

Scott Snibbe, Artist's Statement

The purpose of my work is to bring meaning and joy to people's lives. My work is frequently interactive, requiring viewers to physically engage with diverse media that include mobile devices, digital projections, and electromechanical sculpture. By using interactivity, I hope to promote an understanding of the world as interdependent; destroying the illusion that each of us, or any phenomenon, exists in isolation from the rest of reality.

Humans often think of themselves as embodied beings acting separately from their environment and other people. However, when we examine the object most of us take to be "me"—the body—we find it composed entirely of non-self elements: skin, cells, our parents' genes, food, water, atoms originating from ancient stellar explosions, and these, as far as we know today, made up of pure energy. Furthermore, our bodies' parts are in constant exchange with our environment and with others' bodies through eating, respiration, immunology, and genetics. Similarly, the contents of our human minds are dependent: language, thoughts, memories, and preferences only emerge from our interactions with others. Even while alone, the imprints of our lifetime's interactions propel our thoughts and memories. Such a view of interdependence has long been central to Buddhist philosophy, and has recently gained widespread validation from neuroscientists, social psychologists, and philosophers of emergence, chaos, and complexity theories.

In my interactive artwork, I usually portray the interdependence of beings with their environments and each other through bodily interactions. Many of my works do not function unless viewers actively engage with them—by touching, breathing, or moving—so that viewers are essential to a piece's existence as art. Furthermore, although the works involve state-of-the-art technologies, viewers' experiences more typically occur in the context of human-to-human social interactions. In social settings, the public works provoke communication among the viewers that, more than a mere reaction to the work, becomes its very essence. For more intimate works, the experiences can be ones of concentrated creative attention more frequently associated with meditators and artists than with media consumers.

Interaction is by nature time-based, and my artistic process is rooted in my training in film and animation. The frame-by-frame creation of movement is based on an understanding that even a thirtieth of a second changes the perceptual and emotional impact of a cinematic moment. I apply a similar methodology in creating time-based interactions between humans and technology. My artistic vocabulary is comprised of the subtle changes in timing that unfold as images or objects react to viewers. These changes are encoded not as frames of film but rather as computer instructions that constantly reinterpret and update the temporal conditions of the work.

Although the ideas that my interactive art attempts to convey are complex, my artistic practice is minimalist. My working process is subtractive: removing elements until only those essential to convey a work's meaning remain. I combine this approach with the principles of phenomenology: the philosophy of how a body "thinks" through unmediated perception, rather than through reason and language. Often participants construct the meaning of my works not through analytical processes, but through their physical awareness, which, in the words of the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty: "gives us at every moment a global, practical, and implicit notion of the relation between our body and things, of our hold on them." As applied to interactivity, this approach rewards viewers with an immediate, visceral sense of presence, while simultaneously inducing them to understand the motivation and meaning behind an individual work of art.

My interests in phenomenology and minimalism parallels my artistic influences. First and foremost is the tradition of experimental and abstract film, especially the work of Len Lye, who created *direct cinema* by scratching and marking celluloid film directly with his body. Lye, along with other abstract film pioneers, including Oskar Fischinger, Hans Richter and Moholy-Nagy, revealed that it is possible to create sophisticated, time-based, emotional and meaningful work without resorting to representation, and through intimate physical connection. A second direct influence on my work is the minimalist art of light and space, most notably that of Robert Irwin and James Turrell, who explored how subtle changes in an environment can make deep impressions on the viewer. My work continues in these traditions by constructing both environments on screens and in space that meaningfully react to viewers' presence and engagement, and promote concentrated awareness.