AND FINALLY...

I hope everyone takes a look at this back page from time to time. It contains all the information you need about the IAAA, in order to contact the Board, Editors, send queries about Membership, etc. Still, occasionally we get letters saying “I didn’t know how to contact so-and-so”...

Often, Pulsar is supported by a small number of regular contributors. Ask yourself: have you ever sent a contribution? If not, please do consider doing so. Are we doing a good job? If not (or if so), let us know!

What are your feelings about abstract, impressionistic or expressionistic space art (see page 7)? Let me know. I am now particularly in need of art, so send prints (preferably black-and-white) for use on the cover or inside. Arthur Gilbert has provided all our cartoons so far, but are you a cartoonist? There’s no closed shop here!

And may I repeat: IF you can send material in digital form, on floppy or via the net, IT REALLY DOES HELP.

Gee Giant & Globular Cluster
by Jose Tucciarone

General Editor: David A. Hardy
Coordinator, USA: Michael W. Carroll
Exhibition in Earth Orbit
On EUROMIR 95

The Cosmonaut Art Jury
On September 3, 1995, 20 works of art on the theme "Space & Humanity", selected through an international competition, accompanied European Space Agency (ESA) astronaut Thomas Reiter to the Mir space station on his 180 day EUROMIR 95 mission. Ars ad Astra represents the first time in history that artists have been invited to have their art works installed in the world’s space program - in space.

The Announcement: Live From Space
Thomas Reiter and his two Russian colleagues Sergei Avdeev and Yuri Gidzenko had the task of deciding which of the twenty art works best fulfilled the theme of the project. After more than one week of deliberations the cosmonauts agreed that the first round was won by Joël Hagen. The first two art works to be installed are called "When Dreams Are Born" and "First Contact" in honor of the first two works to be installed on the Mir station as they were approved and used for the Cosmic Dancer Sculpture in 1993.

Art & Education: Space & Humanity
Approximately 100 art students from different European schools were also present at the EUCOSMOS Center to participate in the event. They were introduced to European space activities by ESA representatives, had a chance to use the center's facilities, and got to meet European astronaut Ulf Merbold. Five students were picked to ask the Mir crew questions about their experiences in space.

Some students brought with them a piece of art that they have made of the same theme - Space & Humanity. Reproductions of the 20 paintings in space and the student artworks were put on display at the center. A "Cosmic" fashion show and a "vernissage" of the art exhibition took place on both Earth and in space capped the events of this exciting day.

The International Exhibition Tour
All of the original art works except for the ones chosen to stay on the Mir station will be returned to Earth at the end of the EUROMIR 95 mission. The Arsad Astra art works will become part of the Art to the Stars exhibition of space art which is currently on an international exhibition tour including stops in Osaka, Berlin, Turin, and Beijing.

(From Arthur Woods, ORBS Foundation e-mail: thomason@access.ch
Web site: http://www.access.ch/ours)
The Process and Evolution of Machine Aided Art (Part 1)
by Don Davis

The creation of astonishing visual images, especially those with hardware or other geometric elements, requires not only the knowledge and use of computer graphics and lighting principles as well as a working knowledge of the subject matter. Much of the work of such paintings has traditionally been the preliminary sketches in which the composition and lighting are determined. Perspective drawing and shadow plotting techniques have provided the means of trying out the effect desired within the chosen composition.

For the quarter century from the start of my professional painting career in 1968 until the beginnings of my use of the computer with any regularity, labor intense perspective drawings of things like spacecraft and planetary rings were used, and the resulting images appear in my early paintings. Now most of such preliminary work, as with the primary act of painting, has largely moved to the computer.

The first preliminary drawings are still exclusively done by hand, with my personal contribution to the painting, which increasingly the computers do poorly or slowly and clumsily, such as landscapes, amorphous details, and lighting effects such as reflections, shadows, and so on.

The rise of this media has touched my life occasionally, and this account is an attempt to summarize some of my thoughts regarding the dawn of the digital age.

Computers in the '80s

My first peek at a good computer paint system was mid 1980, when I was asked to paint a series of texture maps of Saturn, the outer planets, and some of their moons for use by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in upcoming Voyager encounter animations.

At that time Jim Blyth, the originator of much of the texture mapping methods now widely used, was working at JPL, and had written much of a then sophisticated painting program which used an electronic stylus (with a cord attached) to apply painting, or rather tracing, on the computer. I learned to use this method by hand and create images that were later used for the Voyager encounter animations, which had a variety of features such as 'infinite' and 'space'.

The first machine I began to play with was a Mac II with 8 bit color, with which I painted 3 megabytes of RAM, and an early paint program called Pixmap. I learned to work on this on my own, and I also started to look at the possibilities for using the Macintosh computers, which I had used in the past. I also started to look at the capabilities of the Macintosh, which I had used in the past.

One Pixmap drawing tool in particular, meant to simulate charcoal rubbing, was capable of surprisingly subtle textures. During a visit by David Egges, it was a delight to see how he became interested in this same tool. He used it to do a series of paintings which were then exhibited in a show in book form. Later the Pixmap program was bought a computer scanner and an early tablet, which allowed me to do the same. Later I used the Painter program, which allowed me to do the same.

(To be continued)

PC Users: Leonard McVicker

I just read the Pulsar article on computer art by Steven Hobbins. He mentions two software packages that he uses for landscapes. I would suggest a third very low-cost, but powerful package. The software is called Imagine 2.0, a 3D modeling, ray-tracing and animation package that is perfect for an artist on a budget. I can get the best of both worlds with the Imagine 2.0 Modeling library by Philip Shadduck, published by the White Group Press.

The full version of Imagine comes included with the book on two 3.5 floppy drives. The book is about $39.95 US and covers the theory and practices of 3D computer graphics in a step by step method using Imagine. When you finish the book not only will you have a working knowledge of Imagine but an understanding of computer graphics in general.

Imagine has a good 3D modeller, does scene and light ray tracing, shadow casting, keyframe and motion path animation. It also has texture, bump, reflection and transparency mapping, as well as UV effects. It supports some basic lighting and can render images up to 8k by 8k. You get more bang for the buck with this package.

Profile: Lenny McVicker

Occupation: Computer animator/artist.

The big stuff such as the Silicon Graphics, Mac and IBM are at work. At home I have an Amiga 2500/20C & an IBM DX 2-66MHZ with Imagine on the hard drive.

I've done nothing as much space art recently as I would have liked, in fact I have so little time that I haven't done any work in a while. Hopefully I will find the time to do some. The computer gaming field I'm in is a hectic, expanding industry where a person must constantly keep up or be left behind, and finding the time to do space art is very difficult. And that's my excuse for today!

(In future issues: Profiles of Michael Böhmke, Chris Buter and Ani Rao. And you, if you send one)
Kim's Computer Column

THE WORLD WIDE WEB

So what is the Web? It is a textual and graphical way to view information on the Internet. It is based on the notion of "hyperlinks", which are "links" to other information. On a site like yours, for example, mouse-clicking the name of a particular artist (shown in underlined colored text) and a "hyperlink" sends you to a page of that artist's works. It doesn't have to be a link in the same site, or even the same country. A link can easily be defined to send you to The Qua Foundation's page in Switzerland, or ANYWHERE else! You can easily browse and click from one page to the other's "hyperlinks" to sites all over the planet and forget where you started. This is what is known as "surfing."

WEB LANGUAGE

HTML is the "language" Web pages are encoded with. It is the format for viewing a page. DO NOT BE AFRAID EARTHLY! This is not really a computer language like C or FORTRAN, or even BASIC. It is a "markup language" (HTML stands for Hypertext Markup Language) that can be easily learned in a few hours, or less for the basics.

It is similar to the word processor, where you had to learn to use it. This book does not cover HTML, but it is assumed that you will learn it in the beginning of this section, the rest of the text will tell you all the information that you need to start your web page.

WEB ADDRESSES

URL is simply your Web address. It stands for Universal Resource Locate, but nobody remembers that. It's just "What's your URL?"

Mine is: http://www.novaspacem.com/ For the WWW, it always starts with http:// which stands for "hyperlink transport protocol" the "http" is UNIX (the basic server language) for "base directory." Then comes the actual address, "www" may or may not be present, and it just might go directly to the server name "novaspacem", followed by the type of entity. Mine is .com for company. There are also other types like .edu, .academia, .mil, .military, .gov, .government, .net, network, .org, etc.

It doesn't take a high powered computer to get on the Net. Just a good modem, and a 386 capable of running Windows (for a PC). A color monitor running at least 256 colors will do nicely. Fancy Pentum or Power PC chips won't make it any faster, better or easier. Many access services exist in most cities, some of them nationwide as well as with the commercial online services. Often you can get "wired" for $20 a month for unlimited usage. I've made an agreement with my secretary that she can surf while I am out of the office. It was very crisp and transparent night. One of those that you get only three or four times a year.

A friend of mine was at his telescope with a little red light and pencil and paper. He asked me what he was doing and he replied that he was sampling a small PK planetary in Aquila. I asked if I could take a look. "Not the best seeing tonight," he said. I looked through the scope and had to admit that, indeed, it looked nothing at all like what I was looking at! He then put his thumb to an exaggerated dot and moved it in a circular fashion. I was shocked. Remarkably, he knew what I saw in the eyepiece. I asked him if he was doing this to help himself. "No, that was all I taught," he replied. I then started counting hours of looking through the eyepiece. Everything that I could not see on spurious Well pencil just wasn't getting the job done, so I went to pastels. That was a little better but it still wasn't quite what I was looking for. Then came the airbrush. That was it. I had found my medium.

The art work just got better and I started getting a few sales. My brother took them off to Colorado to sell them. All my friends were very reasonably priced. They talked to Tom and I at the Astronomy Magazine and he pointed me to the IAA. This was very opportune as I was asked to put on an art show benefit for the Challenger Learning Center in Sacramento. I got on the phone and talked to several artist who were willing to make a go of it. My special thanks go to Lynette Cook, Pam Lee, Michael Carroll, and Joel Hagen. They really helped out especially on the business end of it. We sold almost $900 worth of paintings, and I got a couple of commissary orders out of the deal.

It just so happened that reps from Ironwood Games were there and they thought that since my galaxies and planets were good, that I could also do witches and demons. So they commissioned me to do nine "spell cards" for their game The Power and Glory. Go figure.

Arches Workshop

The Arches work shop, put on by Michael Carroll, was a party, no stop, where you painted with some of the best in the world. I learned from everyone who was there. Bill Hartmann buys good beer! Joel Hagen and I had our toes out there, but Michael was the stabilizing force... until he lost it. I won't say the different concoctions were that edible, but there was a lot of orange food there. Some green too! It was a truly great time and I would highly recommend that you attend one. Bring your wit and some paint.

Besides the cards that I am doing, I have a Star Trek show in March and a couple of things lined up for the summer. I've done far more painting since I joined the IAA than ever before. Life is good!

Members' Forum

Joe Tucciarone (see this issue's great cover) writes:

"On the back of the Feb/March Pular you asked how members feel about abstraction/impressionism/ expressionist art (henceforth known as "a.i.e.") and I'd like to respond. I hope this doesn't offend the a.i.e. members of our group.

I am a diehard realist. When I first joined the group, I was composed almost entirely of artists whose paintings represented the plausible and the possible in nature. In other words, if it was possible to get a camera to a specific location in both time and space, it would record the same scene a realistic artist would paint, in grand and wonderful enough to fill uncounted numbers of canvases with such images.

An a.i.e. painting may be pretty, but a pretty painting by an "astronomical realist" has the added feature of telling a story about an important moment in time and space.

There you have my philosophy in a nutshell; I don't want to seem being in the way of the a.i.e. art school. After all, I am, like Van Gogh's famous Starry Night, and I like Bob McCall's work, even though much of it has a mystical aura.

I just want the stuff you and Bonestell and the other realists produce better!"

Don Davis has written in similar vein, but several members have said they liked Ana Koren's powerpoint, which covered many\n... too many to mention anyone! Next time: Betsy Smith's thoughts, plus Ron Miller and a software review from Anir Fazio.

The Tenerife Workshop

This is taking place from 14 September, for one week. It will be accompanied by a small exhibition at the Science Museum, with a larger one possibly taking place later. The current list of participants is Dennis Davidson, Bill & Gayle Hartman + friend Kelly (daughter Amy?), Dina Berry + friend, Betsy Smith, Andreas von Ketty + friend, Michael Behrens, Italo Rodenstadt, Erik Viktor, Jackie Burns, Jess Arnt, Dave Hardy, John Baker, and me. Joel Hagen, Arturo Wood. Hotel: as little as $22 per week.

IF YOU'D LIKE TO JOIN US, WRITE ME NOW!