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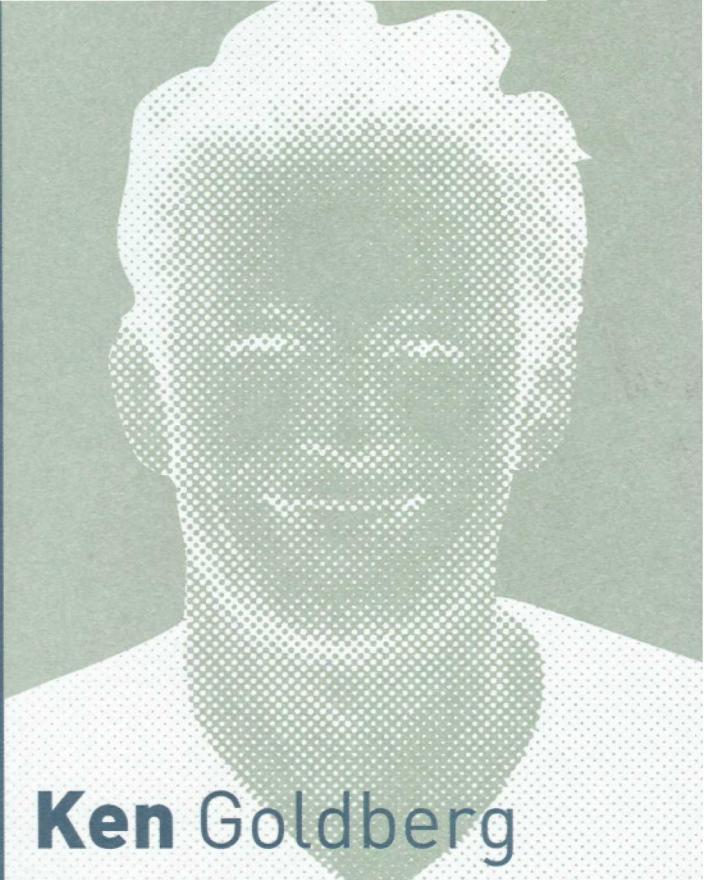
Ken Goldberg

RESUME_ Ken Goldberg is an associate professor at the University of California at Berkley whose specialty is technology and robotics. He's also a practicing artist.

PROJECTS_ Ken Goldberg's most recent projects investigate tele-reality, the study of real environments over the Internet. In 1995, he co-created the Tele-Garden, a flower garden watered and planted by a robot controlled by Internet users. He is currently working with a group on the Tele-Actor, a project that substitutes a human being for an automaton. The Tele-Actor wears a camera and navigates a real space, responding to directives of users on the Internet who tell the actor what to do via clicks of their mice over the scene presented in real time before them. The clicks are logged as votes that are then averaged into a directive followed by the Actor.

PHILOSOPHY_ "I'm interested now in the idea of collective behavior on the Internet," Goldberg says. "There were strands of that in the Tele-Garden because a group of people were online sharing one physical space. Now I want to get more immediate interaction between users. When we started the Tele-Actor project, we thought we'd have a robot move around live environments, but we realized how much trouble that could be. Instead, we use a human carrying the camera and responding to input from the users. We've taken the Actor to a number of environments, starting with the Webby Awards two summers ago. We transmitted live over the Internet so users would look over the shoulder of the Tele-Actor as he moved around. Users are able, with everyone else, to control where the Tele-Actor goes. It is like moving around in a game space, but it's real.

"We're studying beyond the capability of what we can do now on the Internet — we've stretched it as far as it can go at the moment. We can't deliver live video to large numbers of people because the Internet is too slow. It's much different than streaming video, so what we're working toward isn't quite feasible yet. We're thinking five to 10 years ahead when I see a form of interactive television coming out. We'll have that capability in every household by then. Everyone will be connected over some kind of two-way channel, where people will have the means to communicate back in response to what they're seeing. It's a whole new sense of television; instead of watching passively, you can vote on things, guide the action and respond, not only with what you're watching, but with everyone else who is watching." ⊕