Concepts Notation Software Art

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Software in the Arts

- Current Problem: The “Black Box” Syndrome.
- Recognition of “aisthesis” but not “poeisis”
- “If one defines as a medium something that it is between a sender and a receiver, then computers are not only media, but also senders and receivers which themselves are capable of writing and reading, interpreting and composing messages within the limitations of the rule sets inscribed into them”
A Crash Course in Programming

• Uses the process of creating a Dada-ist poem as an example in computer programming and shows an example in Perl
• Two major points in this example
  – The act of writing, programming, is equivalent to the act of doing, authoring ("Computer programming collapses, as it seems, the second and third of the three steps of concept, concept notation and execution")
  – Software cannot be taken for granted ("Although one can of course use computers without programming them, it is impossible not to use programs at all; the question only is who programs")
(Some Reflections So Far)

• A Question of Authorship: if all computer art is built off someone else’s programming, can one program be “fully authored” by one person?
• To what extent is the text also the code?
  – John Cage’s “Roaratorio”
• The opposite of “Black Box” syndrome: obfuscated code
  – [http://www0.us.ioccc.org/main.html](http://www0.us.ioccc.org/main.html)
  – For Example, this one line is an extremely complex way of saying “Hello World”
  • main(v,c)char**c;{for(v[c++]="Hello, world!\n");(!c)[*c]&&(!--|| c&&execvp(*c,*c[!!c]+!!c,!*c));**c=!c)write(!**c,*c,!!*c);
Executable Code in (or as) Art

• Code can exist mentally, or outside of hardware
  – Programming Books
  – Tristan Tzara’s DIY Dada poems

• The constructive process == art
Concept Art and Software Art

• Concept Art: art where the concept vs an artifact takes focus.
• “Since ‘concepts’ are closely bound up with language, concept art is a kind of art of which the material is language”
• La Monte Young’s “Composition 1961”
Conclusion

- Trying to avoid a definition of software art as “simple, elegant code” or as a completely cultural understanding of software (versus the understanding of software itself)
- Artistic value of software art lies in the property of language being executable, and concepts being the medium of the art, not necessarily the computer.