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History of bitmap files in this directory:

After spending most of the late 1980s absorbed in programming the Amiga first in Basic and then in C, I turned my attention to programming on a PC with a Windows platform.

The cause of this change began with my admiration and growing jealousy of electronic musicians who would gather informally on nights of the many computer conferences that I attended and jam together informally. I thought it would be wonderful to write a program that would allow me to jam with them impromptu. For such collaborative jamming I would need to transform the keyboard as an instrument that would create short abstract moving pictures.

At first I tried very hard to convert the Amiga to such a purpose but could not. I found that the PC and Windows were much more amenable to such use. I thus spent the late 1980s and early 1990s programming what I eventually called my Kinetic Painting program. I lost a lot of the versatility of the Amiga's graphics and sound commands but gained the power to assign several little programs to each of the buttons of the keyboard.

With time, as I played with the program and began practice with musicians, I ameliorated the program so that I could capture what I had on the screen and save it in a file as a still image. We used to call them bitmaps in those days. Now any computer has a screen-capture function.

I often used the program to create a static image and saved it in a file as a bitmap. This is why all the original files that result from this program have a file ending of .bmp reflecting accurately the pixel colors and resolution of the screen.

As the program grew, I wrote functions that allowed me to record the sequence of keys pressed during a performance as a file. However, playing back a file that repeat all my key movements was a failure. I learnt that the crucial information of the timing between key-presses was lost. The files simply repeated my key-presses at as fast as the computer can run. I thus needed to deal with time as a new element in painting. While the Amiga had allowed me to think creatively about the relationship of form and sound in our experiences, writing the Kinetic Painting program allowed me to understand more clearly that time is a concrete elements that needs careful consideration as a new dimension in abstract paintings.

Of course, there is a difference between the processing things seen over to create abstraction and time as in moving pictures that are abstract.

It is important to point out, as it is not immediately obvious, that what I was doing was not animation. I was creating a painting in time and the timing of events was crucial. This led me to create of functions that could run continuously and simultaneous while other functions are played intermittently.

Every spring takes me back to remembering my programming of paintings. As I see the repetition of detail in nature as tree buds and flowers begin to appear with their great variety of textures I yearn to deal with them aesthetically. I know that I can best describe a bit of this beauty in digital programming.