

A Brief History of YLEM

Trudy Myrrh Reagan was president of YLEM for 7 years, and Newsletter (now Journal) editor for 9. Her goal: To apprise artists using science and technology of new developments, to make their works accessible to the public, and to validate it for posterity. It is celebrating its 25th anniversary.

This brief history from 1980 to 1995, will give you the flavor of the ferment and excitement in this area before ISEA began.

1980 - Howard Pearlmutter proposes to the Homebrew Computer Club at Stanford to do a special evening of computer graphics, which featured, among other things, animations from Russia and from Los Alamos, and video synthesizer effects to rock music produced in Santa Cruz. Trudy Myrrh Reagan attends and is hooked!

1981- Pearlmutter's Graphics Gatherings spin off from the Homebrew group, and hold regular meetings for several years. Trudy Myrrh Reagan confides to Pearlmutter her dream of starting a specifically artist group, Ylem: Artists Using Science and Technology (later written YLEM), and he assists her. (ylem= "the primordial matter and energy that blew up in the Big Bang to create the universe." Coined by physicist George Gamow's group in 1949). It holds its first bimonthly Forum in San Francisco to expose artists to new science and technologies, and gives a podium to artists doing imaginative work with them. YLEM becomes a membership-supported non-profit group outside academia and the art world where the artists can be themselves.

1982 - Louis Brill of L.A.S.E.R. organizes an YLEM Forum on holography held at SLAC in Menlo Park.

1982 - Stephen Wilson moves from Chicago to San Francisco to teach at SFSU, and joins YLEM's board. (He still plays a vital role in YLEM's governance).

1982-4 - Eleanor Kent organizes 3 YLEM Computer Graphics Tours. The 1982 tour includes a visit to Ampex, where another member, Glenn Entis, shows off a large "turnkey" system. Entis now heads Dreamworks Interactive in Redwood City.

1983 - YLEM produces a computer art show as the focus of Tapestry in Talent, an art and music festival in San Jose. It is in the Convention Center (a building that now houses the offices of the Tech Museum). The work of 20 artists, mostly YLEM members, include Jaron Lanier's "Moondust," a computer game on a Commodore 64 (64K machine), Scott Kim's computer-manipulated calligraphy, Lucia Grossberger-Morales' video images manipulated on an Apple II (which had no video input at the time, but she cobbled it together), and a 6' X 9' face comprised of 12 domino sets by Kenneth Knowlton.

1982 or 83, the De Anza-Foothill College District, which encompasses the home of Apple Computer in Cupertino, begins to teach computer graphics. Lucia Grossberger-Morales is one of the instructors. Mission College joins them in this.

1984 - In Paris, Frank Malina, founder of Leonardo in 1967, dies. His son, Roger Malina, an astronomer at UC Berkeley, brings Leonardo to the Bay Area. It becomes Leonardo/ISAST, and is edited by Brian Rogers, teaching at SFSU. YLEM is invited to its reception at SFSU. Since then, Roger Malina and other ISAST members have served on the YLEM board, and we have collaborated on several projects, like the SolArts Festival of Jurgen Claus. It later documents many NY Digital Salons in special editions of Leonardo.

1984 - Dr. Marcia Chamberlain, SJSU, organizes the first CADRE conference, held at Mission College and SJSU. An outstanding national conference of the various aspects of computer art and graphics, with many exhibits. One of these was curated by YLEM's Eleanor Kent. YLEM members participated in many ways.

1985 - Beverly Reiser becomes YLEM president, a post she holds for 14 years.

1985? SJSU decides to offer digital arts, and hires Joel Slayton. He starts the CADRE Institute.

1985 - SIGGRAPH 85 comes to San Francisco. Lucia Grossberger-Morales co-curates an exhibit at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art called "I/O". YLEM newsletter art director David Healy successfully uses a 128 K Macintosh and the new Pagemaker software to produce a newsletter to coincide with SIGGRAPH.

1988 - YLEM Forums begin to be held at the Exploratorium.

1989 - Dutch-born Josepha Haveman, an Ylem member teaching computer art at CCAC (now CCA) is sent as YLEM representative to FISEA, held in Holland.

1989 - Trudy Myrrh Reagan chairs a panel, "Women Humanizing High Technology," at the National Conference of Women's Caucus for Art held in San Francisco.

1989 - Spearheaded by Joel Slayton, NCGA and SJSU hold the second CADRE conference at SJSU. Some YLEM members are on its panels, like Glenn Entis of PDI (now Dreamworks).

1990? - YLEM member Nathaniel Friedman of NYSU (not sure of acronym) - Albany, organizes the first of several art and math conferences. Later, member Carlo Séquin, CS at UC Berkeley, joins him in this effort.

1989-90 Mike Mosher and Trudy try to get City of Mountain View or the Santa Clara Valley Arts County Arts Council to sponsor a computer art festival, without any luck.

1990 - YLEM member Cynthia Pannucci starts ASCI in New York, holds conferences.

1993 - YLEM member Roman Vorostko at MCAD organizes the Minneapolis ISEA conference, and continues work to make this a strong organization.

1995 - An YLEM team consisting of Beverly Reiser, Gary Zellerbach, Annette Loudon and Barbara Lee create one of the first fine arts sites for YLEM on the web. Called "Art on the Edge," it won many prizes.

YLEM member Louis Brill was at the first Burning Man at Baker's Beach in San Francisco. He later became its publicist. He organized two "Burning Man Decompression" Forums for YLEM at the Exploratorium. Dale Scott, longtime YLEM member, is its fire marshal.