

UW Design Machine Group unveils new programs

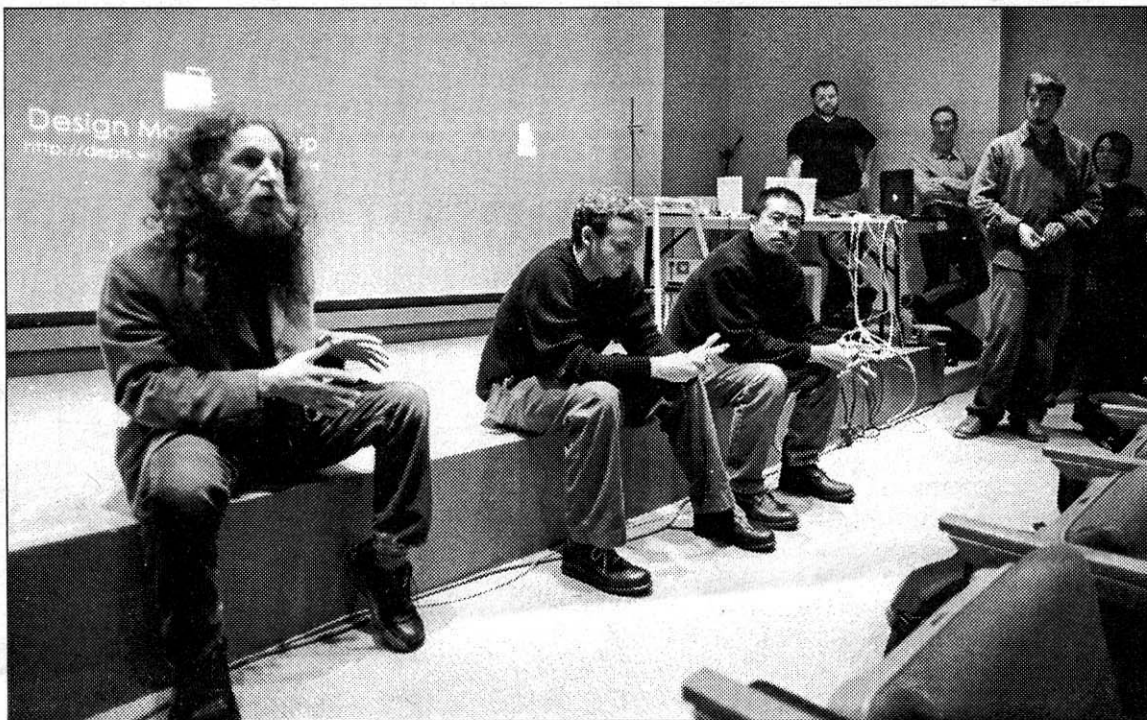
by JONATHAN CHARNITSKI
The Daily

The UW Design Machine Group (DMG) this week unveiled its 10 most revolutionary and useful architectural design projects of the last year and a half.

The DMG consists of about 20 people in the basement of Architecture Hall blending the newest technologies of computer science with laws of classical architecture. The motivation behind the DMG, which formed in April 2000, is to use computer technology to create, as co-director Mark Gross puts it, "better design tools, better environments."

A presentation shown in the Seattle Art Museum included a variety of tools, including "Maus Haus," a program that uses graphics of computer mice in a virtual arena to describe how pedestrian traffic will move through places like Westlake Center Plaza in Downtown.

The DMG focuses on crafting new tools, inventing new environments and improving on existing features in Computer Aided Design (CAD) programs, but it is not especially intent on putting



KEN MICHELSON / The Daily

Co-Director Mark Gross, left, talks after a presentation at the Seattle Art Museum by the UW Design Machine Group, an organization that develops novel tools to aid architects.

its developments on the shelves for consumers.

"I enjoy being at the University, helping students create software for the future," said DMG Co-Director Ellen Do.

Do presented one of her pro-

jects, the Electronic Cocktail Napkin, wherein rough sketches, akin to those one might make on a cocktail napkin in a bar, are rendered directly into 3-D floor plans. The virtual room can be created complete with furniture

and perspectives from points of view that are determined by different symbols on the sketch.

However, while some of the projects are still in developmental stages, other projects, such as Navigational Blocks, are devel-

oped and ready to market. "Nav" Blocks use small computers in wooden blocks to create a physical interface between humans and computers.

For example, a block with faces named "Who," "What," "Where," "When" and "Why" would be placed under a sensor at a historical site like Pioneer Square. A monitor would answer the question presented on the block as it relates to the site; a "Who" question would provide information on important individuals associated with the area.

Although it does not direct research and development towards the commercial marketplace, sometimes DMG's ideas are too good not to sell. Gross realizes that some of the DMG's may be a valuable commodity in the CAD market, and is open to the idea of selling products.

"I've begun some conversations with the entrepreneurship people at the U.," said Gross, but also concedes that the DMG is not against selling its products to companies like Intel or Microsoft.

"We're open to all-comers. Make us an offer we can't refuse," he said.