

Yorgo Alexopoulos

Creating Art With Macintosh

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YORGO ALEXOPOULOS' CURRENT EXHIBITION COMBINES VIDEO ANIMATION, SOUND, SCULPTURE, AND PAINTING THAT REMINDS US OF WHY MACINTOSH IS THE TOOL OF CHOICE FOR MOST ARTISTS WHO USE A COMPUTER.

Growing up as a child in *Athens, Greece, and Los Angeles, California*, Yorgo Alexopoulos' creative ambitions were on a larger scale than those of most kids. "From as early as I can remember, I would recreate my experiences in physical form," said Alexopoulos. "For instance, after my first visit to *Disneyland* I spent a couple of weeks building my own version in the backyard. I filled the whole yard with stuff; I placed a white sheet over a ladder for the materhorn a trash can lid for Space Mountain, I dug small rivers and lakes. At first glance it looked like a huge collection of junk, but if you spent some time looking you knew it was *Disneyland*. I did the same thing after flying back to *Greece* for the first time. I built a large scale diorama of *LAX* (Los Angeles Internation Airport) in our garage out of everything from pencils and shoe boxes to christmas lights and Legos."

As an explanation, Yorgo says he was influenced at an early age by his frequent travels between *Greece* and *The United States*. "The contrast in lifestyle and culture between *Greece* and *The States* was obvious to me early on. I was not exposed

to much TV or Film in *Greece*. When I was six years old my father took me to the movies for the first time. We saw *Star Wars* and I was blown away. I started painting and drawing that type of imagery; space, lasers, planets, etc. My mother and aunt were very supportive and bought me art supplies and kids books on everything from outer space to mythology. I was fortunate to grow up in an environment where I was encouraged to be creative."

When high school came around Yorgo started to visit museums on his own and developed an interest in art history. After graduating from high school he rented a studio in Venice, CA, and spent about 2 years oil painting before attending the *School of the Art Institute of Chicago*.

"In art school, the computer came into play," Yorgo says. Originally entering the school as a painter, Yorgo soon broadened his interests to other deciplines. "I noticed that my school had a diverse range of facilites so, I decided that I would stop painting for a while and experement." He started working in the computer lab and eventually switched majors, getting into photography.

"I ended up making images on the computer and printing them by playing with various photographic techniques...first I

started silk-screening, then I made c-prints. I finally settled on cibachrome prints; these are rich in saturation and enhanced my digital images. I spent my time in art school developing these techniques while trying to make visually compelling images." recalls Yorgo.

After graduating from art school in 1995, Yorgo moved to *New York City*. He started using *After Effects* to execute an idea for a video installation. This led to freelance work in post-production where he picked up a lot of tricks from his co-workers. For several years, prior to setting on one artistic style or exhibiting his artwork, he experimented on the computer and developed his concepts. At that point, "I didn't think about exhibiting any of my work; I was more interested in just developing my skills and thinking about ideas. I had no interest in showing them to anyone."

What is Yorgo's current body of work? "My current show focuses on mankind's scrutiny of outer space. The work seeks to fuse both the ancient and modern mythology of our understanding of the universe, from ancient astronomy to the "sci-fi" aesthetics of Hollywood.

Yorgo adds that his work also plays with a viewer's perceptions about the materials they are made of. "Part of the reason that I work in so many different mediums is that I am inspired by a vast range of influences. Therefore, I am not interested in creating a typical gallery show of, say, seven similar paintings; I'd rather mix it up and amalgamate it all conceptually. This adds a layer of ambiguity to the work, when for instance, a viewer approaches a piece, and made not be sure what its made of, they are forced to use their imagination. Ultimately my work is not just about concepts, but also about the forms and materials they are created in."

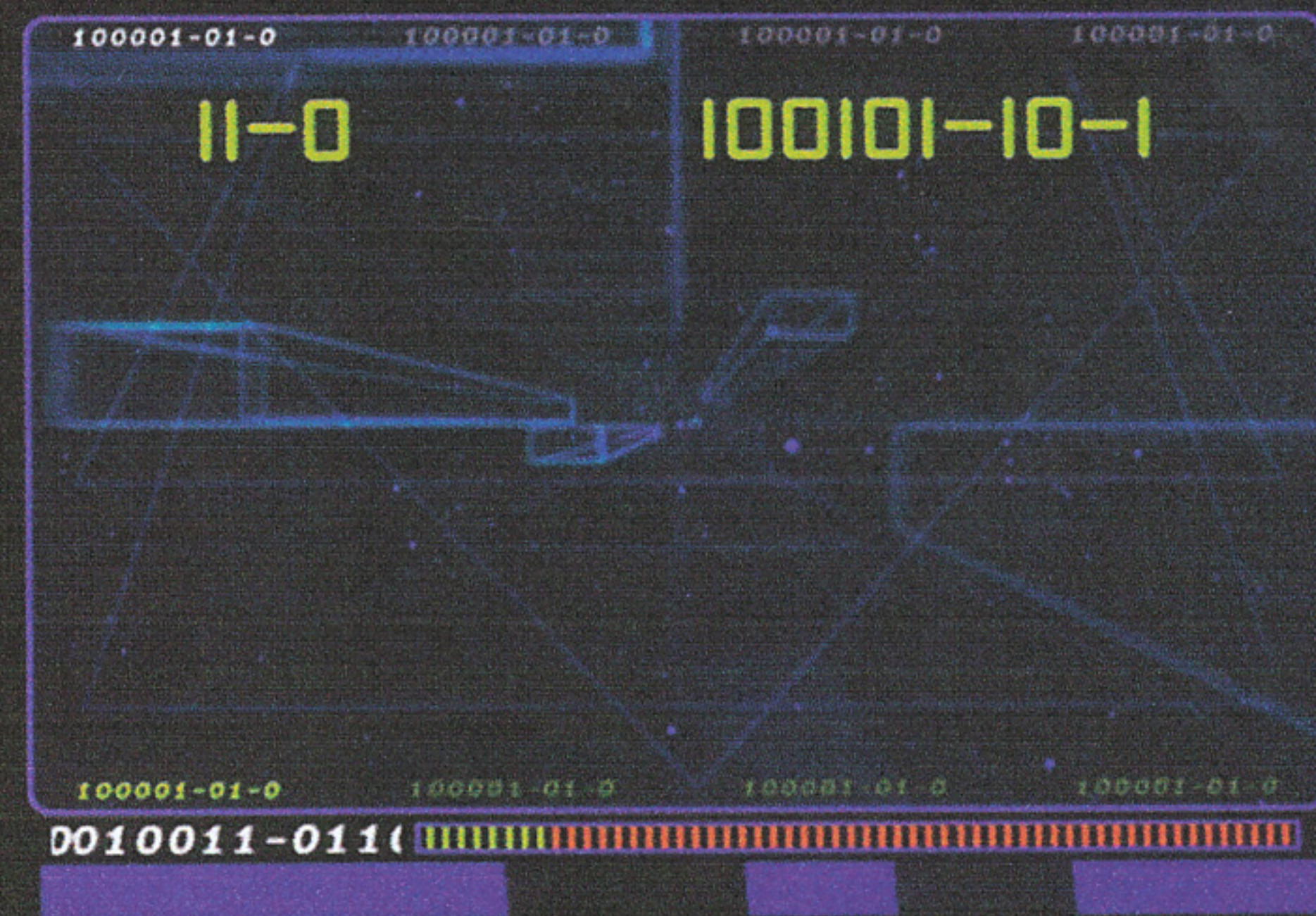
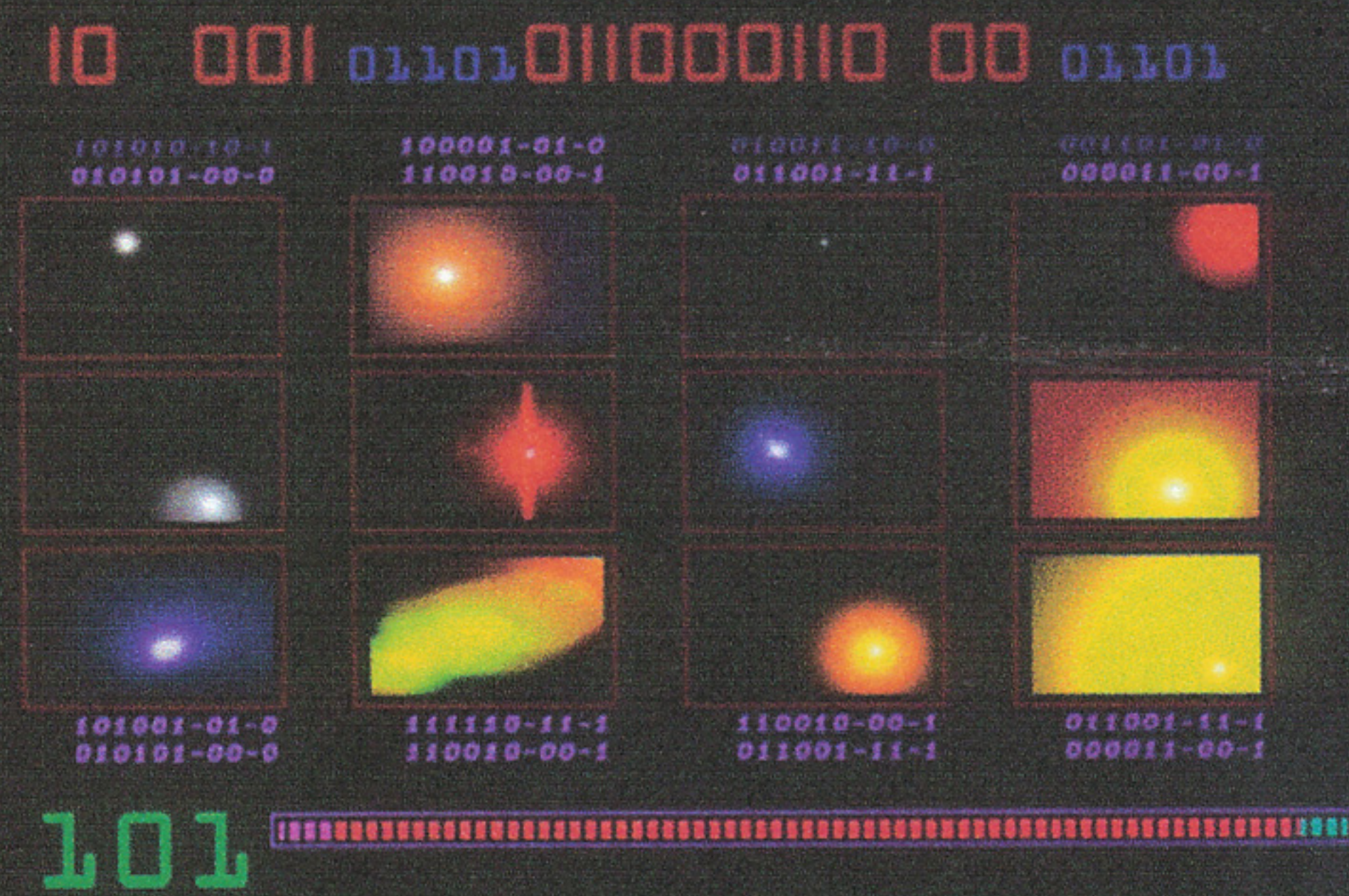
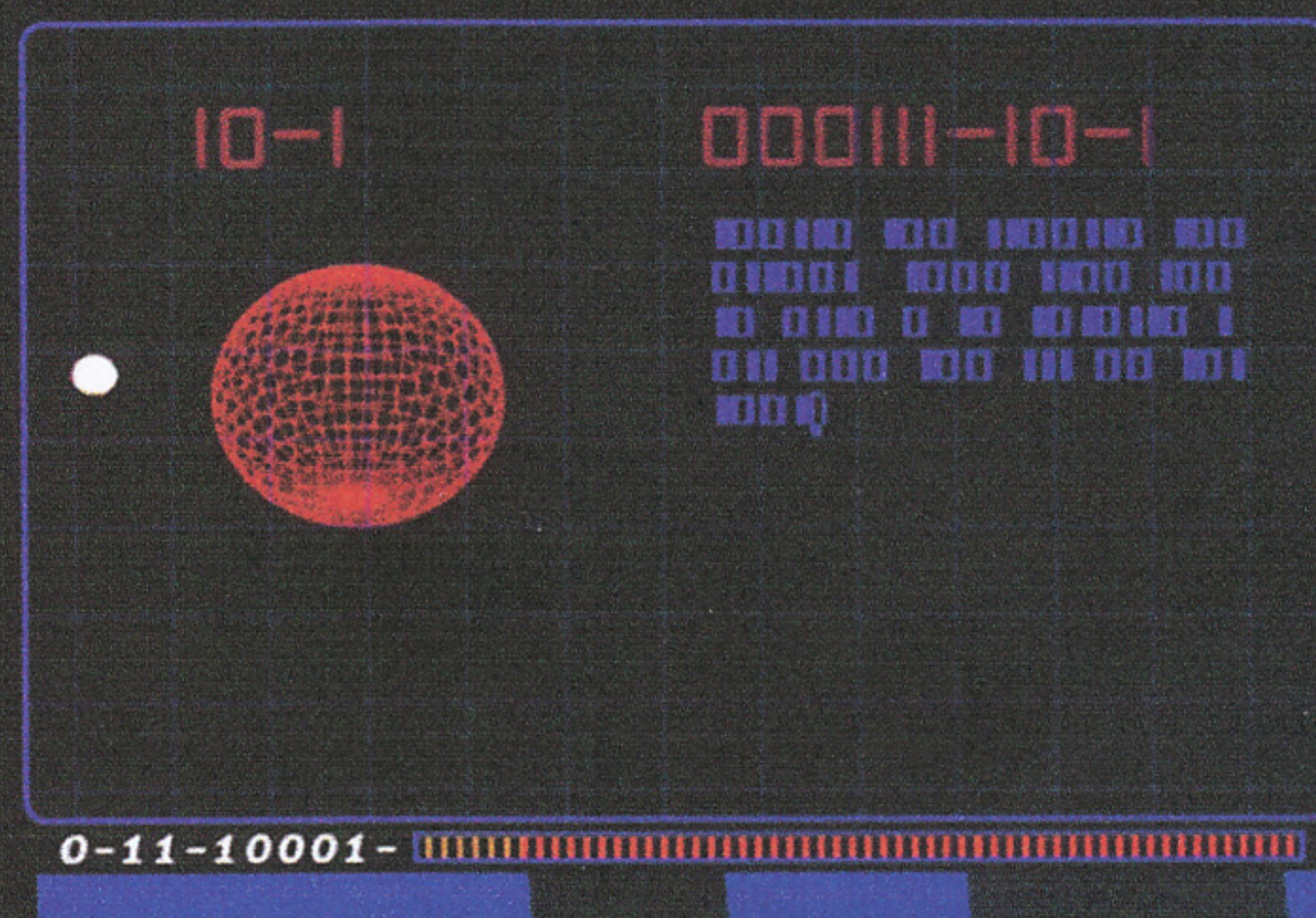
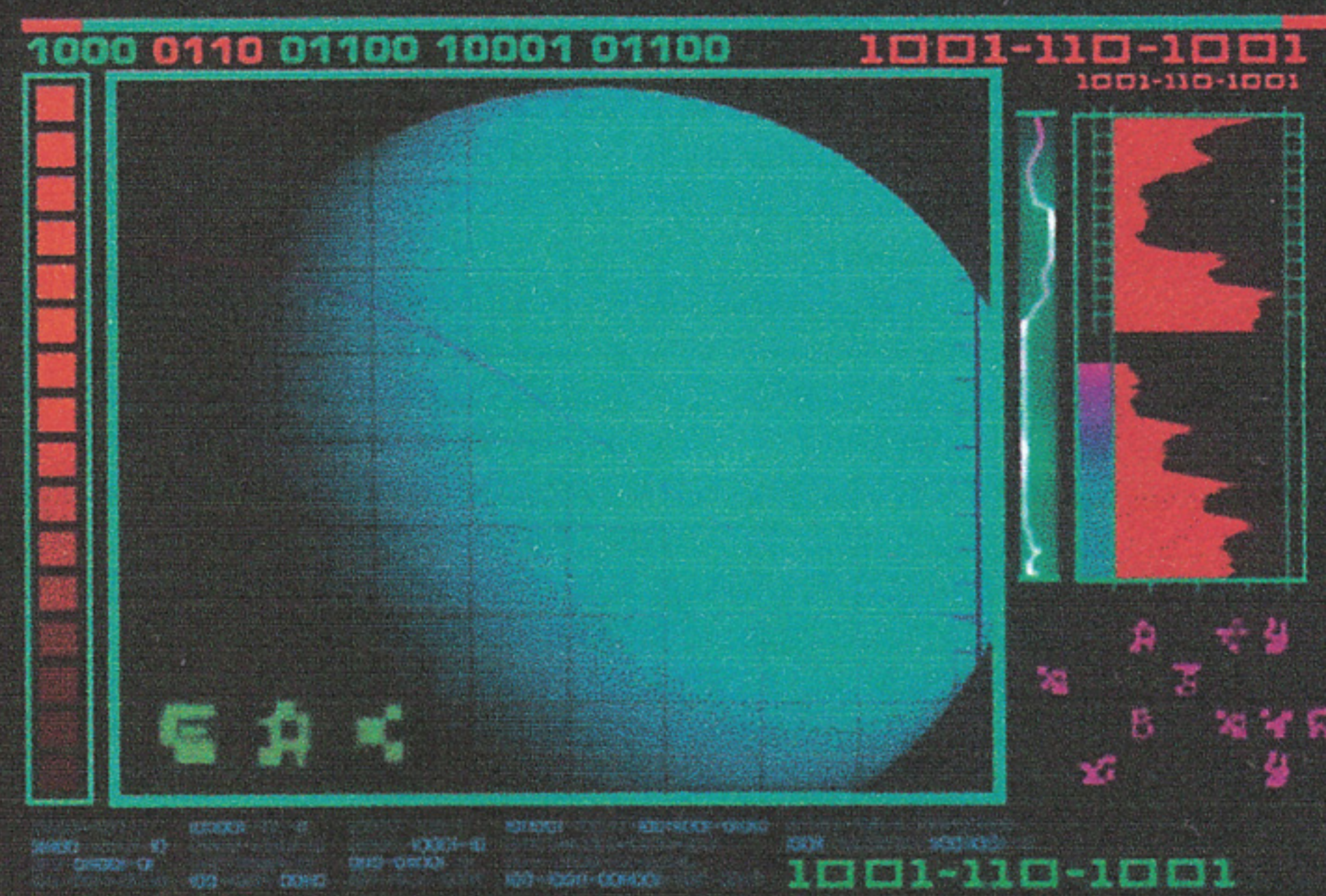
As a part of his experimentation, Yorgo is interested in constantly playing with and layering materials. And in each of his works, Yorgo uses the Macintosh computer to help him "Think Different". For instance, in 'Astral Astray', Yorgo took the concept of using "data screens" from science fiction films as a starting point for an animated video installation. He gathered reference materials and made drawings on paper. From there, "I laid out everything in *Illustrator* and *Photoshop*, and with those two programs, I created the actual elements to be animated."

"Once I created those elements, I brought them into *After Effects*. From there I composited all my elements together and adjusted color and added effects. Then I animated everything and set up the final renderings. To create the audio tracks I went onto a keyboard and created an arsenal of sounds ... buzzes, bleeps and drones." With another program, *Logic*, Yorgo took his video and added sounds on a frame by frame basis. "What ends up happening is that every little movement in the animation gets a sound. When all five videos play together, they create a symphony of sounds."

Yorgo adds that once he completed the sound and animation, he consolidated the two of them to make an Mpeg compression. "Each of the videos has about five animations that are put together and repeat seamlessly." Yorgo did an Mpeg compression of that, and then used Apple's new *DVD Studio Pro* authoring tool to make DVDs. Then, he bought several DVD players to put on the show.

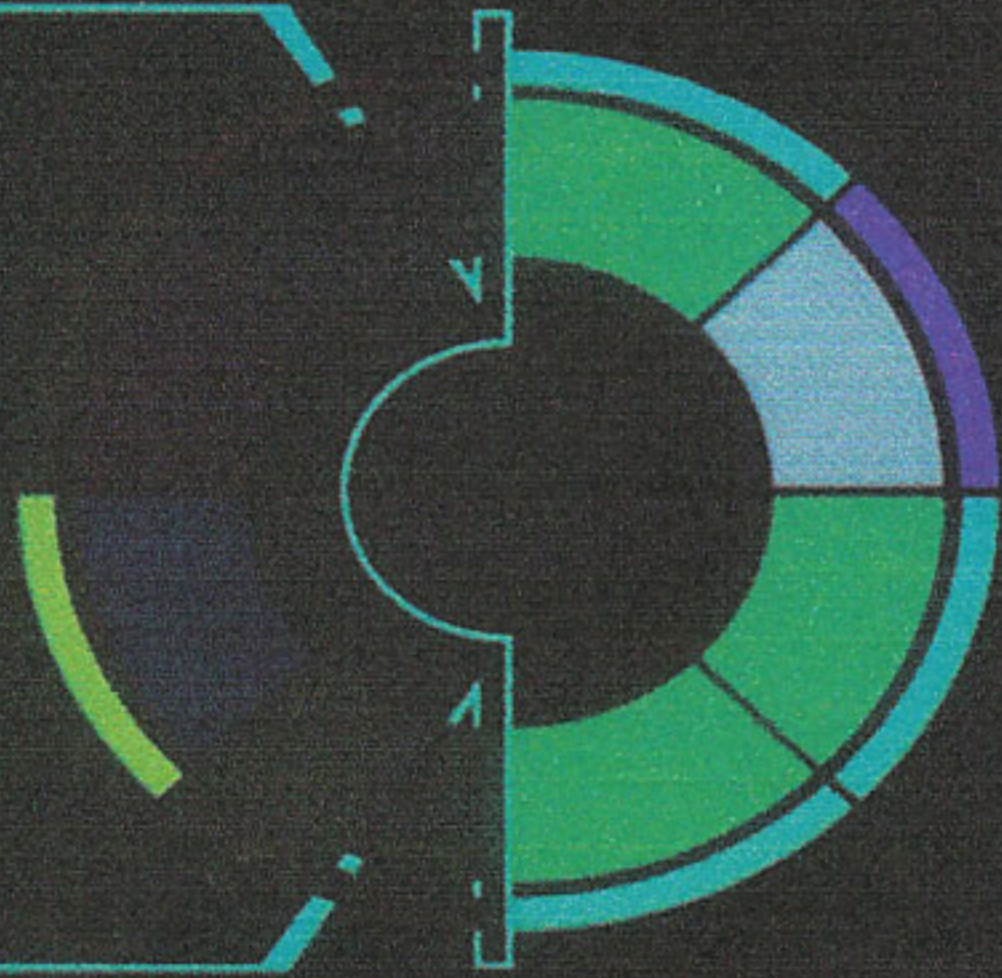
So, thanks to Apple Computer, "one person can now create what it took a whole team of special effects artists to do in the past," Yorgo says.

And what does he think about Apple Computer's, latest ad campaign? "I love it; it basically defines what being an artist is all about. A computer should be an innovative tool, and should be constantly changing and improving. Their campaign is highlighted with people that revolutionized their own discipline in some way. Hopefully the campaign will inspire people to use a Macintosh to do the same." ☒

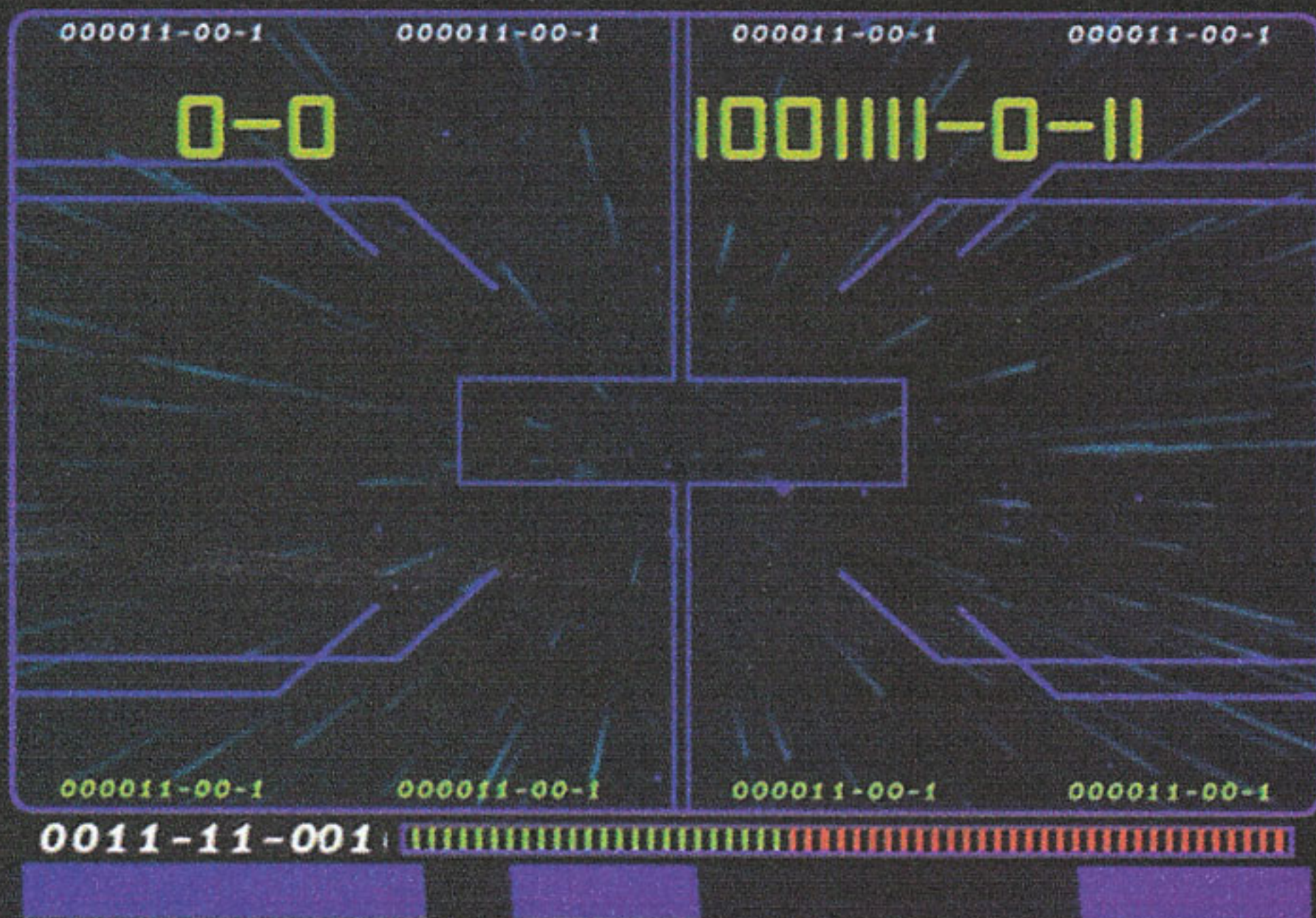


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