Title: The Brides of Frankenstein: Portraits of a Social Phenomenon

Genre: interactive video sculpture

**Applicant's Role in Production:**
Overall concept, all image and sound production, software interface, design and primary construction of final work. Assistance with logging & scanning, equalizing sound from various sources, & welding if necessary.

**Production Format:**
interactive computer software using video and sound elements

**Anticipated Length:**
N/A (interactive – length dependent on viewers' engagement)

**Color/B&W:**
color

**Sound/Silent:**
sound

**Brief Project Description**

I have recently been invited to create a piece for an exhibit called “The Brides of Frankenstein” curated by Marcia Tanner for the San Jose Museum of Art, California. This exhibit would coincide with a Bay Area Cyber Art festival to open in late 2005. I’ll be creating a series of portraits for this exhibit, based on seven women who were practicing science just prior to and during the time of Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein. These portraits would also engage the concurrent phenomenon of automatons - spectacular constructions of artificial humans. I believe that as social constructs, as spectacles, and as “monsters,” women scientists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries shared much in common with these automatons. Most importantly, both were objects of a belief system that saw them as impostors, as threats, and as something less than fully human. These portraits would involve interactive video, incorporating audio with moving and still imagery accessed by touch screen, set into automaton-like armatures. They would be slightly larger than life, yet would evoke an ephemeral quality of existence. Hybrids of the human and mechanical, they would investigate eighteenth and nineteenth century concepts about women, science, machines, and their convergence.

A Media Arts Fellowship would provide essential support for collecting, producing, and editing the necessary video, sound, text and still imagery, programming their interactive display, and building the armatures to hold this interface. The issues that Shelley initially explored in her tale of a modern Prometheus are as imminent now ever: the construction of an artificial life, the temptations of science, the essentials of human nature, and the depths of human loneliness. The role of women in science has received renewed academic attention in the past few years. I hope to add to this discussion through these portraits, and to bring that discussion to a public venue.
New Media Fellowships
2004 Sample Work Form

Gail Wight

If you are sending more than one sample, please copy this page. Sample(s) must be cued: indicate how long each sample should be viewed for a COMBINED viewing time of no more than 15 minutes. If slides are included in this application, please list the title and year of the work on this form.

Title "Kings Play Cards..."
Year 2003

Technical Information

Original Format

x Software

Web

Installation

Other

Format Submitted for Viewing

Softare

Web

VHS

Other

x DVD

Preferred OS

Windows

Mac

Unix

Other

Web Information (answer only if sample work is in Web format)

URL ____________________________________________ (if more than one please list them below)

Browser requirement(s) ____________________________________________________________

Plug-in requirement(s) _____________________________________________________________

This sample requires broadband connection (fast Internet connection)

A local copy of the sample work has been included with the application

Special Information for Screening:

Description of Work (use an additional sheet if necessary)

"Kings Play Cards..." is an interactive computer projection exploring the impact of the Human Genome Project on academic communities. Using interviews with UC Berkeley faculty, archives of the UC system, the US Patent Office database, public documents and other areas of university life, this work aims to reveal relationships and repercussions in areas profoundly effected by the Human Genome Project yet not often associated with it. Visitors access multiple videos embedded within each petri dish through use of a wireless mouse. Beanbag chairs made a comfortable and inviting atmosphere for engaging with the work. The title refers to a mnemonic device for taxonomic structure: Kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, species, variety.
Title "Crossing"

Year 2003

Technical Information

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Special Information for Screening:

Description of Work (use an additional sheet if necessary)

Two constructed mice - one mechanical, one genetic - explore their coexistence. Using scale, changes in frame rate, and sensitive microphones, this large-than-life video projection emphasizes the subtle nuances in the negotiations between these two manipulated states of being.
Title: "Linnaeus Unbound"

Year: 2001

Technical Information

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Plug-in requirement(s)

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Special Information for Screening:

Description of Work (use an additional sheet if necessary)

Subtitle: Hereditary Relationships Among Automata and Life Like Creatures in the World of Absurd and Entertaining Replications of the Animal Condition

An aging chart of the Linnaean classification system, with liberties taken: a few names changed, a few added, and no attempt made to disguise the animals' mechanical wind-up keys. A video display embedded in the chart steps through one set of relationships each time it is triggered by the touch of the viewer. From jellyfish and lizards to forlorn bears, the Venus of Willendorf to Tamagotchi pets, the ironies and mysteries of the "tree of life" play out as the mechanical beasts morph from one species to the next or simply motor across the stage.
Gail Wight

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Title "Future Flight"
Year 2000

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Special Information for Screening:

Description of Work (use an additional sheet if necessary)

A chalkboard shows drawings from the "red book," a classic compendium of a century's pre-recombinant DNA mutations on the fruit fly Drosophila. The right-hand inset monitor shows two fruit flies involved in a mating dance, circling, singing, and eventually embracing. On the left, a second video shows a bio-chemist giving genetic counseling to the flies in a humorous and slightly macabre diatribe. Reading from the "red book," she offers them a myriad of possible futures drawn from previous laboratory experiments. Commissioned for "Paradise Now: Picturing the Genetic Revolution."
Referring to the first entomology society in 17th c. England, the Aurelians is a set of four pinned insect collections, each commenting on the legacy of this practice. “Ghost” shows a mechanical butterfly tumbling in slow motion on a tiny monitor, amidst a set of pinned butterflies. The slowed sound of its motor and flapping metal wings become an echoing roar. Not pictured but part of this series: “Collapse” is a heap of broken butterflies at the bottom of a bug collection box. In “Lost,” one beetle in a large collection spins slowly counterclockwise. In “Possessed” one of three dragonflies gives a fleeting twitch every few minutes.
New Media Fellowships
2004 Sample Work Form

Gail Wight

If you are sending more than one sample, please copy this page. Sample(s) must be cued: indicate how long each sample should be viewed for a COMBINED viewing time of no more than 15 minutes. If slides are included in this application, please list the title and year of the work on this form.

Title "Meditations on Evolution"

Year 2002

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Special Information for Screening:

Description of Work (use an additional sheet if necessary)

Based on “cabinets of curiosities,” the 17th century precursors to natural history museums, each curio leads to a small anecdotal musing on evolution. Encompassing both biological and technical evolution, these anecdotes tend to address the unanswerable, the places where science becomes speculation, technology infects biology, and visa versa.

In a few cases, curios present a short video, such as the slow motion growth of slime mold, or a series of videos, as in animated images of foundry work at the turn of the last century. In most, however, viewers can interact at a deeper level. For instance, viewers may rearrange the bones of the human body; scan through images from an ancient apothecary of Tibetan medicine, where five centuries of the names of illnesses have been connected with curative plants; watch Darwin age; trigger conversations between Darwin’s finches; or browse through a small archive of brain structures belonging to different animals. Anecdotal in nature, the work addresses many of the minute details of evolutionary studies.
Gail Wight

If you are sending more than one sample, please copy this page. Sample(s) must be cued: indicate how long each sample should be viewed for a COMBINED viewing time of no more than 10 minutes. If slides are included in this application, please list the title and year of the work on this form.

Title "Crossing"

Year 2003

Genre large-scale video projection

Applicant's Role in Production All aspects of production

Original Length 12 minutes.

Color/B&W color Sound/Silent sound

Sample Submission

Format DVD

Length of Cued Selection entire piece included as supplement to 2min.30sec. excerpt

Special Information For Screening

Description of Work (use an additional sheet if necessary)

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Title slides
Year 1996 - 2003
Genre video & audio sculptures
Applicant's Role in Production various – see list of works
Original Length/Format n/a
Color/B&W n/a Sound/Silent n/a

Sample Submission
Format slides
Length of Cued Selection n/a
Special Information For Screening

Description of Work (use an additional sheet if necessary)

Additional information on these works on sample work sheets and in list of works.