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BCS (British Computer Society) Machine Intelligence Awards 2007 sponsored by Electrolux – Winner announced

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The prize for a working system demonstrated at the competition that was considered to be the most significant step forward using Machine Intelligence was awarded to Simon Colton Maja Pantic and Michel Valstar of Imperial College London for their system 'The Emotionally aware Painting Fool'. The Emotionally Aware Painting Fool brings together two Artificial Intelligence systems in order to produce computer portraits in an exciting new way. Firstly, the system 'looks' at a video clip of someone expressing an emotion, for instance smiling or frowning.

Then, the software determines which emotion is being shown, where the eyes, nose and mouth are in the picture, and at what point in the clip the person is being the most emotional. This information is passed to The Painting Fool, a computer program which aims to be taken seriously as a creative artist in its own right. The Painting Fool chooses its colour palette and painting style according to the emotion in the picture. So, it might choose muted colours and careful pencil marks for a sad portrait, or bright, slapdash paint strokes for a happy portrait. Because The Painting Fool is also told where the facial features are, it can pay more attention to the eyes and mouth, and it can use exaggeration to heighten the emotion. The results of this can be seen at The Painting Fool's website.

The Electrolux Sponsored Machine Intelligence Awards are held annually at Cambridge University by the British Computer Society Specialist Group on Artificial Intelligence. The finalists in this year's competition had been asked to produce real working intelligent machines and present them to the Society at the finals at the SGAI annual conference on 11th December 2007 at Peterhouse College. The conference delegates then cast their votes and the winner received a plaque from the Society and a cash prize from Electrolux.

"Electrolux are proud to sponsor this prestigious event and award the prize to such a worthy winner," said Dawn Stockell, UK Brand and Marketing Manager, Electrolux Major Appliances. "Electrolux has already pioneered machine intelligence in domestic appliances: the Electrolux Trilobite robotic vacuum cleaner, The Electrolux 'Talky' talking dishwasher, the application of fuzzy logic in washing machines and automatic self programming in dishwashers. We wish Simon, Maja and Michel a successful future for The Painting Fool."

The other finalists of this year's awards were:

Mei Yee Lim and Michael Kriegel, Heriot-Watt University with their system FearNot (Fun with Empathic Agents Reaching Novel Outcomes in Teaching). This system uses intelligent graphical characters to improvise relationships between bullies and their victims.

Tony Allen and Sergio Grau, Nottingham Trent University with SiLog. A voice activated computer password protector.

Xenogene Gray, Grays Knowledge Engineering, Australia with eGanges, A freely navigable question and answer system for use in law. Client interacts with the system which makes notes for lawyers.

Eric Atwell, Leeds University with CHEAT – a hybrid human-machine intelligence system to generate academic research papers.

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