Lincoln, MA, December 16, 2010 – DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum is pleased to announce that director of the Boston Cyberarts Festival and former deCordova curator of New Media, George Fifield, will curate an exhibition of the earliest computer prints and computer animation by the field’s innovators. Curated from the Providence-based collection of Anne and Michael Spalter, Drawing with Code is one of the first American museum exhibitions to broadly document this early period of new media art. The exhibition will be on view from January 29 – April 24, 2011 to coincide with the 2011 Boston Cyberarts Festival. DeCordova has been supportive of new media artwork since the 1980s and, since its inception in 1999, has subsequently participated in every Boston Cyberarts Festival.

Drawing with Code will feature computer-generated art from the 1950s to the mid-1980s alongside the more recent work of these early practitioners. Starting with the seminal Electronic Abstraction 4, 1952, by Ben Laposky, a silver gelatin print of an abstract image from an oscilloscope screen and possibly the earliest artwork in existence made using a computer, the exhibition will present the work of 33 pioneering artists who had the foresight to see the creative possibilities of the dawning computer age. The exhibition also features works by artists including Jean Pierre Hebert, Manfred Mohr, Vera Molnar, Mark Wilson, Stan VanDerBeek, Roman Verostko, Edward Zajec, among others.

As our lives are becoming increasingly digital, it serves us well to remember a time when computers were clunkier—if not simpler—creatures. This was an era when, in the words of programmer and artist Harold Cohen, “You used card-punch machines to punch your program onto IBM cards…. There was little chance you would get any results the same day, [and what you would often get] was a cryptic message saying that there was a missing comma on card seventy-three.” The prints and drawings in Drawing with Code represent some of the most elegant and innovative images to be born of such a bygone computer-era.

Drawing with Code provides a window into the past with some of the best examples of an incredibly productive collaboration between technology and art. In addition, the exhibition will present a group of the earliest computer animations produced at Bell Labs.
under the auspices of Ken Knowlton. Knowlton was a pioneer researcher in computer graphics at Bell Lab’s Murray Hill facilities in New Jersey who invited a number of artists, including Lillian Schwartz and the experimental filmmaker Stan VanDerBeek to the lab to create the earliest computer art animations. While rudimentary primitive by today’s standards, these animations revolutionized the field and paved the way for the wealth of computerized media we see today.

Director Dennis Kois noted: “DeCordova has been an enthusiastic supporter of computer-generated art and new media since the 1980s—in 1994, George Fifield curated an exhibition at deCordova with now Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs Nick Capasso entitled Computer in the Studio—and we are proud to now blaze a trail in documenting the history of the medium. The Spalter collection is among the most important troves of this early, and now rare, material in the world.”

This exhibition is organized by guest curator George Fifield, independent curator of new media, founding director of Boston Cyberarts, Inc. and adjunct faculty at the Digital + Media Department at Rhode Island School of Design. Fifield has a long lasting relationship with not only the Sculpture Park and Museum, but also with Anne and Michael Spalter; Continuum, an exhibition featuring part of the Spalters’ extensive collection, was included in Fifield’s Cyberarts Festival 2009 and was comprised of computer animations from the 1960s’ experimental digital film.

Equally passionate about computer-generated art, Providence-based Anne and Michael Spalter are major collectors and boast the largest private collection of its kind. Work has been lent to leading institutions such as the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, which exhibits On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century this fall, featuring works from the Spalter collection. In addition, Anne Spalter published The Computer in the Visual Arts (1999), “the first comprehensive work to combine technical and theoretical aspects of the emerging field of computer art and design”, according to computer graphics designer and painter James Faure Walker. Mrs. Spalter also combined math, science and design to create the first computer art courses at Brown University and Rhode Island School of Design.

**Educational Programming**

All programs are free with Museum admission unless otherwise stated.

**Artist Talks**
Manfred Mohr  
Saturday, February 5, 3 pm

-more-
Mark Wilson  
Saturday, March 12, 3 pm  
Meet some of the artists whose work is exhibited in Drawing with Code and hear the inside perspective on their work, process, and creative inspirations. Talks begin at 3 pm in the 3rd Floor Lobby, and will be followed by a brief Q & A period.

Eye Wonder Family Program  
Sunday, March 6, 1–3 pm  
Panel Discussion at MIT, moderated by John Maeda  
Tuesday, March 8, 7 pm  
Bartos Auditorium, MIT Campus  
Join deCordova and MIT for an evening event focused on how the computer has creatively influenced both the visual and literary arts in this panel discussion. Hear from Drawing with Code curator George Fifield, exhibiting artist Mark Wilson, and writers who employ computers in their creative practice as they discuss the history behind this fascinating intersection between science and art. Held in collaboration with MIT’s Purple Blurb series, this event is co-organized by deCordova and MIT.

Curator Talk: Guest Curator, George Fifield with Douglas Dodds, Senior Curator, Word and Image Department, Victoria & Albert Museum  
Saturday, April 23, 3 pm  
Cell Phone Audio Tour  
Listen to artists explain how they manipulated early computers to create stunning works of art, hear collectors Anne and Michael Spalter discuss why they collect this compelling work, and learn how this show was curated and installed from guest curator George Fifield.

Family Gallery Guides  
Gallery Guides are available throughout the museum and provide information about Drawing with Code: Works from the Anne and Michael Spalter Collection in a family-friendly way.

About deCordova  
DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum was established in 1950 to educate the public about American contemporary art. DeCordova’s unique campus features both indoor and outdoor venues, allowing its visitors to celebrate and explore contemporary art across 35 acres. Inside, the Museum features a robust slate of rotating exhibitions and innovative interpretive programming. Outside, deCordova’s Sculpture Park hosts more than 60 works, the majority of which are on loan to the Museum. DeCordova also offers the
largest non-degree granting studio art program in New England. DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum attracts more than 100,000 visitors from New England and tourists from around the world to its campus each year and enrolls more than 3,000 students of all ages in its studio art program.

**General Information**

DeCordova is open Tuesday through Sunday, from 10 am to 5 pm and on selected Monday holidays. General admission during Museum hours is $12 for adults; $8 for senior citizens, students, and youth ages 6-12. Children age 5 and under, Lincoln residents, and Active Duty Military Personnel and their dependents are admitted free. The Sculpture Park is open year-round during daylight hours. Guided public tours of the Museum’s main galleries take place every Thursday at 1 pm and Sunday at 2 pm.

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