, ideas are all part of this new reality that is rapidly taking on a form which is as tangible (and often more relevant) as our physical world. It seems that "Virtual Reality" is becoming less virtual every day. Our perception of "hardware" is being challenged too. Old ideas about television as a one-way communication device, or of the telephone as an impoverished method of inter-personal communication will have to be abandoned. Increasingly

everything is linked to everything else, old boundaries between mediums of communication are dissolving.

Before I began the residency my working knowledge and use of computer technology was strictly limited to a rather ancient (at least in computer terms) word processor. The opportunity to work with state of the art image and sound processing hardware has been quite a revelation, literally opening up my art practice to a whole new range of possibilities.

My initial task was to familiarise myself as quickly as possible with the hardware available to me, (an Apple Macintosh "Quadra" 840 AV computer with a 32MB RAM and a 500MB hard drive) but the most time consuming aspect of this familiarisation period was the exploration of the numerous software packages available. In terms of software relevant to my own research I eventually concentrated on "Quick Time" (a package designed for digitising video sequences), "Director" (for producing animation), "Photoshop" (for the manipulation of photographic images) and "Hypercard" (a system for the organisation of images, texts and sounds).

Projects evolved as I began to discover the possibilities of this multi-media ▶



"A Sense of Myself"

► facility. My initial ideas as put forward at the proposal stage were for the production of a series of sculptural installation pieces, and I began to work on "Perpetual Motion", a piece using "renewable energy resources" (in this case a wind turbine) to drive a computer displaying a continuously repeating animation sequence.

During the development of this work, intended for a public space, ideas for works on the opposite end of the scale to large public installations began to emerge. I wanted to try to make some works for private, personal and intimate experiences and so developed plans for a CD ROM, "Domestic Landscapes" an interactive "non-linear" work to be explored on a computer screen by a single viewer.

A second sculptural work "Fire and Ice" evolved from a forward/reverse loop of flame alternately consuming and revealing a written text. This piece also uses renewable energy in the form of photo voltaic panels (solar cells) which convert studio lighting into electrical energy to power an LCD projector displaying the computer-generated imagery.

A second CD ROM, "A Sense of Myself", presenting a series of self-portrait images produced using a variety of lens-based media, has been recently completed. This work incorporates video, sound, still photography, and computer-generated images and is designed to be viewed (in computer jargon "browsed") as an animated artist's book.

Opportunities to exhibit the work I have produced whilst on the residency are already apparent, the first of which was an exhibition and residency at the Saw Contemporary Artists' Centre in Ottawa, Canada during August and September 1994. I am presently researching exhibition venues in the UK for this work and for "Fire and Ice". The CD ROMs have distribution potential which is currently being investigated.

The experience of working at Oxford Brookes as a Resident artist has been very rewarding. The residency has enabled me to explore new areas relevant to my practice as an artist and to extend my skills as a communicator and teacher. I have both enjoyed and benefited from my contact with the staff and students at the school and intend to maintain the dialogue which this residency has given me the opportunity to begin. ■

Simon Biggs

Simon began his residency placement in September 1994 and will continue until April 1995.

AS ARTIST in residence in electronic imaging I have set myself an objective that seeks to reflect the basic nature of the department of Visual Arts, Music and Publishing.

I have sought to bring together the potentials of the electronic imaging department with that of publishing. The end objective is a publication that exists both in a traditional form (a book) and an electronic form (a CD-ROM). The two parts form together a single unit which can be seen in a sense as a finished artwork as well as a document of a working process and of previous projects suitable for conversion to CD-ROM.

The book is to be a modest affair in black and white which in some ways will resemble an 'artist's book' (that is, a book as objet d'art) but will also be a familiar book that one could expect to encounter in any (good) bookshop, selling at "the lowest price possible" thus avoiding the preciousness of the artist's book concept. It's design will follow the usual conventions of the book (hard cover, A5,

etc.) however it will have incorporated into its fabric a CD-ROM, offering another dimension to the reader.

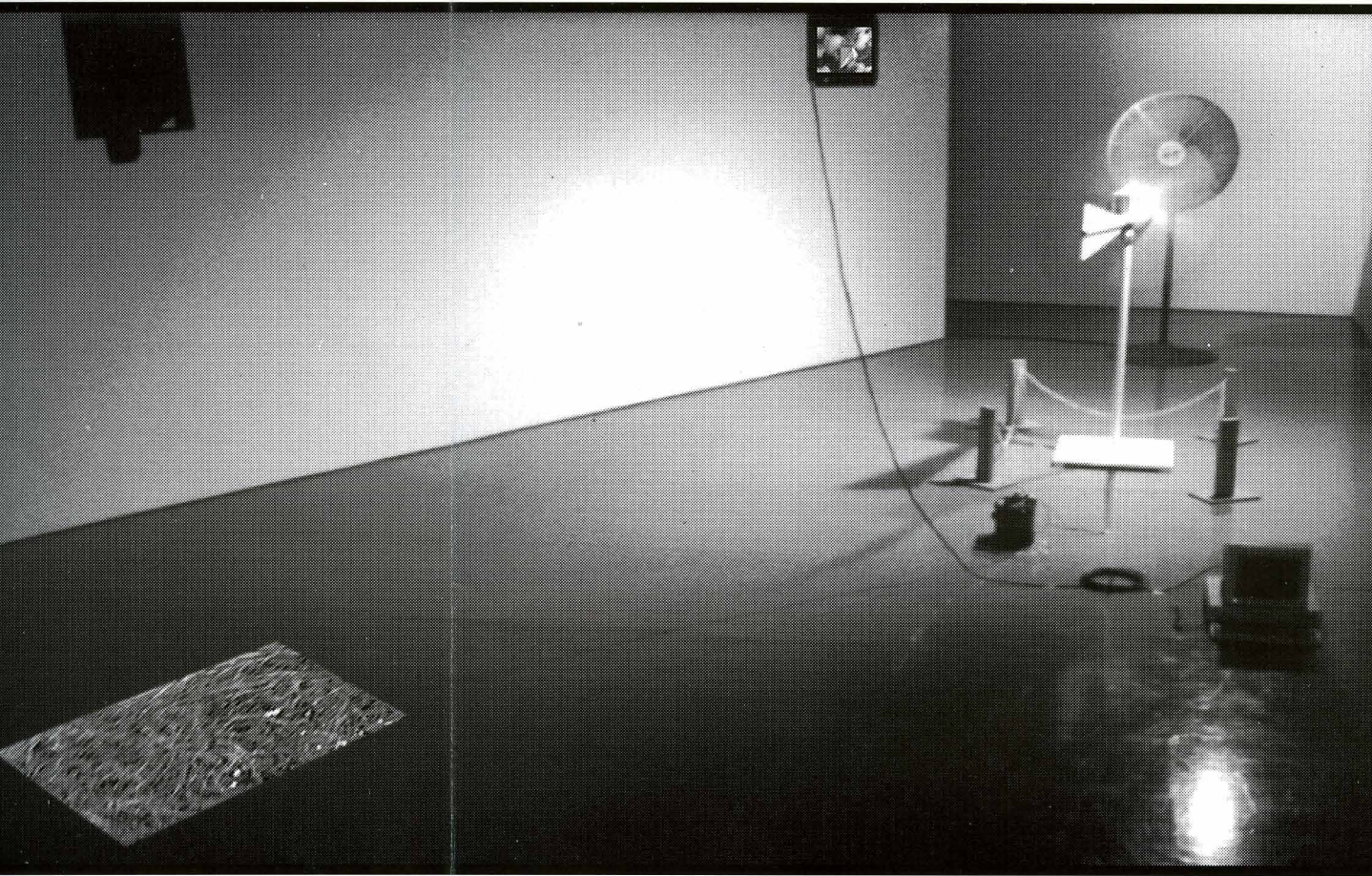
The contents of the book will be original and are to be produced whilst at Oxford Brookes. The content of the CD-ROM will be far more wide ranging, including material created during the residency, a number of earlier interactive projects recast for the CD-ROM format and the documentation of other earlier projects. It will therefore be an interactive art object (like a book) but also contain a wide range of other material which will expand its form into all aspects of my practice as an artist working with computers since the late 70's.

The overriding interest and focus in my practice over the past ten years or so has been interactive installation in various forms. The themes I have dealt with have been wide ranging but unified by the constant presence of the question of identity (of the artist, of the reader, of the individual) pushed into ontological relief by the foregrounding characteristics of interactive media.

That is the recognition that interactive media place the reader existentially at the centre of the text along with the writer. That their destinies within the (hyper)text

are inextricably and explicitly intertwined in a manner that non-interactive forms and expression have in the past tended only to hint at.

I am not seeking here to make any particular claims for interactive media (there is more than enough hype available on this subject already) but rather to point out that the medium does have certain characteristics, as does any medium, and that those characteristics are seen to inform the nature and content of my work at the deepest level. ■



Exhibition Listings

● **The Ferry Centre, Marston Road, Summertown, Oxford**

This venue shows exhibitions organised by Oxford Photography on a continuous basis. Open 9.00am - 8.00pm. Admission free.

Mark Edwards 16 January - 1 March

Trevor Ashby 1 March - 10 April

● **Museum of Modern Art, 30 Pembroke Street, Oxford. Tel: (0865) 722733**

Lower gallery.
Open Tuesday - Saturday 9.00am - 5.00pm.
Tuesday 9.00am - 9.00pm.
Sunday 2.00pm - 5.00pm. Admission free.

Nearly Every Tuesday – Photographs of Thame Market, Oxfordshire 1989 - 94.

John Comino-James

21 February - 26 March

This exhibition and accompanying book will be profiled in the May/June Oxford Photography Publication. Exhibition supported and toured by Oxfordshire County Council.

Lectures and Workshops

Simon Biggs will be giving a series of four lectures on electronic imaging at the Museum of Modern Art, 30 Pembroke Street, Oxford. All lectures start at 7.00pm.

For further information, directions and confirmation please phone Ian Cole at the Museum on (01865) 722733.

Lecture dates: All lectures are on Wednesday evenings.
1 February, 22 February, 9 March, 23 March.

A series of highly successful workshops took place last year at Brookes giving 'hands on' experience of what is possible using manipulation software. If you are interested in taking part in further workshops (either as a beginner or at a more advanced level), please phone Oxford Photography on (01865) 483477 and put your name on a mailing list for further information.

Oxford Photography

OXFORD PHOTOGRAPHY is a non-profit making organisation which exists to promote the understanding and practice of photography in Oxfordshire and the surrounding area. We are involved in all aspects of photography and seek to promote new and innovative work. Photography is a rapidly changing medium and we support photographers using traditional techniques, electronic and digital imaging as well as artists that use photographic images in their work.

Oxford Photography is funded through the Regional Arts Board, Southern Arts, Oxford City Council and Cherwell District Council, as well as membership subscriptions and donations. We offer

financial assistance in the form of small bursaries for exhibitions, fund residencies and support community based projects. We hold lectures, debates and workshops and have a number of touring exhibitions for hire to schools, colleges and exhibitions venues together with a frame loan service.

Membership of Oxford Photography is open to everyone and we welcome proposals and suggestions for exhibitions, projects and events. Please get in touch!

Oxford Photography, c/o Visual Arts,
Oxford Brookes University, Headington,
Oxford OX3 0BP. Tel: (01865) 483477.

Images by Tim Wichsens showing an installation piece by Chris Meigh-Andrews as part of an exhibition at the Saw Gallery in Ottawa. August 1994.



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