

Socio-Kinetics: Visualizing Impressions of People Behavior through Motion

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Submitted to the Program in Media Arts & Sciences, School of Architecture & Planning,
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of Master of Science in Media
Arts and Sciences at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

September 2002

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Abstract

Online public discussion spaces such as Usenet newsgroups are rich social environments. The social dynamics within the community are not obvious upon looking at the strings of text-based content. Only a careful reading of the threads allows the viewer to discern complexities and nuances of social interactions. Expressive visualization, however, is an alternative medium for effectively conveying such information. In order to animate the dynamic social qualities found within the static data of a Usenet interface, I chose motion as the communicative agent for this visual translation. The goal of this thesis is to isolate those elements which comprise visual motion, such as position, direction, speed, and time, in order to develop a visual language through which the social complexities of online communities can be communicated. A series of studies exploring this problem were carried out using a theoretical framework inspired by cognitive and artistic precedents. These investigations resulted in an understanding of how motion can be successfully employed as a visual language for social expression.

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