

Smalltalk - Pure OO

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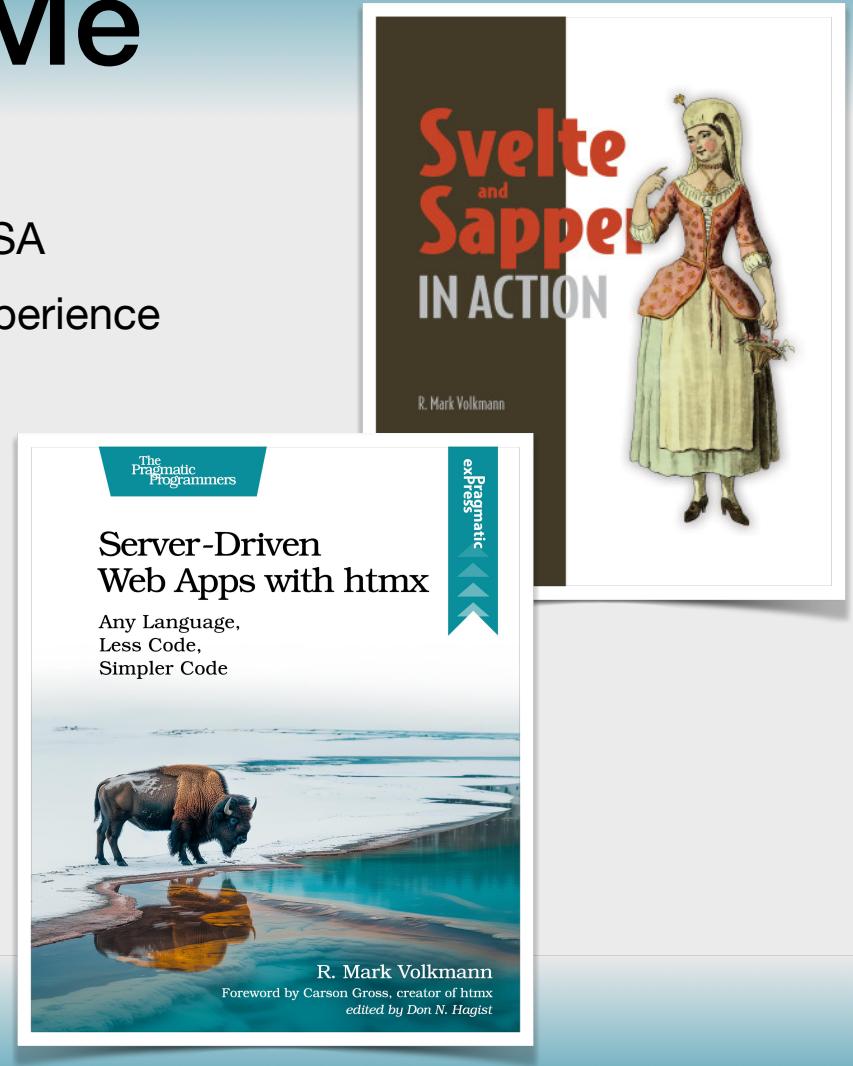


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Slides at <https://github.com/mvolkmann/talks/>

About Me

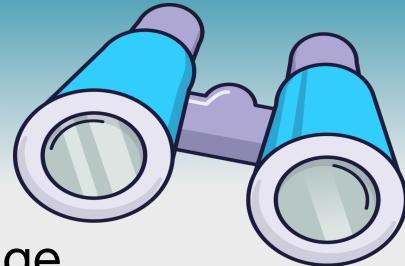
- Partner and Distinguished Software Engineer at Object Computing, Inc. in St. Louis, Missouri USA
- 44 years of professional software development experience
- Writer and speaker
- Blog at <https://mvolkmann.github.io/blog/>
- Author of Manning book “Svelte ... in Action”
- Author of Pragmatic Bookshelf book “Server-Driven Web Apps with htmx”



Why Learn Smalltalk?

- Beautifully minimal syntax
- Excellent development environment
- Gain understanding of pros and cons compared to other languages
- Get ideas for features that can be added to other languages and their development environments
- Actually use it as an alternative to other languages

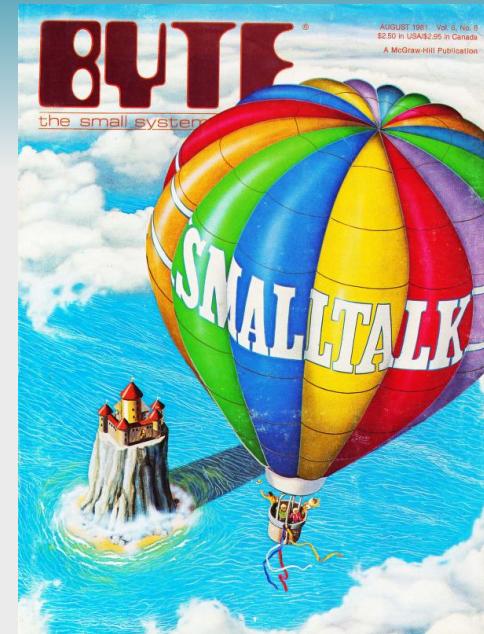
Smalltalk Overview



- Purely object-oriented, dynamically typed programming language
 - first popular OOP
 - everything is represented by an object that is an instance of some class
 - includes classes themselves and all development environment GUI elements
- Everything happens by sending messages to objects
 - objects decide whether and how to act on messages
- Duck typing
 - types of variables, method parameters, and method return types are never specified
 - use any object as long as it responds to all messages sent to it
 - determined at run-time (late binding)

Origin

- Invented at Xerox Palo Alto Research Center (PARC)
 - by Alan Kay, Dan Ingall's, Adele Goldberg, and others in 1970's
- First version in 1972
- Gained popularity in 1981 due to Byte magazine cover
- Was popular alternative to C++ in early 1990's
- But there were no free, open source implementations and licenses for commercials versions were expensive
- The free Java language was released in 1995 and the wind was removed from Smalltalk sails



Current Implementations

- **Free, Open-Source**

- Squeak (1996) - fork of Smalltalk-80
- Pharo (2008) - fork of Squeak
- Cuis (2009) - fork of Squeak

Pharo and Cuis
use Squeak VM

- **Commercial**

- Cincom Smalltalk - VisualWorks and ObjectStudio
- Instantiations VA Smalltalk - VAST Platform
- GemTalk Systems - GemStone/S
- Dolphin Smalltalk

Notable ways in which Cuis differs from Squeak and Pharo:

- ships with minimal set of Smalltalk-80-inspired classes for simplicity
- supports Unicode
- supports TrueType fonts
- supports high-quality vector graphics
- supports SVG

Just-in-Time Compilation



- Not interpreted
- First programming language to use just-in-time (JIT) compilation
- Code is compiled to optimized bytecode that is executed by a virtual machine (VM)
- Compilation occurs when method code is saved
- Results in better performance than interpreting code

VMs and Images



- Running Smalltalk programs requires two parts, VM and image file
 - VM reads and executes Smalltalk code found in image file
 - VM is specific to operating system and CPU architecture being used
- Image files can be moved between operating systems on different CPU architectures
 - displays same (pixel for pixel) across Windows, Linux, and MacOS, only differing based on screen size
 - no need to recompile code for different environments; makes code highly portable
- Image files are snapshots of current environment state
 - describes collection of all active objects
 - during development, changes can be saved to current image or a new image

Message Syntax ...



- Three kinds
 - unary - **receiver unaryMsg**
 - example: `'Hello, World!' print`
 - binary - **receiver binaryMsg argument**
 - example: `width * height`
 - keyword - **receiver kw1: arg1 kw2: arg2 kw3: arg3**
 - example: `dogs at: 'Comet' put: 'Whippet'`
- Precedence is unary, binary, then keyword
- Evaluated left to right
- Use parentheses to change evaluation order

Binary message names can only contain one or more of the following characters:
+ - * / \ ~ < > = @ % | & ? ,

... Message Syntax

- An object sends a message to itself using `self` as receiver
- Statements in method bodies are separated by periods
- Message cascade (;)
 - sends multiple messages to same receiver
 - ex. `Transcript show: 'Hello'; newLine; show: ' World!'`
- Message chain (: :)
 - sends message to result of previous message
 - removes need to surround previous expression with parentheses

```
1 + 2 squared -> 5  
(1 + 2) squared -> 9  
1 + 2 :: squared -> 9
```



Blocks ...



- Deferred set of message sends that are not evaluated until block value is requested
- Value is that of the last expression

```
[1 + 2] value 3
```

- Can take arguments

```
[:a :b | a + b] value: 1 value: 2 3
```

OR

```
[:a :b | a + b] valueWithArguments: #(1 2) 3
```

... Blocks

- Can be assigned to variables
- Can be passed to methods
- Can be returned from methods
- Can declare temporary (local) variables
- Can contain multiple statements
- Are closures, so can access in-scope variables

```
average := [:a :b |  
    sum |  
    sum := a + b.  
    sum / 2.0  
]
```



More Syntax



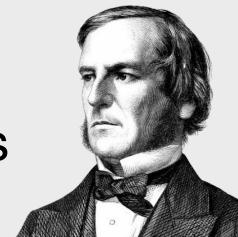
- Literal strings are delimited by single quotes

```
'Hello, World!'
```

- Comments are delimited by double quotes

```
"This is a greeting."
```

- Boolean values `true` and `false` are singleton instances of `True` and `False` classes which are subclasses of `Boolean`



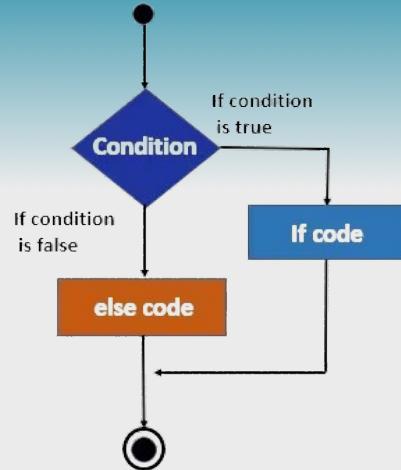
George Boole

Conditional Logic

- Implemented as methods in **Boolean** class
- Examples

```
result := a < b ifTrue: ['less'] ifFalse: ['more']

color := 'blue'.
assessment := color caseOf: {
    ['red'] -> ['hot'].
    ['green'] -> ['warm'].
    ['blue'] -> ['cold']
}
```

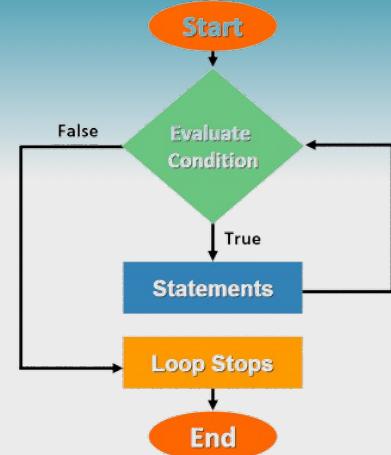


Iteration

- Many methods in provided classes support iteration
 - such as **Integer** and **Interval**
- Examples

```
3 timesRepeat: ['Ho' print]  
  
interval := 1 to: 10 by: 2.  
interval do: [:n | n print]  
  
1 to: 10 by: 2 do: [:n | n print]
```

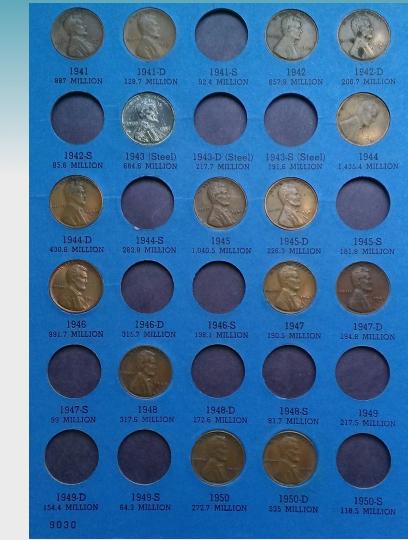
- Also see **do:** method in collections on next slide



Collections

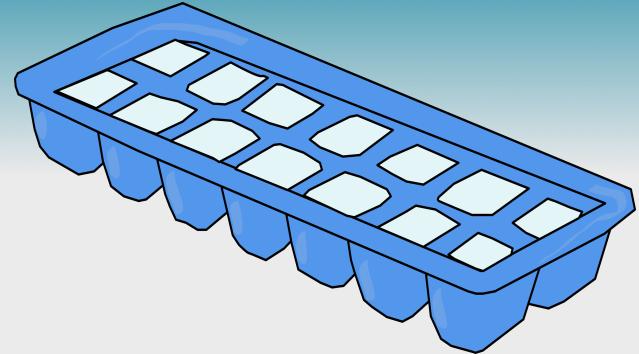
- Many provided collection classes in a class hierarchy (some shown here)
- **Collection** (abstract)
 - **SequenceableCollection** (abstract)
 - **ArrayedCollection** (abstract)
 - **Array**
 - **Heap**
 - **Interval**
 - **LinkedList**
 - **OrderedCollection**
 - **SortedCollection**
 - **Bag**
 - **Set**
 - **Dictionary**
 - **OrderedDictionary**

```
coll := OrderedCollection newFrom: #(1 2).
coll add: 3.
coll do: [ :n | (n * 2) print ]
```



2
4
6

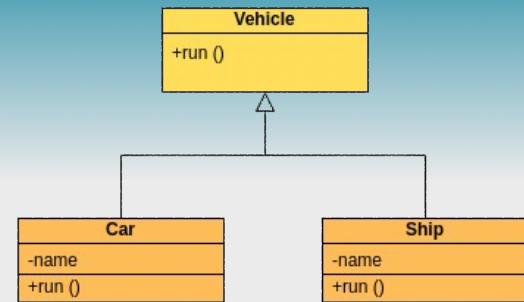
Arrays



- Literal syntax
 - list of literal values separated by spaces: `#{1 4 8}`
 - list of run-time expressions separated by periods: `{ score1. score2. score3 }`
- Indexed from **1** rather than 0

Class Definitions

- Must be a subclass of some existing class
- Class name is a symbol
- 3 space-separated lists
 - instance variable names
 - class variable names
 - pool dictionary names
- Category name



```
Object subclass: #Todo
instanceVariableNames: 'done text'
classVariableNames: ''
poolDictionaries: ''
category: 'TodoApp'
```

Instance Variables

- Always private
- To expose, define accessor methods

```
text  
^text  
  
text: aString  
text := aString
```

^ is typically rendered as ↑
:= is typically rendered as ←



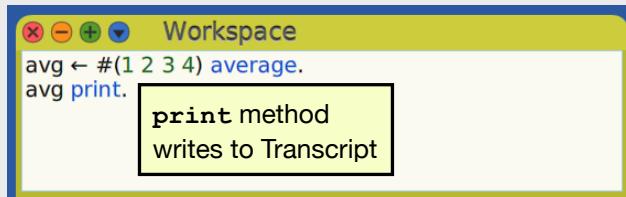
Methods

- Always public
- Methods that should only be used by others in the same class, should be in a method category whose name begins with “**private**”
 - ex. method `emptyCheck` is `Collection` class is in `private` method category
- Follow conventions for argument names that describes expected type

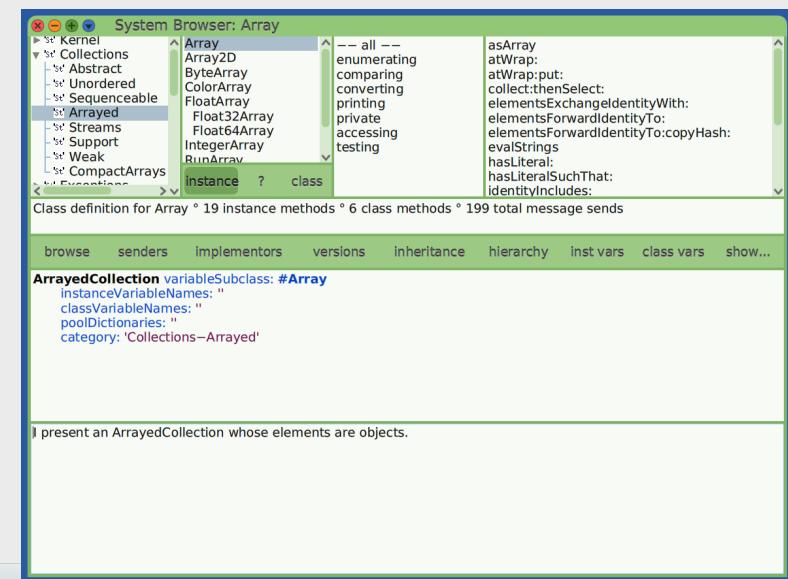
```
findFirst: aBlock startingAt: aNumber
...
from: fromNumber to: toNumber do: aBlock
...
```

Development Environment

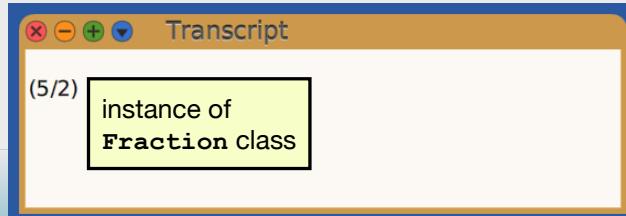
- Many kinds of windows
- Main ones are
 - **System Browser** - for reading, writing, and modifying code
 - see next slide
 - **Workspace** - for experimenting with message sends



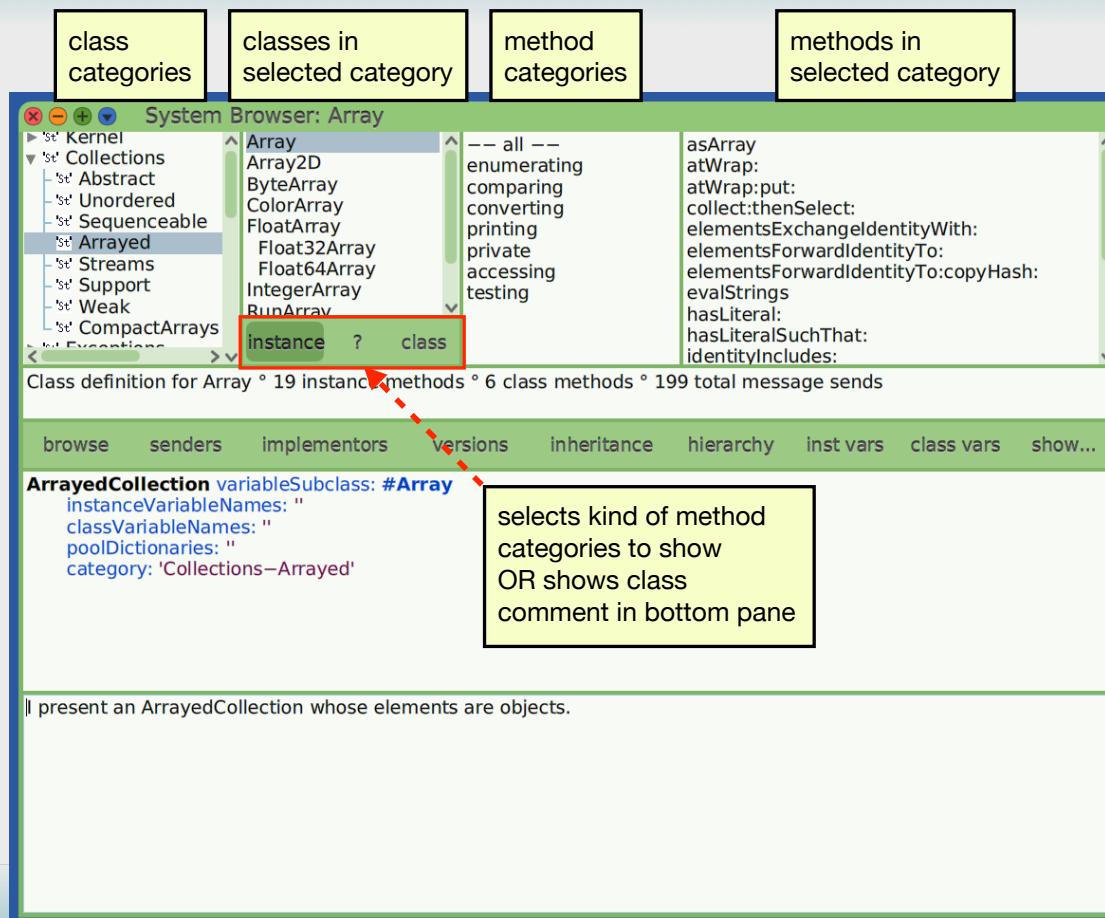
By default, focus moves with cursor position.



- **Transcript** - for displaying output



System Browser



DEMO #1

- Open a Browser
- Hover over class categories pane
- Press cmd-f and enter “**Stri**”
- Select “**String**” class
- Hover over methods pane
- Press “**i**” to scroll to first entry that begins with that
- Select “**isEmpty**” method
- Note that it sends the message “**size**” to **self**
- Click **size** method and discuss primitives (62 returns collection size)

DEMO #2

- Open Browser
- Right-click in class categories pane and select “add item...”
- Enter “**Demo**”
- In bottom code pane, change “**NameOfSubclass**” to “**Greet**”
- Press cmd-s to save new class
- Add “**message**” to **instanceVariableNames** list
- In message categories pane, select “**as yet unclassified**”
- Add these methods
- Place first two methods in method category “accessing” and last one in “printing”
- Open Workspace
- Enter following lines, select them, and press cmd-d to “Do it”

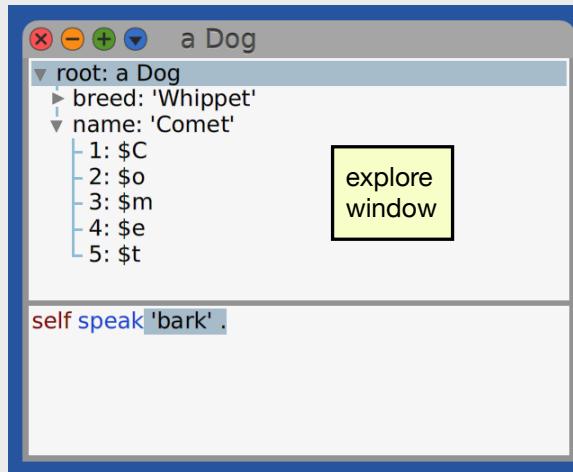
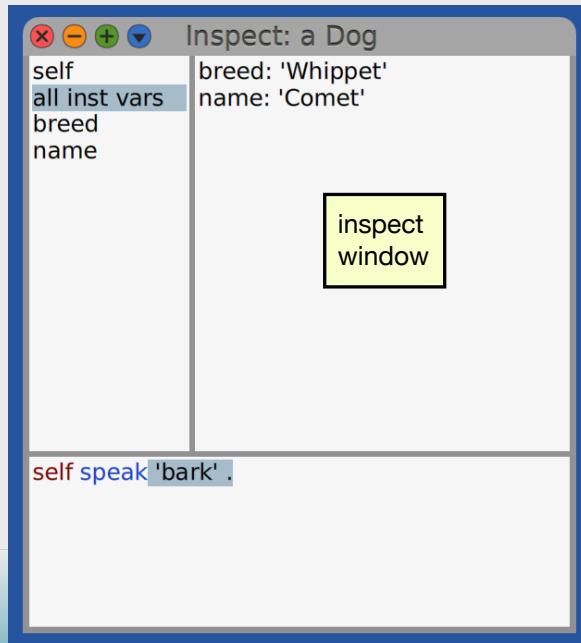
```
g := Greet new message: 'Hello, World!'.  
g greet
```

```
message  
^message  
  
message: aString  
message := aString  
  
greet  
message print
```

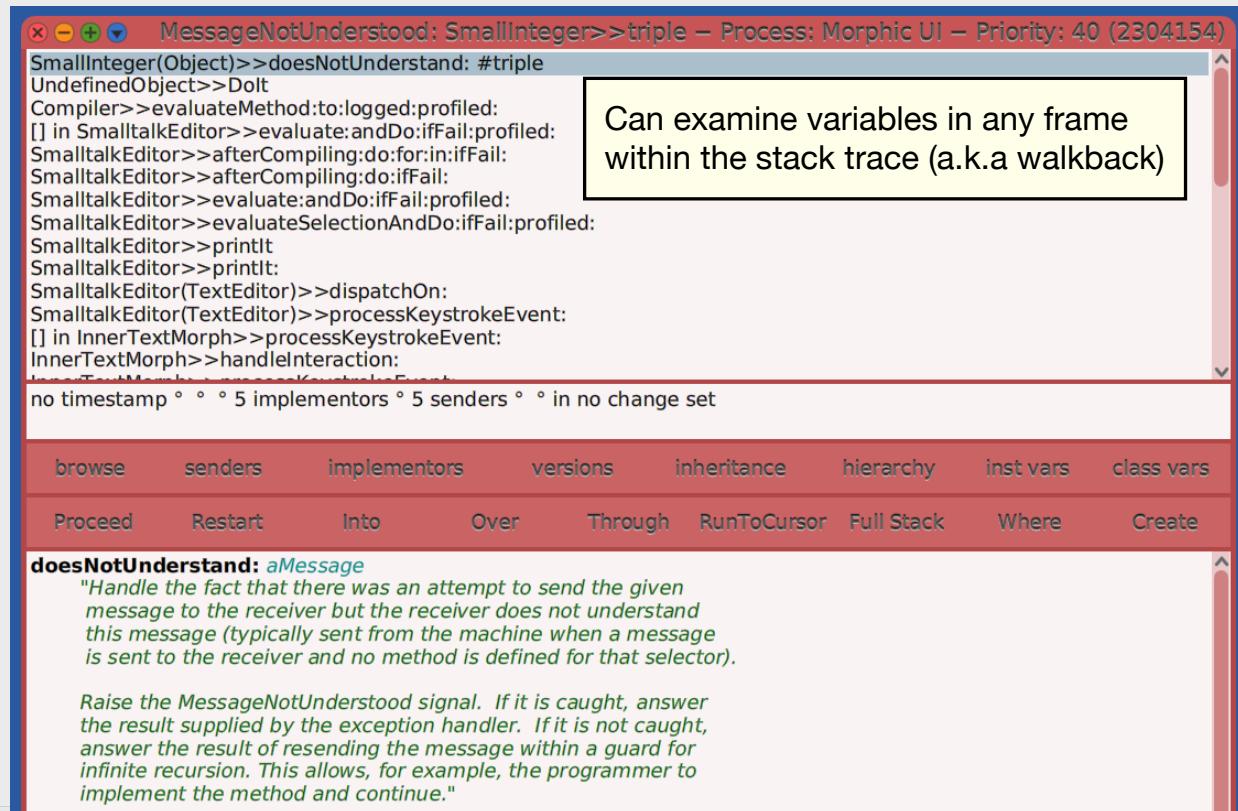
Inspect/Explore Windows



- Inspect windows examine a single object
- Explore window examine a tree of objects starting from one
- Both can send messages to selected object in bottom pane



Most Common Error



DEMO #3

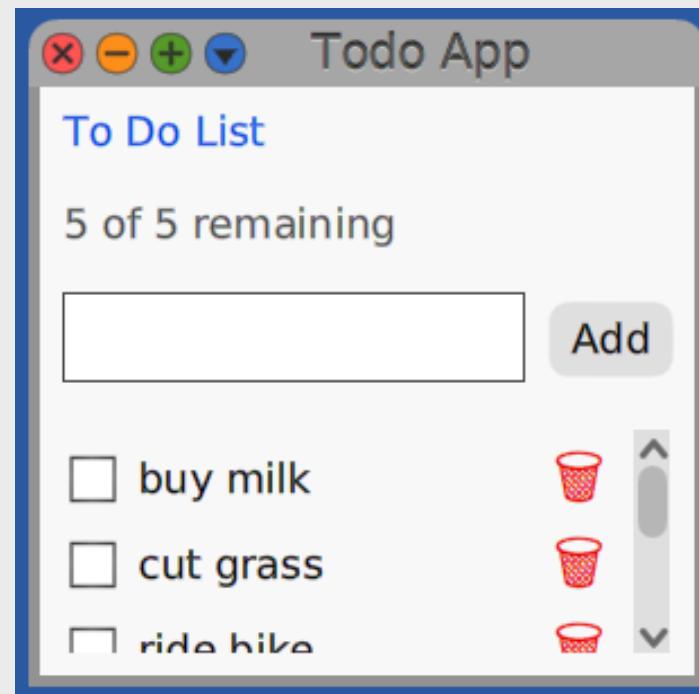
- In the Workspace, enter “g” (variable name)
- Press cmd-i to “Inspect it”
- Press cmd-l to “Explore it”
- In the bottom pane of either window, enter self message asUppercase
- Press cmd-p to “Print it”

DEMO #4

- Open a “Message Names” window
- Enter “`at:put:`”
- Select “`Dictionary at:put:`”
- Study signature, method comment, and method body
 - `findElementOrNil` is implemented in `Set` which is the superclass of `Dictionary`
 - `ifNil:ifNotNil:` is implemented in `ProtoObject` which is the superclass of `Object` which is a superclass of every class

Todo App

- Demonstrate app in Cuis
- Walk through code in Cuis



Resources

- **Smalltalk Wikipedia page**
 - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smalltalk>
- **Cuis Smalltalk**
 - <https://cuis.st/>
- **Pharo Smalltalk**
 - <https://pharo.org/>
- **Squeak Smalltalk**
 - <https://squeak.org/>
- **Byte Magazine issue on Smalltalk**
 - <https://archive.org/details/byte-magazine-1981-08>



Wrap Up

- For me, Smalltalk has the most elegant syntax of any programming language
- Even if choose not to use Smalltalk, there are many ideas from it that can be applied to other programming languages
 - especially in its development environment
- Todo App code at
<https://github.com/mvolkmann/Cuis-Smalltalk-TodoApp>

