EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY

An Interactive Fiction Proposal

John Adams
April 1994

Every Picture Tells A Story - An Interactive Multimedia Proposal

The Premise

1. A picture may be worth a thousand words, but of themselves images are often ambiguous and sometimes meaningless until they are qualified by text or sound.

2. Human beings are endlessly fascinated and intrigued by stories.

The Proposal

To produce an interactive project, which comprises a finite set of photographs, displayed in an order which is selected by the viewer. A voice over will accompany each image and the corresponding text will be displayed alongside. The text and VO will therefore convey a narrative which will relate to the succession of images. The plot will depend on the sequence of photographs selected by the viewer.

The number of possible storylines derived from a small number of images is disproportionately large. Six images for example present the possibility of 720 unique viewing sequences. Ten images yield 3,628,800 combinations ($10! = 10 \times 9 \times 8 \times 7 \times 6 \times 5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1$).

It would not of course be practical to write this number of stories. However, if the concept of linear narrative is replaced by that of 'jig saw' narrative, then it is possible to relate a limited number of stories in many different ways. It is therefore feasible to imagine, that many viewers could each experience several specific versions of the work.

In addition, using fractal compression techniques (see attached), I would also like to explore in collaboration with Iterated Systems Ltd*, the potential offered by 'resolution independence'. This is the property of a fractally compressed (or regenerated) digitised image which allows very close examination without the loss of detail.

For example, taking as a starting point, a full frame photograph of Van Eyck's *The Betrothal of the Arnolfini,* it would be possible to zoom in to examine the reflected face of the future bride.

*I am currently collaborating with Iterated Systems on a research project. The company is eager to develop and publicise applications of fractal algorithms and may support the proposal by providing technical assistance, essential software and hardware.

John Adams. November 1993

Experience

Since August 1993 I have been researching interactive multimedia technology and its applications. In October, I was began an appointment as a researcher in this field at the University of Northumbria and I am currently producing a commercial interactive multimedia programme which will be distributed on CD-ROM. (Please see CV attached for further background information).

Research Costs

The amount applied for will be used to pay for developing a workable interactive system and multiple storylines.

Collaborations

As mentioned in the attached proposal, I believe that Iterated Systems Ltd would lend technical support. I would also like to work with a regionally based photographer to create constructed images in exterior locations. Locus + has expressed an interest in the project and I would like them to be involved in the production.

Timescales & Budgets

Research: From Jan '94: 3-4 months (£2K)
Production: From Sept '94: 6-9months (Estimated budget £15-18K)

Relevance to 1996?

That is a difficult question to answer. However I would hope that the implications of the work will be greater than those of regional identity,or of the method of production and presentation.

John Adams. November 1993