



RICHARD PANDISCIO'S ONE TO WATCH

2000 Space Odyssey There's a line of dialogue I've always loved from *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955). It comes during the scene at the Griffin Observatory at the end of a lecturer's discussion of the creation of the universe and after he's questioned the likelihood that man is, in fact, not alone. This statement prompts Sal Mineo to turn to James Dean and ask flatly, "What does he know about man alone?" For the lecturer, staring at his facsimile of the cosmos in all its vastness, it is a question of statistics; for the character played by Sal Mineo, it is a question of desire. Most of us expect no real answers to such a question, but software artist Scott Snibbe is building the tools and doing the research to better ask them. And he expects nothing less than to find, if not the complete answers, at least some clues.

A disciple of artists James Turrell and Robert Irwin, Snibbe is interested in how small environmental changes can affect the way two people respond to one another in that environment. Armed with practical training in software development, Snibbe transforms research on social behavior and natural dynamic functions into engaging, visually comprehensive experiences. His *Boundary Functions*, for example, is an interactive piece in which individuals entering a gallery space are separated by a line emitted from an overhead projector that is guided by mathematical principles he has programmed into it. These programs continually divide the space as more people enter it. "With more than two people in the room," Snibbe explains, "the floor becomes divided into cellular regions. The intangible notion of personal space and the line that always exists between you and another person becomes concrete." Amusing, yes, but layered with a deeper meaning as well. For instance, the title of the piece, *Boundary Functions*, refers to Theodore Kaczynski's (a.k.a. The Unabomber) 1967 Ph.D. thesis at the University of Michigan, a work that dealt with issues relating to the individual and society—something Snibbe's work gets at as well.

Despite the complex quality of Snibbe's work, it hasn't prevented him from asking questions as seemingly innocent and childlike as "What would it be like to draw with stars?" For the answer, log on to his Web site at www.snibbe.com/scott/dynamic/gravilux/gravilux.html and find out. ■

Multidimensional artist Scott Snibbe.
Clothing by J. LINDBERG.

Photos: SVEN WIEDERHOLT