

Paris Connection: Introduction

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Paris Connection focusses on the web.art being done in Paris by six artists: Jean-Jacques Birgé, Nicolas Clauss, Frédéric Durieu, Jean-Luc Lamarque, Antoine Schmitt, and servovalve. Via interviews, profiles and other writings, *Paris Connection* offers perspective on the artists individually and as a loosely-knit group; the coherence of their work as a group is fascinating.

Paris Connection is a co-publication of four sites in four countries: arteonline.arq.br (Brazil), coriolisweb.org (Canada), dichtung-digital.org (Germany), and turbulence.org (USA). Our goal has been to present the entire project in English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish. As of this writing, it looks almost possible. Each of the sites presents *Paris Connection* in a different way. The interviews and profiles are offered on all sites but additional writing was put in a pool that the producers could include or not on their own site. This allows difference between the sites in how the project is presented.

Individually, the six French artists are some of the most brilliant web.artists on the planet. And, since they are web artists, you get to see the work itself, rather than a representation of the work.

Something beautiful is unfolding in Paris. Just about all of them know one another. servovalve has not met Clauss, as of this writing; that is the only pair who have not met. Many of them have collaborated on work together. They all use Macromedia Director except Birgé, so collaboration is easier than it would be were they to use different tools. The synthesis of arts, media, mathematics, programming, and collaboration amongst the six artists and within their work individually is something to behold.

Three of the six, Durieu, Schmitt, and Lamarque, are artist-programmers. Director has been in their repertoire for ten years; they worked to CD prior to the Web and still do in some projects. CDs permit 'heavy media'. But if you visit the work of the three of them, you don't find too many stylistic similarities. Or even conceptual similarities. Though there are some juicy ones which the interviews and profiles explore a bit.

servovalve's background is not that of a programmer, unlike Durieu, Schmitt, and Lamarque, but his work is progressively moving into that sphere with, I would say, considerable success and energy. One gets a sense of a vision of minimalist visual

music being worked out in servovalve's visuo-techno, codified ditties. The visual, the sonic, and the Lingo are in cohesive relation.

servovalve shares with Lamarque and Birgé this obsession with the music of multimedia. Lamarque's work on *Pianographique* is also musical and visual in near equal measure. But again, apart from this, you would not easily compare the work of servovalve and Lamarque. Lamarque's *Pianographique* is an interactive instrument. servovalve's work doesn't emphasize interactivity in the same way, and the music and visuals are specific to servovalve. Also, servovalve is a performing visual musician, he plays gigs with his work.

Then there is Jean-Jacques Birgé. He has wide experience in many media—he writes a lot of articles for newspapers and magazines, writes poetry and words for songs, has directed a few movies, produced dozens of records, hundreds of live shows, composed music for 200 films and music for theater, ballet, radio, CD-Roms, Web sites and huge exhibitions—but since he is the only one of them who does not use Director, he collaborates with them and has worked with Schmitt, Durieu, Lamarque, and Nicolas Clauss in doing the audio for many of their works, and not just supplying audio but working in a more fully collaborative way on the vision of the interactivity and visuals and so on, ie, full collaboration. Indeed, he works more with each of them than any of the others. They tend to meet at his place. And Birgé is probably the best known in France of the six. He is known as the man of multimedia music in France and works widely not just with our six artists but on the audio of many projects in many media.

Nicolas Clauss works regularly with Birgé. Birgé has done the audio in more pieces than not on Clauss's site. Clauss's background is that of a painter—as is Lamarque's. And someone very interested in film and video. The visual arts done by hand and celluloid. He is not a programmer, but his work in the interstices between painting, coding, film, and audio, particularly given his well-developed ability to collaborate, has resulted in work that has been noted, quite justly, around the world.

In looking at the work of any of them, one is suitably impressed. In looking at the work of all of them, the relations between their various approaches and issues are, I find, fascinating, and the range of the work, taken as a group, is wide but coherent. This has partly to do, no doubt, with the fact that it is all Shockwave work. Shockwave is a high-end Flash. Director has been around since 1987. The emphasis is on fusion of the visual, the sonic, video, and programming. But the coherence of their work, viewed collectively, has mainly to do with their influence on one another, and collaborations together. And also, possibly, with the traditions of French culture. For instance, Guillaume Apollinaire said:

"These artifices can still go much further and achieve the synthesis of the arts, of music, painting, and literature ... One should not be astonished if, with

only the means they have now at their disposal, they set themselves to preparing this new art (vaster than the plain art of words) in which, like conductors of an orchestra of unbelievable scope they will have at their disposal the entire world, its noises and its appearances, the thought and language of man, song, dance, all the arts and all the artifices, still more mirages than Morgane could summon up on the hill of Gibel, with which to compose the visible and unfolded book of the future.... "

"L'Esprit Nouveau et les Poètes" Apollinaire, 1917

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