

During the Fall 2016 course, Introduction to Computation, students were asked to read the introduction to *When the Machine Made Art, the Troubled History of Computer Art* by Grant D. Taylor and reduce this essay to 10 sentences by excerpting the text.

Brian Oakes' Version:

For the present generation of artists, the computer, or more appropriately, the laptop, is one in an array of integrated, portable digital technologies that link their social and working life. [For computer art] there is no scandalous artwork like Édouard Manet's *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1862–3), a painting that raised the ire of the French Academy and insulted public sensibilities, in the computer art movement. Likewise, no computer artwork has ever evoked the same sense of radical dislocation or bewilderment that met Pablo Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)* (1907). Yet, if we collect all the denigrating judgments of computer art, we find that they rival those of, if not exceed, all previous art movements. Computer art, with its interdisciplinary nature, had an even wider audience beyond that of science and technology. Computer art has never been deprived of an audience. Almost any artistic endeavor associated with early computing elicited a negative, fearful, or indifferent response. "Most of us do not even want a machine of any kind to succeed in conceiving any art form at all. The arts are usually presented as our last refuge from the onslaughts of our whole machine civilization with its attendant pressures towards squeezing us into the straitjacket of the organized man." Edward Shanken, a key art historian in the field, rightly points out that there is no clearly defined method for "analyzing the role of science and technology in the history of art." Bruce Wands asserts, [computers] are so "firmly established" in "our daily lives" that their effect is profound at all levels of contemporary society. Another problem confronting researchers of computer art is initially defining which computer art form is under consideration. In contrast to traditional tools, which retained their form and function for hundreds of years, the computer has changed dramatically in a short space of time. To understand the criticism of computer art, we are required to illuminate those emerging theories, methods, and themes that provide the life force of computer art. These include cybernetics, information theory, artificial intelligence, artificial life, and the science of complexity, among others. As will be shown in later chapters, the interaction of these discourses within the fields of science and art causes contradiction and instability within the computer art movement. Yet, it is these theories, poorly understood by mainstream art critics, which provide theoretical depth to computer art. Computer art was both traditional, using the frame and established inks and grounds, and, by means of digital generation, new. For the humanist, the artificial methodologies of computer-generated art alienated the human from the art experience. Computer art seemed a deliberate denial of human feelings of wonder. The Cold War period saw the popularization of dystopian theories that posited technology as inherently predisposed toward domination. "man versus machine." The appearance of the artist brought new humanistic tendencies to the once impenetrably cool and utilitarian computer art form.

Cameron Kucera's Version:

Consequently, if we stratify computer art's discursive space, we find that its reception and criticism is multi layered, with responses and reactions emanating from the mainstream art world; the fields of

science and technology; the new creative space that emerged between art, science, and technology; and the larger public realm. In general, artists from the mainstream held a common disdain for computer art shows, seeing them as “science fiction grotesqueries masquerading as art.” For many, it is hard to reconcile the fact that the digital computer, perhaps the greatest and most impactful invention of the twentieth century and a technology that fundamentally changed the economic and cultural fabric of the globe, is continually omitted from the history of art. Equally, the historian was faced with the difficulty of mapping these rapidly transforming and ever-expanding digital forms. This is perhaps why art historians have traditionally preferred subjects that evolved at a manageable pace. Shaped by military prerogatives and scientific ideals, computer art grew against the grain of fine art practices and its established traditions. Beyond making the abstract visible, there is a prolonged attempt to submit art to the powers of mathematics—to, in effect, demystify art. The scientists and technologists found in the computer the possibility of a fully mechanized art, or, as Franke put it, the final “delegation of the aesthetic-creative processes to machines.” The appearance of the artist brought new humanistic tendencies to the once impenetrably cool and utilitarian computer art form. The nascent artist-programmer paradigm shifts the emphasis away from mathematically inspired abstraction toward such traditional fine art genres as landscape and self-portraiture. So, in a complete turnaround from previous criticism by both humanists and antihumanists, the computer was increasingly perceived as a technology of rupture rather than an embodiment of the Enlightenment vision. Postmodernists tended to align computer technology with the history of photographic technology. Viewed through the new photographic digitalizing software, computer art became increasingly photogenic. Postmodernist critics also attacked the discourse of computer art for being apolitical and inherently conservative.

Christina Johnston’s Version:

Pairing the noun “computer” with “art” has in effect built a label with an unending fission, a precarious reaction from joining two seemingly incompatible and oppositional worlds. The first critics described computer art as bleak and soulless and bemoaned the arrival of this strange and powerful machine in art. An examination of its history shows a dizzying array of ideologies impacting and informing computer art. Within this discursive terrain, competing dogma between art and science shape and construct its reception and criticism. Born into a culture war, computer art becomes a site of contestation, a kind of pawn in a battle for cultural supremacy. I argue that computer art encapsulates much of the technocratic vision and the scientific pragmatism of the post-war period. Computer art, governed by technical utility and conceived through the logical philosophies of Western science and technology, is found to be largely underpinned by what many perceived as the rising cult of science. The reception, a type of anti-computer dogmatism, was more emotive than critical. In the last decade, however, the perception of early computer art has evolved. After a period of mistrust concerning computers, artists began feeling a new sense of ease around the computer, which, through its ubiquitousness and expanding role, would clearly play a significant part in modern life, and thus in art.

Daniel Stone’s Version:

Computer art was initially rejected by art critics because of its perceived lack of any human element. Critics feared the use of the computer and the harm that it could bring the artistic community. The computer, supposedly, was not capable of poetry. However, in recent years the role of the computer as a tool in creating music, animation, and visual arts had been greatly reevaluated, in part because

of the narrative of adversity in computer art and the resistance by the artists towards hostility and rejection. While the advents and innovations in computational technology occurred over the course of several decades, advancements in computers were not initially viewed as relevant in discourse surrounding the making of art. Despite varied reactions from critics and the public, overall response to digital art was incredibly diverse, as it reached out to a wide-range of scientific and artistic disciplines. Computer art became part of the greater social sphere in part because of the public's fascination in emergent digital technologies. Computer art was initially difficult for many to accept because of the rapid evolution of digital tools and the wide array of ideologies that have influenced and informed computer art. With advances constantly arising and diversifying in digital technology, the world of computer art quickly became incredibly complex and intricate. While taking on many conventions of traditional art practices, such as framing, structure, and composition, computer art grew against the grain of traditional conventions and became a unique mode of expression and representation.

Ingrid Nelson's Version:

The negative associations that “cling”—to use Lopes' description—to computer art give us some clue to the deeper undercurrent of misgiving. As Douglas Kahn, a leading theorist of early digital music, rightly points out, when we speak of early computer art, it is often branded as “bad art.” As the computer became the new experimental medium, it was employed within a constellation of practices, including visual arts, film, choreography, literature, and music. The term “computer art” has over time denoted different artistic practices. No technology has ever unfurled its potential as swiftly as computers. In contrast to traditional tools, which retained their form and function for hundreds of years, the computer has changed dramatically in a short space of time. Apart from having no national heritage, there was no centralized location or organizing body that could devise a coherent corpus of belief, in contrast to the myriad of other twentieth-century art movements that achieved this through a type of geographically linked metropolitanism. When the Machine Made Art computer art practitioners to formally organize themselves socially and politically around a central idea. The personal computer, with its new user-friendly interface of windows, icons, and later the mouse and pointer systems, revolutionized computing and brought a raft of potential applications.

Jeff Yinong Tao's Version:

The term, computer art, remained problematized and contested throughout its entire history. Computer art rarely represent judicial appraisals, that detached and objective perspective we believe formal criticism requires. Computer art has aroused the kind of extreme resentment that characterized many of the idolatry controversies scattered through the history of art. Computer art has a fragmented and often capricious history. The expanding nature and convergence of digital technology have meant that computer art is essentially a diffuse practice. Within this discursive terrain, competing dogma between art and science shape and construct its reception and criticism. Computer art seemed a deliberate denial of human feelings of wonder and mystery through the cold calculation of instrumental rationality. The other factor that illustrates the trend toward the abstract sciences and that made computer art diverge considerably from the traditions of fine art is the desire for the mathematization of art. The ever-evolving nature of computer technology defied any singular conceptualization. So, in a complete turnaround from previous criticism by both humanists and anti-humanists, the computer was increasingly perceived as a technology of rupture rather than an embodiment of the Enlightenment vision.

Jonathan Melendez Davidson's Version:

1. Digital Art: at this point what does that mean.
2. Computer Art has a broader audience than actual art
3. Computer art was a bore (aesthetically speaking to curators)
4. Where and How does a museum store 'digital' works?
5. What are the physical dimensions of computer art (just a thought)
6. Oh wait, contemporarily it's accepted as art?
7. Are the beaux arts afraid of Utopias?
8. What's the economic value of computer art
9. Computer art over time has changed through its relation to culture or the lack of culture
10. Ultimately humans ruined computer art

Kevin Crouse's Version:

Pairing the noun “computer” with “art” has in effect built a label with an unending fission, a precarious reaction from joining two seemingly incompatible and oppositional worlds. The term [computer art], unlike those within the narratives of modern art that were coined by a disparaging critic and later accepted by the art establishment (“Impressionist” and “Cubist” come to mind), has remained problematized and contested throughout its entire history. For many, it is hard to reconcile the fact that the digital computer, perhaps the greatest and most impactful invention of the twentieth century and a technology that fundamentally changed the economic and cultural fabric of the globe, is continually omitted from the history of art. Apart from having no national heritage, there was no centralized location or organizing body that could devise a coherent corpus of belief, in contrast to the myriad of other twentieth-century art movements that achieved this through a type of geographically linked metropolitanism. Computer art, governed by technical utility and conceived through the logical philosophies of Western science and technology, is found to be largely underpinned by what many perceived as the rising cult of science. Combining the strong anthropomorphic ideals of Renaissance humanism with the eighteenth-century traditions of romantic protestation against the machine, this humanist reaction sought to admonish computer art for its dehumanizing and hyper-rationalizing tendencies. Beyond deciphering the mysteries of art, the technologists and mathematicians believed it was possible, through programmed aesthetic and stylistic rules, to automate aesthetic production and “program the beautiful,” as Max Bense famously phrased it. After a period of mistrust concerning computers, artists began feeling a new sense of ease around the computer, which, through its ubiquitousness and expanding role, would clearly play a significant part in modern life, and thus in art. So began the rhetorical debate that centered on the mind/body dualism in which one group privileged the analytical and cerebral while the other valued traditional artistic standards such as intuition, craft, and manual dexterity. A new focus, one deprived of old prejudices, has begun the process of reevaluating these computer-generated artworks, finding them to be acutely important to the history of art.

Meredith Barone's Version:

For the present generation of artists, the computer, or more appropriately, the laptop, is one in an array of integrated, portable digital technologies that link their social and working life. For many artists of the period, the term both embodies a sense of rejection and reveals the essential contradiction in the art form itself. Pairing the noun “computer” with “art” has in effect built a label

with an unending fission, a precarious reaction from joining two seemingly incompatible and oppositional worlds. Yet the nature of computer art's criticism is complex and multileveled, often reflecting modes of traditional art criticism and at the same time being entirely divorced from it. In addition, many of those who wrote on computer art were performing multiple functions: the art historian who organized historical facts and brought clarity to context, the critic who examined the value of the work, and the advocate who generated popular excitement. Conversely, computer art, with its interdisciplinary nature, had an even wider audience beyond that of science and technology. Computer art was part of the greater social sphere, driven in large part by the general public's interest in the future of this emergent technology. Computer art has never been deprived of an audience. Because it emerged from the abstract sciences, the computer art form was viewed by many as an anachronistic project—akin to the early modernist fascination with pure science. For many, it is hard to reconcile the fact that the digital computer, perhaps the greatest and most impactful invention of the twentieth century and a technology that fundamentally changed the economic and cultural fabric of the globe, is continually omitted from the history of art.

Wudi Hong's Version:

For art students in this generation, they regard computation technology as a multi-disciplined platform not a singular technology. Computer artist become rare to see while the size of digital device reducing a lot. Some people still defend the term of digital art. The reception and criticism is multi layered in art, science and technology. Same as the music made by computer, 20th century art are dehumanized and mechanical, but computer poetry seems better than those. Jeanne Beaman thinks arts are the last refuge from machine civilization. Computation art was another type of the vulgarization (俗化) of science. Computation artist was attacked by fellow artist. And the negation was more enduring than modern art. The market for digital art occurred gradually. Digital art's history was lamentably omitted from the history of art. Computer art's history is unorthodox. In the history of computer art, artists always focus on morphology and tempo of digitalization. The first exhibition of computer art received negative response. The influence of postmodernism provided a foundation of digital art.

Samantha Xia's Version:

However, computer art is not yet that historical artifact, a fossil from which a new species of technologies can be said to have evolved. Pairing the noun "computer" with "art" has in effect built a label with an unending fission, a precarious reaction from joining two seemingly incompatible and oppositional worlds. Consequently, if we stratify computer art's discursive space, we understand that its reception and criticism is multi layered, with responses and reactions emanating from the mainstream art world; the fields of science and technology; the new creative space that emerged between art, science, and technology; and the larger public realm. The negative criticism lasted the entire duration of the movement, and computer art never found the widespread critical and cultural acceptance that modern art received. Indeed, computer art, which was long considered "non-art" by traditionalists well into the 1990s, is now generally accepted as art. Computer art has a fragmented and often capricious history. Digital arts have remained difficult to assimilate into traditional art historiography. Moreover, computer art's idiosyncratic traits, such as its devotion to mathematics and its adoration of the machine, meant it was orientated more toward the unfamiliar philosophies of technoscience. Part from analyzing the general ambivalence surrounding computer art, the chapter concludes by demonstrating the increasing de-rationalization of the computer art object and

the move away from the idealization of mathematics as the normative aesthetic and theoretical paradigm. So, in a complete turnaround from previous criticism by both humanists and anti-humanists, the computer was increasingly perceived as a technology of rupture rather than an embodiment of the Enlightenment vision.

Yun Chu (Iris) King's Version:

As much as culture and technological, the computer was an unique historical artifact. However, not like the common fact we know nowadays, when computer art debuted on the world art performance stage, it was maligned from not only art but also science field. Computer art like a child born to loveless parents and struggling for a long time to wait a chance to bloom on the world stage. Until the personal computer released out with its user-friendly interface of windows, icons, and later easy to use the mouse and pointer systems, and these factors revolutionized computing and brought a lot of potential applications and opportunities to whom or industries want to join the computer art alignment, such as industrial design, entertainment and event drawing softwares we used to learn today. Due to a bunch of commercial softwares have been released, everyone is able to obtain a chance to join computer art and computer art itself can keep effectively blooming in this century.