



European Media Art Festival 1995

Idle Hands

Interactive Installation
*Rafael Lozano-Hemmer and
Steve Gibson 1994*

Idle Hands is an installation which allows two participants to control an audio-visual environment by their movements in a large interactive area and by striking a percussion controller.

In the piece one participant holds a small wireless GAMS ultrasonic tracker which transmits his or her 3D coordinates to a computer, which in turn controls a huge rear-projected animation of a human hand. Wherever the wand holder goes in the interactive area, the hand follows with Orwellian precision by pointing and gesturing.

By striking a percussion controller, a second participant transmits velocity information to another computer, which alters a pre-composed audio sequence (i.e. a hard hit on a pad raises the volume of the sound associated with that pad). One pad on the controller is also set to allow the participant to move back and forward in the piece, in the manner of ›hyper-music‹. Additionally each pad also triggers movements in the visual sequence, enabling the participant alter the hand movements initiated by the wand holder.

In addition to reacting to the input of the participants, the *Idle Hands* follow a musical composition, as well as a probabilistic programmed synthetic behaviour.

Idle Hands is primarily concerned with the relationship of the hand to computer networked technology (Latin ›manus‹ = hand/manual; ›digit‹ = hand/digital). Here hand movements produce both predictable and unpredictable re-

sults in a computer environment. *Idle Hands* avoids direct causal relationships between the participants' action and corresponding audio/visual elements (for example a hit on a drum pad never triggers an actual drum sound).

Rather, *Idle Hands* seeks to illustrate the temporal relationship between action and result in new, subtle ways, creating a complex interaction between the actions of the human interface (the hand) and an artificial environment.

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Music: *Steve Gibson*

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