



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SAN JOSE SEMAPHORE CODE REVEALED

Two Silicon Valley technologists discover that the embedded code in public art project atop Adobe is classic Thomas Pynchon book, *The Crying of Lot 49*

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Aug. 14, 2007 — One year after the debut of San Jose Semaphore, a major public art project commissioned by Adobe Systems Incorporated and the San Jose Public Arts Program, two Silicon Valley technologists, Bob Mayo and Mark Snesrud, today announced that they have unraveled the mystery behind the artwork's coded message. They have uncovered that the four revolving amber circles high above San Jose's skyline were revealing text from *The Crying of Lot 49* by Thomas Pynchon.

“Given the artwork's location in the heart of Silicon Valley and concept, a semaphore, there really was only one logical choice for the text: Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*,” said noted artist, Ben Rubin, the creator of San Jose Semaphore.

“Although he wrote the book in the mid 1960s, Pynchon's setting is a fictional California city filled with high-tech corporate parks and the kind of engineering subculture that we now associate with the Silicon Valley. The book follows the heroine's discovery of latent symbols and codes embedded in this landscape and in the local culture. At its heart, San Jose Semaphore is an expression of what Pynchon calls ‘an intent to communicate’,” said Rubin.

Mayo and Snesrud, the San Jose Semaphore “code crackers,” shared their findings at a press conference hosted by San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed and San Jose Councilmember Sam Liccardo, District 3, at the Richard Meier-designed San Jose City Hall with the San Jose Semaphore—atop Adobe's global headquarters in downtown San Jose—serving as the event's backdrop.

“Bob and Mark's discovery will further attract attention to San Jose Semaphore and help elevate its status as a beacon for Downtown San Jose,” said San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed. “This project demonstrates that business, the arts and government can work together to create a contemporary downtown experience that's interactive, innovative and entertaining.”

According to Mayo and Snesrud, the basis for cracking the code started with their own ‘intent to communicate.’ “A few weeks before, Mark and I had met each other at a communication skills seminar. Actually it was a how-to-flirt-with-women seminar. We were eager to put things to the test. After dinner in Downtown San Jose, we decided to explore the surrounding areas to see if we could locate a fun place to hang out. As we crossed Almaden Boulevard, the amber discs of the San Jose Semaphore stood out against the night sky, presenting a display that engaged our curiosity. Not much progress was made on our social explorations that night, but the decision was made to try to solve the puzzle that the San Jose Semaphore posed,” said Mayo, former computer scientist at HP Labs.

After accepting that challenge, Mayo and Snesrud relied on their deep high tech expertise and unyielding determination to begin cracking the code. “San Jose Semaphore offered us a compelling puzzle with clues through its illuminated discs and its AM and online soundtrack. When combining the technological aspects with the aesthetics of the art, San Jose Semaphore posed a formidable challenge that definitely synthesizes left-brain analytics with right-brain creativity. And, it was simply compelling to watch,” said Snesrud, an engineer with Santa Clara-based W&W Communications whose career also includes positions at Sun Microsystems and Intel.

Located within the top floors of Adobe’s Almaden Tower, San Jose Semaphore consists of four ten-foot wide illuminated disks composed of 24,000 Luxeon® LEDs donated by Philips Lumileds in San Jose. The disks continually shift and turn, engaging viewers on a visual and kinetic level while providing a steady, glowing, and purposefully moving presence on the San Jose skyline. The giant illuminated disks rotate to a new position every eight seconds and pulse out a message using a visual coding system that is intended to be deciphered. An online audio broadcast provides a soundtrack of spoken and sung letters, numbers and musical tones to help decode the message.

Semaphore refers to a traditional system of visual signals that convey information via the changing position of lights, flags or hands.

Intended as a meditation on the coded nature of communication, San Jose Semaphore’s illuminated disks assume four distinct positions: vertical, horizontal, and left and right-leaning diagonal. With four wheels and four positions each, San Jose Semaphore has a vocabulary of 256 possible combinations, creating a way of communicating its encrypted message, known—up until today—only to the artist and those involved with the installation. Cracking San Jose Semaphore’s coded message was posed as a challenge for the public when it debuted August 2006 at the beginning of the biennial ZeroOne San Jose, a festival showcasing digital art from around the world.

“Adobe congratulates Bob Mayo and Mark Snesrud on cracking the San Jose Semaphore code. Their spirit and determination exemplifies the inventiveness that exists throughout San Jose and Silicon Valley,” said John Travis, vice president, brand marketing, Adobe. “We are pleased to have been a part of this important art project and continue to be committed to supporting the city of San Jose as a key destination for innovative art forms.

For further information, please visit, www.sanjosesemaphore.com.

About the San Jose Public Art Program

The City of San Jose Public Art Program seeks to build community identity by initiating artworks and exhibitions that enhance the civic landscape. The Public Art Program is part of the City of San Jose Office of Cultural Affairs, a division of the Office of Economic Development. For more information, please visit www.sanjoseculture.org.

About the City of San Jose's Office of Economic Development

The City of San Jose's Office of Economic Development (OED) is committed to a vital, competitive San Jose economy that increases prosperity for people and companies and enhances City revenues. The Office guides the City's economic strategy, provides assistance for business success, helps connect employers with trained workers, and provides art, sporting and cultural resources to our community. For more information, please visit, www.sjeconomy.com.

About the City of San Jose

From its founding in 1777 as California's first city, San Jose has been a leader, driven by its spirit of innovation. Today, San Jose stands as the largest city in Northern California and the Capital of Silicon Valley—the world's leading center of innovation. The city, the 10th largest in the U.S., is committed to remaining a top-ranked place to do business, work, live, play and learn. For more information, visit, www.sanjoseca.gov.

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