Fine Arts Gallery displays computer seeking alien life

Caroline Leong

A computer transmitting data from the universe will be on display in the Fine Arts Gallery Nov. 7-25. The exhibit, "Retrospective," will feature work done by the Rev. M. Lubbers, S.J., professor of fine arts.

The Apple IIe computer display will be an interactive remote sensing of the world, universe and the presence and quantities of bodies, sound, motion and temperature from immediate environment will be picked up and displayed 24 hours a day on graphs, he said.

The computer will pick up data from a smaller environment (the art gallery) up to the universe, he said.

Radio sources

Along with data from our immediate environment, the computer will display radio waves transmitted by objects from the universe and meteors that enter our atmosphere, he said.

The computer will also be ready to accept "signal transmitted by an extraterrestrial intelligent culture civilization," he said. In the event a signal is received, the computer will be able to analyze the message, Lubbers said.

Through the display, Lubbers said he hopes to bring about a "solidarity of intelligent human beings in the universe."

The process of solidarity will also bring awareness and reaction to our environment, he said. The art deals with "everything we're immersed in not only immediately but in the widest possible scope of awareness that we can imagine."

Fully human

As all art, the computer display deals with elements of a culture to make people see who and where they are and what they are to be fully human, he said.

Lubbers said he hopes to make that awareness more "at home and satisfied" for people to understand through his art.

"Retrospective" is a smaller scaled duplication of a project done at Ohio State University in Columbus. The Ohio project was first to computerize on all possible frequencies the reception of some kind of signal from an extra-terrestrial intelligence, he said.

With his sculptures displayed around Creighton, Lubbers said that he's "doing the same thing that I've always done as a sculptor, (but), only better and more perfectly. It ('Retrospective') achieves the awareness most vital to us now, than other forms or earlier forms," he said.

Lubbers said the awareness is achieved by the signals, messages, information exchange, values and realization by the computer's hardware and its invisible parts.

Invisible elements

"The invisible elements are concrete in bringing a realization of other cultures from around the world," he said.

Lubbers decision to approach "Retrospective" came as an evolvement of prior projects, he said.

"I may duplicate those older pieces simply to help people see that evolution. I'm not interested in mystifying anyone in spite of the fact that it may appear that way to some," he said.

Art is significant in Lubbers' life because it's what "I'm involved in as a sculptor," he said. "It's the thing in which I'm excited and fully and totally occupied with at the moment. It's a world and universe which is endlessly mystifying and amazing."

Despite the magic and fun Lubbers said he finds with art, working with electronics can have some drawbacks.

"As a child I always felt hopeless when faced with old radios that didn't work," he said. "I always thought mysterious things ought to be doing mysterious things. And they do."