



## Give Moving Signage a Spin

*Motion displays communicate effectively and add a touch of class.*

By Glenn W. Smith

### Kinetic Sculpture

Moving sculptures are deployed in building interiors for the same reasons as motion displays in general. Two prominent examples — both by the great American sculptor Alexander Calder — are the large motorized mobile installed in the lobby of the Sears Tower, and the magnificent suspended mobile in TWA's Kennedy Airport terminal.

Because they do not have to carry specific informational content, kinetic artworks can be even more precisely calibrated to enhance their architectural setting while still serving as a powerful expression of the corporate mission. What other architectural medium, for example, could excel Calder's TWA mobile in conveying the romance and excitement of air travel?

From an immediate bottom-line standpoint, a unique kinetic sculpture can be a compelling magnet for high-tech tenants; architectural features and amenities will often stand out in a prospective tenant's mind after a long day of inspecting potential office properties.

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Let's face it: Interior signage — and, in particular, *moving* interior signage — is not even on the radar screen of most facilities professionals.

We're not talking here about flat 2D "message centers," but real, 3D motion displays that include animated kiosks and even kinetic artworks. The surprising fact is that IBM, Sears, Bellsouth, TWA, and a host of other major companies have deployed such displays in their corporate lobbies and other public spaces. These companies have learned that motion not only communicates effectively but also can actually enhance the static beauty of an architectural setting.

It must be motion of the right kind, however. In a world that already seems too frenetic, the display must first of all move with a certain grace and coherence. Second, the motion must be varied and thought-provoking so as not to trivialize its setting. Above all, the motion must be centrifugal; that is, it must gesture and draw attention to the architectural space around it. The properly designed motion display can transcend mere signage to become an architectural feature, taking its place alongside fountains, plantings, and other respected means of activating and creating points of interest within interior spaces (and, not incidentally, adding to the value of a property as a whole). Other benefits:

- Having sentries marching back and forth at an entryway is no longer in vogue, but the principle remains the same. A classy, high-tech animated kiosk in a corporate lobby can create a powerful first impression — a result of motion's unparalleled ability to tell a story and express energy.

- What's more exciting, on the way to a seaside vacation, than to catch sight of the ocean sparkling in the distance? Motion displays, likewise, can bring interior spaces to life, especially those which might otherwise seem uninviting. Consider, for example, placing a moving kiosk at the end of a long corridor, or siting a kinetic sculpture in an otherwise remote corner of a lobby.

- Motion displays make excellent landmarks because they stand out at a distance. Two of the country's largest retailers, for example, are experimenting with ceiling-mounted motion displays to create points of reference within their hangar-like stores. The same principle also applies to airports and convention centers.

- What better way to call attention to the information of the day than by making it move? A major telephone company has found animated kiosks to be an ideal means of introducing new area codes. For the same reasons, motion displays can also be tastefully integrated into building directories and computer kiosks.

- In queuing areas, moving signage can not only inform but also entertain. A German financial services company, for example, is using animated kiosks in its banking lobbies. The backlit display graphics advertise the bank's offerings, while their kinetic antics relieve the tedium of waiting in line. This concept is also a natural for hotel lobbies.

Motion displays can have practical as well as aesthetic benefits. The newer systems, for example, are far more easily deployed and maintained than water features; in fact, the typical unit can

be expected to operate 12 hours a day for four years between refurbishments. Power consumption is low (less than 100 watts per level), and the units can even be solar powered.

The high-tech revolution has produced modular displays with multiple moving elements. Because the movement of such systems can be reprogrammed and their visual elements easily replaced, they can be used to construct graphics kiosks, three-dimensional product displays, and even kinetic artworks.

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