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ArtBots 2003, artistic robots.

The ArtBots 2003 festival, held at the Eyebeam Gallery in New York, has just ended. It was the second edition of the successful exhibition of creative robots which, last year, was held at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn (New York). This year, the projects chosen by the curators (Douglas Irving Repetto, Philip Galanter, Jenny Lee) were: '50 drones', by David Bowen, where single unit made of aluminium and PVC vibrate and interact with one another, creating unpredictable behaviours and a continuous background buzzing; 'Automated Architecture Robot', by Ira Spool and Anna Tsylin, a robot sculpturing architectural shapes in ice, then decorating them by projecting slides on their surfaces; 'Chair de poule', by Brian Todd, a mechanism able to emit, through telepresence, the noises 'physically' made by its user; 'BabyBot', by Stefan Prosky, which assumes the abstract identity of a child in the shape of a giant feeding bottle; 'Drawing Machine 3.1415926 v.2', by Fernando Orellana, which interprets the noises in the gallery, captured by microphones, to generate abstract drawings which can be influenced by the noises the visitors can voluntarily make near the microphones; in 'Drums of War', by Rahul Bhargava and Mira Friedlander, the visitors can move a pointing device on a planisphere to modify the frequency of a drum according to the chance that a war will erupt in that region; 'Happy Feet', by Stephen Turbek, is an installation made with 5 pairs of elegant shoes, mechanically controlled to generate sounds similar to those made by a tap dancer and to create interactive choreographies; 'Fotron2000 (FOE-tron-too-THAU-zin(d))', by Dan Paluska, Jessica Banks and jackbackrack produces polaroid photos of those who want to be represented according to the mainstream view of 'robotic' things by drawing them with 'neon' traits, sort of a public photo booth from the future; 'Lev', by Ranjit Bhatnagar, implements a machine which can play a theremin; also centered on music are 'GuitarBot, IrBot ("chik-r-bot"), ShivaBot and TibetBot' by LEMUR: League of Electronic Musical Urban Robots, four musical instruments which can play autonomously reproducing traditional and modern instruments; 'micro.adam & micro.eva', by Julius Popp, are two minimal robots which can develop a reciprocal conscience of their structure; 'MEART - The semi living artist' was developed by the SymbioticA Research Group in collaboration with the Steve Potter Lab, and it's, on the contrary, a complex project of an automata which, starting from a few isolated neurons which communicate in a digitally mediated way, creates a single entity able to evolve, learn and express itself through artistic activities; 'Neil', by Jason Van Anden, is based on the author's research on emotional responses to human behaviours; 'Monkey on Your Back', by Kal Spelletich/SEEMEN, realizes the radical vision of robotics shared by this collective of more than forty people whose goal is to build machines which can move fast and process heavy feedbacks like those experienced in an extreme sport; the work by Futurefarmers (Amy Franceschini and Michael Swaine) is analogous: 'Robots like H2O: Photosynthesis Perpetual Motion Machine', a machine which demonstrates their idea of making projects which can amplify one's conscience and are environmentally sustainable; 're-capacitance', by Leesa and Nicole Abahuni, is inspired by the prohibition to manifest dissent using graffiti in the United Arab Emirates; 'Scratchrobot', by Stijn Slabbinck, plays a scratched version of the email messages it reads; 'Shootings (After Francisco de Goya)', by Han Gene Paik, represents, using robot dolls, a paradox of computer programming that states that the higher is the complexity of their conscience (that is, the more complex is the program controlling them), the worse is their interaction with one another; 'small work for robot and insects', by host productions, tries to find a way to establish a communication between an insects colony and a robot equipped with a neural net; 'Slowscan Soundwave', by Douglas Irving Repetto, represents sounds by varying the position of 79 plastic sheets suspended in mid-air; 'Tribbation', by Josh Lifton, Michael Broxton and Joseph Paradiso, is based on Tribble (The Robotic Interactive Ball-Based Living Entity), a machine which, thanks to its 516 sensors and its bandwidth of 5 Mbits/sec, is aware of its surroundings and can react to multiple stimuli with a precise coordination; finally, 'The Watchers - Televisuality for Xenia', by John S. Lathram III, watches the space of an art gallery with the spirit of a six-year-old, who can get bored and leave or communicate informations to another work in a secret language.