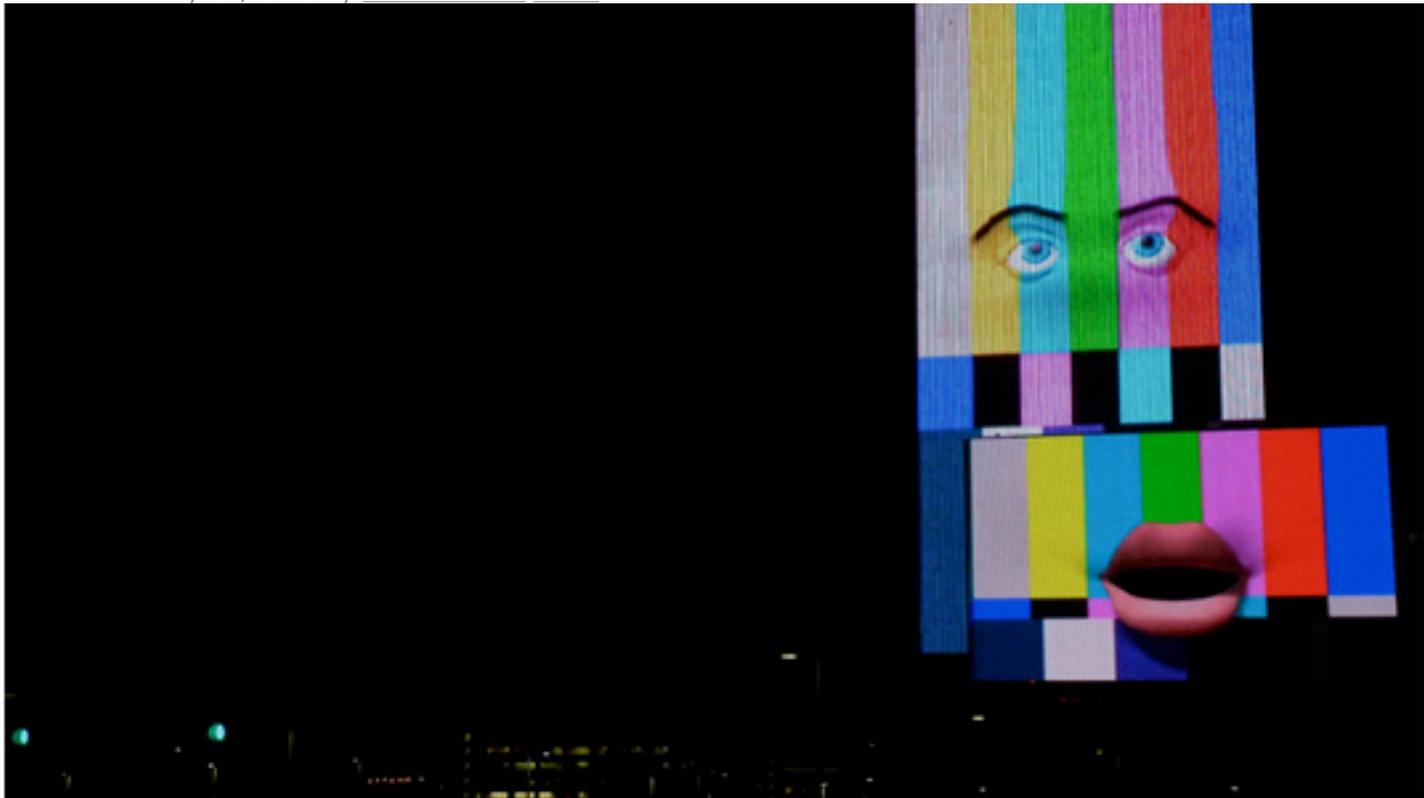




## PHANTASMA: ART ON THE MARQUEE

Posted on February 27, 2012 by BILL SHANER Email



*"I want to explore the use of LEDs at a large scale not to excite, but to soothe, and create a meaningful experience using the scale."*

Kawandeep Singh Virdee saw that the Boston Convention Center was hosting an artwork competition for its new [80-foot tall LED screen Marquee](#) and decided to make a statement.

**"I want to explore the use of LEDs at a large scale not to excite, but to soothe, and create a meaningful experience using the scale," he said.**

**“When I think about calmer meaningful moments, what comes to mind are moments in nature – like watching a sunset from my window at work, from a rooftop.”**

[Urban Bloom 3D](#) from [which light](#)

The Marquee stands outside the Convention Center’s main exit, in view of Summer Street traffic and the World Trade Center T stop. Somerville-based Virdee’s “Urban Bloom” is a digitally rendered take on a day in the city. The bottom panel uses rhythmic, geometric movement to reflect the daily rise and fall of urban congestion; the top panel shows gradually shifting color hues to illustrate a larger, slower and more natural daily motion.

Virdee’s piece is one of six clips chosen by [Boston CyberArts](#) to be cycled through the Marquee. The LED screen’s chief purpose is advertisement and community outreach – nearly every convention center in the country has a structure like it – but Boston’s is the only to have art commissioned for it, at least according to George Fifield, director of Boston CyberArts.

Boston CyberArts was commissioned by the Convention Center to chose clips for the Marquee. The six clips are the first installment of many to come. The idea is to keep building a larger library of clips for the Convention Center people to cycle through when they need to.





[Dennis Miller](#), a music technology professor at Northeastern University, submitted a clip of digitally rendered photographs and videos of the Boston Marathon.

The bulk of Miller's work is in visual music – usually 8 to 10 minute original digital pieces set to original music – and says he's excited about the growing awareness and acceptance of digital art, especially in Boston with the help of Boston CyberArts.

"You've got the ICA, which is really stepping it up in the video world," he said. "The Gardner is now online with their new performance spaces. I think there are going to be more opportunities for this kind of work around town."

Cambridge artist [Nell Breyer](#)'s piece "Falling Man," aims at a more direct effect upon the viewer than the other pieces. It depicts tiled frames of a man falling, in sequence, going from top to bottom. By default, information is read laterally, left to right. This piece forces the viewer to read vertically, to absorb information from top to bottom and through that feel the falling motion of the man. The thirty second clip is an attempt at getting the viewer to read gravity, to feel falling.

**She pulls it off. Standing in front of an 80-foot screen, watching dozens of frames depicting one man fall in a staggered, vertical sequence is pretty wild.**

[Jeffu Warmouth](#) and [Ellen Wetmore](#) deliver some lighthearted clips. The former portrays a man falling down the top screen into a pool of water in the bottom screen and the latter depicts her son jumping up and down.

**The most immediately striking piece of the lot is [John Slepian](#)'s "sigh\*," in which an animated face is layered over a "color bar" test pattern, sighing along with the commuters.**

The title is said to be a shout out to Charlie Brown's famous reaction to just about everything, and I think everyone has a little Charlie Brown in them on their way back from work.

It's exciting to see a city facility commission artwork for its ad space. It's more exciting to see said artwork selected by a fair and open competition that's put a spotlight on some local artists and given the growing field of digital art another platform. Good job, Boston Convention Center.

*Photos by [Sara Afzal](#)*