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software news

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PROGRAMMERS

## Employers struggle to find experienced ASIC developers

By John H. Mayer

► Looking for the action in cutting-edge, integrated circuit development? Despite the spotlight shining on faster

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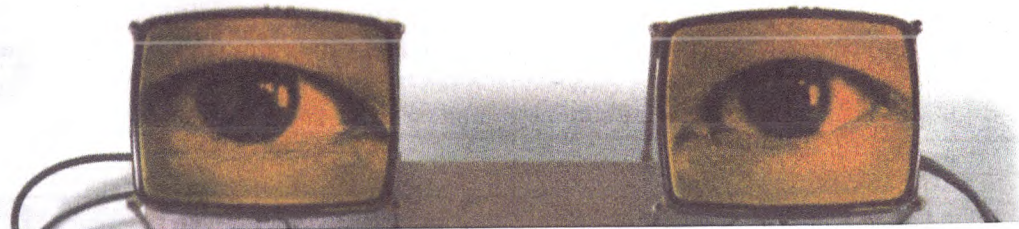
Special Focus  
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Tech Notables Seek  
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ROBOTIC ART AT AUSTIN MUSEUM OF ART

## A Nexus of Hardware & Software



# to find experienced ASIC developers

By John H. Mayer

▶ Looking for the action in cutting-edge, integrated circuit development? Despite the spotlight shining on faster microprocessors and larger memory chips, some of the best jobs are going to programmers who can develop application-specific integrated circuits or ASICs.

Designed to perform a specific function, these high-performance chips are now being used in applications as far afield as auto emission control and personal digital assistants (PDAs). Designers typically build ASICs using compo-

[ ▶ PROGRAMMERS page 11 ]

## THE ROUNDUP

# Labor Drought Affects High-Tech PR

By Kimberly Tabor

The tech labor shortage isn't affecting only software execs. It's trickled into other layers of tech society, too, and those situated on the perimeter are also affected. Public relations, a booming industry with an overabundance of talent in some sectors, is also encumbered with a scarce high-tech talent pool.

Craig Parks

"The demand for qualified personnel is the biggest issue" facing high-tech PR

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## Special Focus PR & Advertising

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## Features

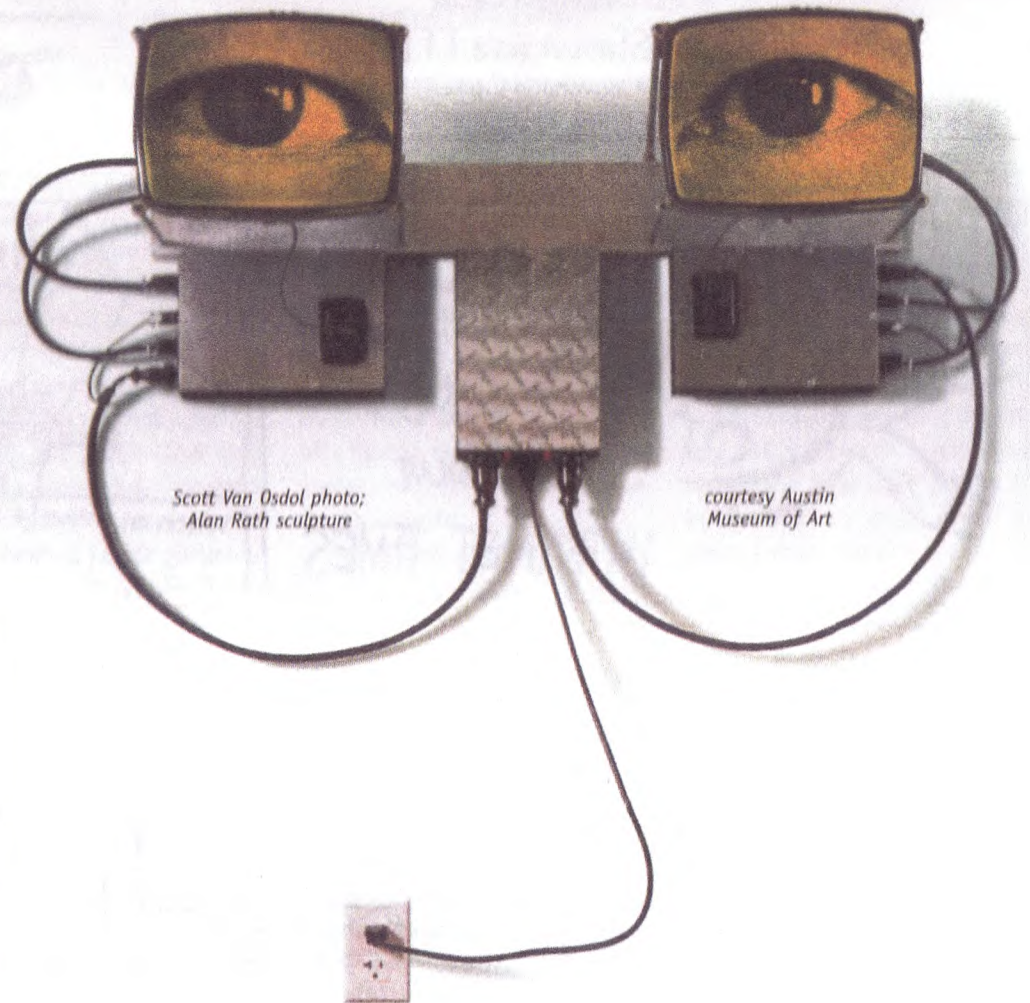


HP  
Acquires  
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## Of Note

Texas Ecomm  
Association  
Invokes History  
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By Emily Sopensky

▶ It was plain old civic duty that inspired Austin Software Council Chair Betty Otter-Nickerson to suggest holding the May monthly meeting at the Austin Museum of Art. "You need a cultural and civic aspect to promote the appeal of the community as Austin continues to grow," she said.

[ ▶ ROBOTICS page 9 ]

## A Nexus of Hardware/Software

[ ◀ page 1 ]

Program Co-Chair Bill Kleinebecker was more explicit. Along with professional sports teams, cybercafes, and other cultural attractions, Kleinebecker said that "a compelling arts infrastructure ... [is] necessary to attract and retain software types."

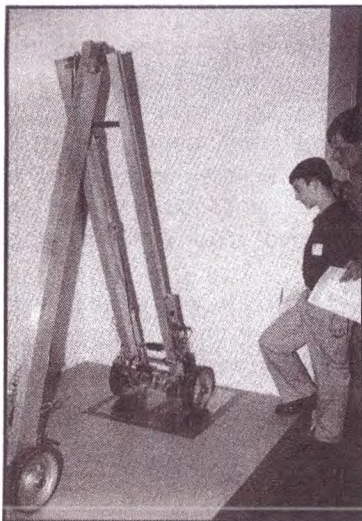
In other words, both Otter-Nickerson and Kleinebecker agree that supporting art and culture is important in recruiting highly skilled software talent to Austin.

Because the current exhibit at the museum features robotic sculptures, the ASC invited Professor Takeo Kanade to offer his perspectives. Kanade is the director of Carnegie Mellon Uni-

The exhibition features the mechanized sculptures of Bay area artist Alan Rath. A self-taught artist who holds an electrical engineering degree from M.I.T., Rath designed his creations to interact with onlookers — as well as prominent speakers. During Kanade's speech, several sculptures made their presence known more than once by starting, stopping and moving around the museum.

Rath's artworks are not nearly as complicated as Kanade's projects. Nevertheless it took the artist one full week to set up 16 sculptures for the Dell-sponsored exhibit. Sensors are embedded in both the creations as well as in the floor. For example, the movement of "One Track Minds" — which includes two robots facing each other on a single track — is triggered by an infrared sensor board located at the base of one of the robots. As a result, as soon as anyone walks into the room, the robots begin to randomly move back and forth across the track, never quite touching each other.

The first venue for this exhibit was Santa Fe's Site One Gallery where Rath's creations prompted famed physicist and fellow of the Santa Fe Institute Murray Gell-Mann to remark that they "are a powerful reminder of the ubiquity of regularity and chance variation." The exhibit moves to Cincinnati after June 15.



Above: "Inchworn" by Alan Rath; below: "Rover" by Alan Rath  
Michal Hubbard photos

versity's Robotics Institute, one

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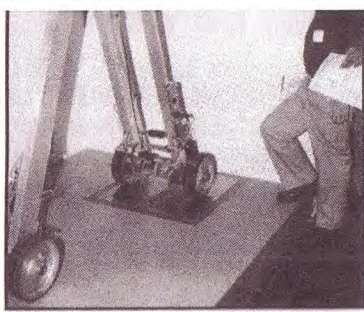
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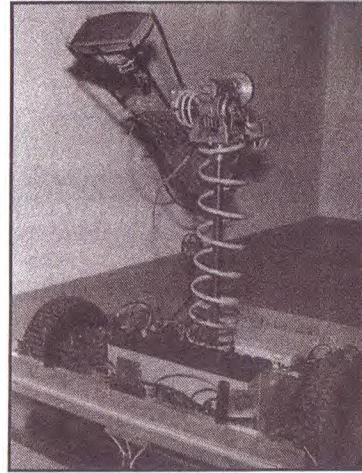
**Above: "Inchworm" by Alan Rath; below: "Rover" by Alan Rath** Michal Hubbard photos

versity's Robotics Institute, one of the leading robotics labs in the world. His research, funded mostly by U.S. Department of Defense agencies, is wide-ranging. Some of his robotics projects resemble characters from "The Phantom Menace" — odd, bug-like vehicles; roving troves of metal chock full of sensors and instruments.

Imaging is Kanade's specialty and the Virtualized Reality Project is one of his pet endeavors. In a fully digital 3-D room, his lab employs 50 video cameras that record events simultaneously. However, this massive video capture — up to 15 million images are contained in just 10 seconds of tape — is a processing glutton. Three years ago, it would take three weeks to process the 10-second clip that could then be used to simulate movements from any angle. Now it takes just two hours. Kanade suggests that this type of technology will eventually find its way into many applications, especially in the entertainment industry. For example, imagine seeing an NBA replay from any angle. Or playing a 3-D video game inside it.

move back and forth across the track, never quite touching each other.

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*The Alan Rath: Robotics exhibit will run through June 13, 1999, at the Austin Museum of Art-Downtown, after which it moves to Cincinnati. The exhibit, presented by Dell, has been funded by Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation, Toby Devan Lewis, The Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation Inc., The Shifting Foundation, Smart Art Press, and Vicki and Kent Logan Family Foundation. This exhibition was originated by SITE Sante Fe. Media and Design Sponsors: Advantage Outdoor, Austin American-Statesman, Austin Chronicle, CitySearch, FOX 7, GSD&M, KEYE, 107.1 KGSR, Pentagram, and XOPIX, Inc.*

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