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# Berkeleyan

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# Exploring the boundaries where art, technology meet

Lecture series highlights intersection of digital media, emerging technologies, aesthetic expression



By D. Lyn Hunter  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

In 1997, at the height of the Internet explosion, there was a growing interest in the intersection of art and technology, but few organized forums for exploring this new terrain.

Artists and engineer Ken Goldberg set out to change that. Teaming up with the art department, the Berkeley associate professor of industrial engineering launched "The Art, Technology and Culture Colloquium."

The popular monthly lecture series brings to campus artists, scholars, musicians, scientists — to discuss the unique union of digital mediums, emerging technologies and aesthetic expression.

A prime example of this convergence is the work of jazz trombonist George Lewis, who came to Berkeley last fall to talk about his computer music.

"George creates special software that listens to performers and provides improvisational accompaniment," Goldberg said.

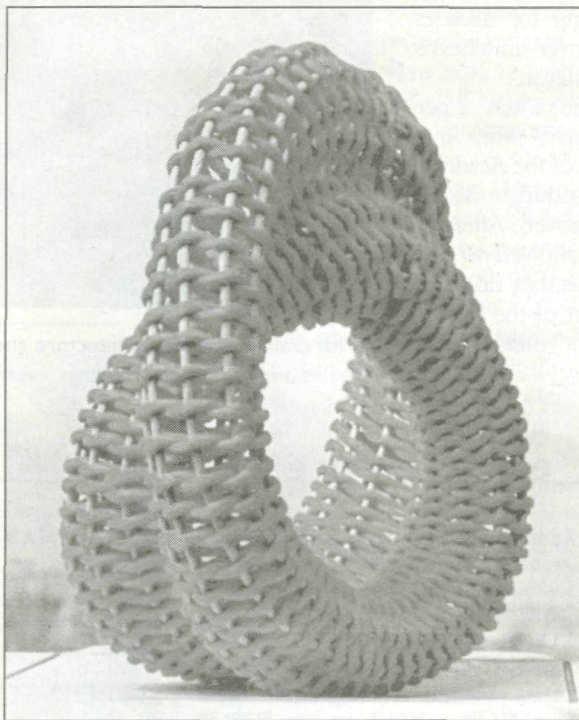
Series speaker Eduardo Kac, who masterminded "Alba" — an albino rabbit, injected with green fluorescent protein, so that it glows when illuminated with a blue light — discussed the nascent and controversial field of transgenic art.

And Christiane Paul, new media curator for the Whitney Museum, discussed the emergence of a new type of artist: the artist/scientist/researcher.

"We are in the midst of a change in how humanity processes information and relates to other people, at least as profound as the changes that Gutenberg made possible for the Renaissance," said Charles Altieri, professor of English and director of Berkeley's Consortium for the Arts, which will administer the lecture series beginning next fall. "The technology will continue to develop, so we need art to keep us attentive to the values and modes of consciousness that it fosters or blocks."

Given its role in shaping many technological advances we live with, Berkeley is "the perfect place for dialogue on how the arts can engage technology," says Altieri. "We have the information, the practitioners, people trained in cultural criticism and an audience eager to see what the arts can do."

"I think our guests are drawn here because of the campus's reputation as a center of dissent," said



Berkeley Engineering Professor Carlo Sequin discussed how he generates geometrical sculptures like that pictured above.

Eduardo Kac talked about his controversial "Alba," left, an albino rabbit injected with green fluorescent protein so that it glows when illuminated with a blue light.

On April 29, media artist Michael Naimark will discuss his "3D interactive immersions," such as the large stereoscopic video image of Timbuktu, Mali pictured below.



Golberg. "We aren't afraid to ask hard questions, to critique and to thoroughly examine the issues at hand. These artists are excited by this challenge."

With such pioneers as Billy Kluver, Charles Ray, Gary Hill, Woody Vasulka, Martin Jay, Hubert Dreyfus and Julia Scher as speakers, the series has developed a loyal following of fans from campus and around the Bay Area.

"I like going because it gives me a chance to ask probing questions about what art is," said Engineering Professor Carlo Sequin, who uses a computer to create abstract geometrical sculptures. "When I gave a talk for the series in 1997, I challenged the audience by saying artists may no longer be necessary because of computers. Not surprisingly, a very lively debate ensued."

Around the globe, people listen in to these conversations by visiting the Berkeley Art Museum web site ([www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/conversations/atc/](http://www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/conversations/atc/)), where videocasts of the lectures are now archived. Goldberg also sends monthly e-mails about the lectures to more than 400 subscribers worldwide.

Goldberg hopes the colloquium will help encourage more cross pollination between creative and technical disciplines.

"Art, technology and culture touch virtually every facet of study here on campus," said Goldberg. "But the intersection of these disciplines is still pretty narrow. We hope to broaden this overlap."

## Upcoming lectures in the Art, Technology and Culture Colloquium series

March 18

**"Learning From the Animals: Improvising Software"**

Sara Diamond, Banff New Media Institute

April 1

**"Liberating the Lab: Art in a Techno-Scientific Era"**

Steve Wilson, San Francisco State University

April 29

**"(Re) Presenting Place"**

Michael Naimark, San Francisco media artist and researcher

All talks take place on Monday evenings at 7:30 p.m. in 160 Kroeber Hall. Visit <http://www.ieor.berkeley.edu/~goldberg/lects/> for information.