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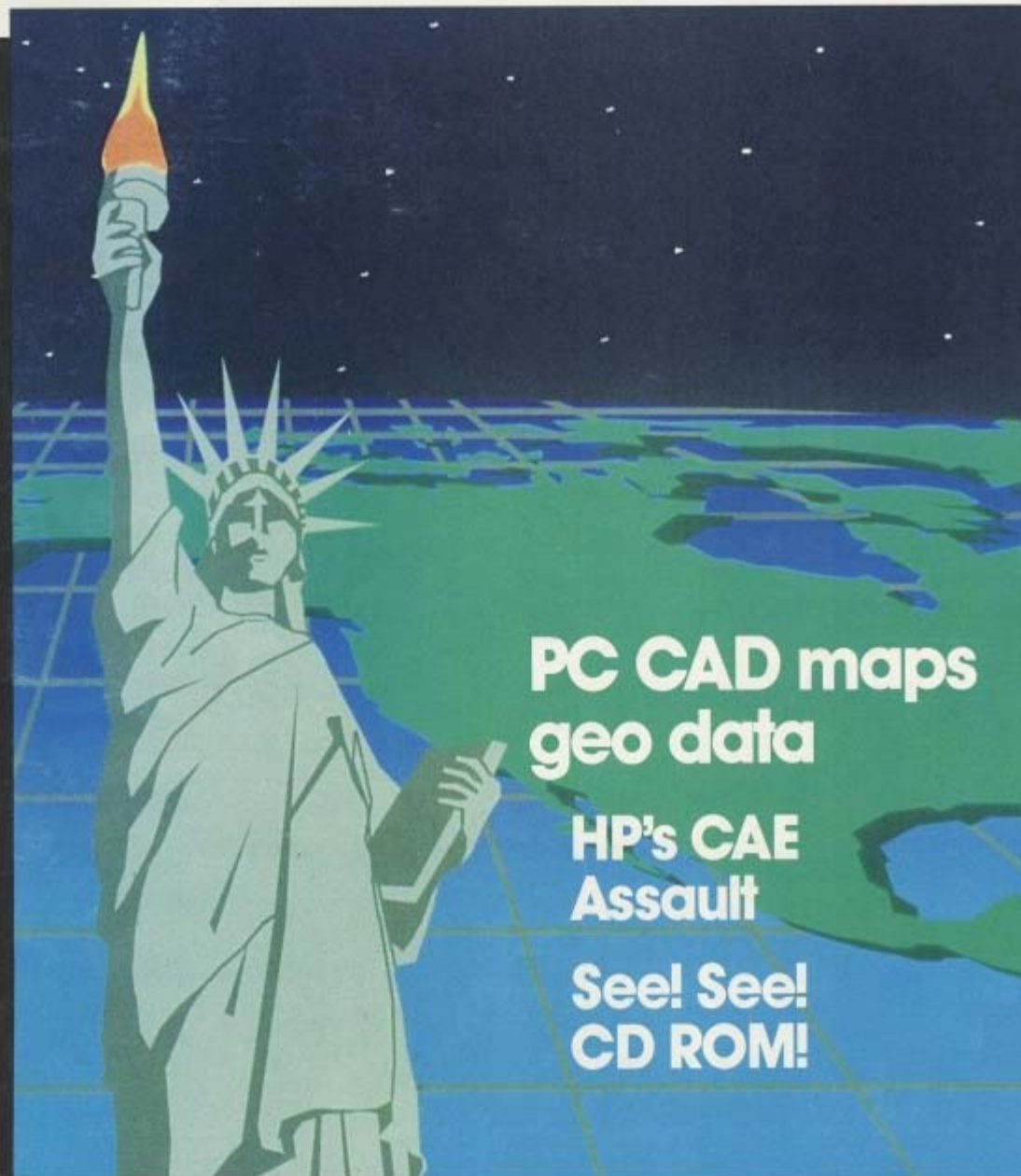
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COMPUTER GRAPHICS WORLD



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more akin to
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GRAPHICS
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The First Picture Show

By Arielle Emmett

Sporting Cibachrome prints, pixel-rich birds of paradise, computer-imaged ceramic tile patterns, and Macintosh-created still lifes, the walls of the Hurlbutt Gallery are a composition unto themselves at a forum of computer artists in Greenwich, Connecticut.

"The Computer as an Art Tool" brings together works of 15 of the country's leading computer artists, seven of the artists themselves, and 40-odd of the Greenwich curious to discuss computers, art, and, most important, computer art.

Reviewer Pans Art

We will learn tomorrow that the *New York Times* isn't impressed. "There is great but frustrating irony," critic William Zimmer will write, "in employing sophisticated tools to come up with banal results." Such aesthetic judgments aside, today's dialogue gives rise to plaudits as well as censure.

Virtually all the attending artists suggest that an adequate vocabulary to describe computer art hasn't been invented. All agree that output devices for computer art still leave much to be desired. But the artists have plenty to say of interest to product developers looking to serve the fine art market and to colleagues interested in how computers can and can't be used in art.

Starting out was like "falling into a black hole," says Roy Blomster. "I called it 'ugly art.' Today it's 'what-you-see-is-what-you-get,'

Arielle Emmett is CGW East Coast senior editor.

On the Panel

Seven computer artists, listed below, took part in the public forum held in conjunction with the exhibit titled "The Computer as an Art Tool," at the Hurlbutt Gallery, Greenwich, Connecticut. Others whose works were shown include Jeremy Gardiner, Isaac Kerlow, Hareesh Lalvani, Eli Lapid, Margot Lovejoy, Peter Max, Manfred Mohr, Micha Riss, Lillian Schwartz, and Mark Wilson.

•Roy Blomster, a Greenwich High School art teacher who does much of his work on an Apple IIe.

•Darcy Gerbarg, moderator of the panel and a widely recognized artist who is currently the director of the MFA program in computer art at the School of Visual Arts (New York).

•Louie Grenier, a teacher and director of special projects at the Center for Media Arts (New York).

•Mark Halliday, a recent graduate of Dartmouth College who works in electronic music as well as images.

•Carole McCauley, an editor and author of *Computers and Creativity*, who is particularly interested in literary applications.

•Jerry McDaniel, a professor at the Fashion Institute of Technology (New York) and MA candidate at New York Institute of Technology.

•Robert Moran, a professional artist who has studied at Parsons School of Design (New York), School of Visual Arts (New York), and Berklee College of Music (Boston).

only the images are blown up from the screen.

"The thing that frustrates me is that I spent so much time learning programming. But in the future, any teacher can teach computer art and graphics because software is available.

"What I draw with a Koala pad and a stylus comes out as a still life on the screen. I use software that allows me to take sections of the drawing, blow them up, and clean them up. Then I put a piece of tinted glass over the picture because I'm not satisfied with its appearance on paper."

Such manipulation of computer art isn't unique. "I work in both video and hard copy," begins Robert Moran. "In hard copy, I

work in both 2D and 3D imaging systems. I transfer the images to large Cibachrome transparencies, then I embed them in plexiglass constructions. And they're edge-lit. The building process is complicated and time-consuming.

"In video applications, I do the same kind of thing, but I do it with an electronic laminating process, where I work with switchers, video, 2D paint systems, and the like. I laminate the pieces together and choreograph them to music."

Output limitations seem to bother the artists most and may partly explain the motivation for manual manipulation. Says Jerry McDaniel, "One of the problems I think all of us find with computers is, once you create something on the

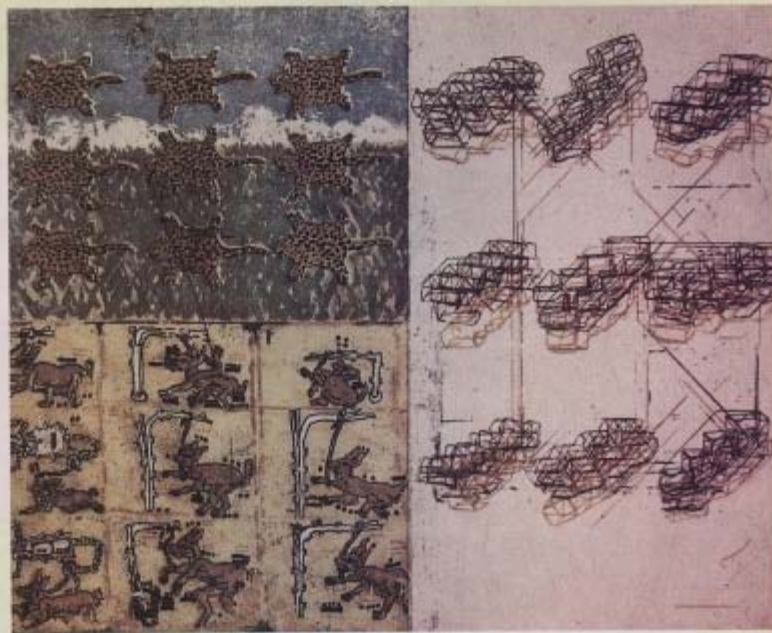


Image by Isaac Kariow

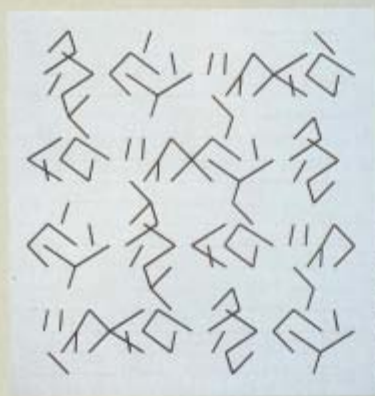


Image by Manfred Mohr



Image by Darcy Gerborg



Image by Jerry McDaniel

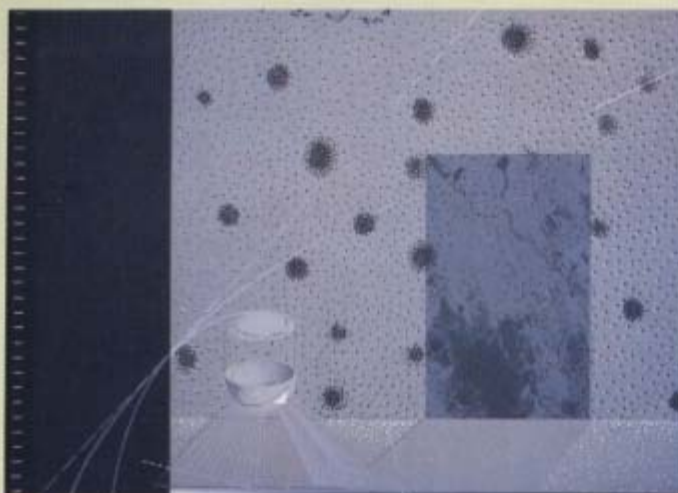


image by Margot Lowrey



image by Michel Bea

computer, how do you get it out? Fundamentally, I'm an abstract painter, although the things I show on the computer are objective in my mind. The generation loss as the art comes out [of the computer] is so poor that you don't really get a whole lot out of it."

Artistic Solutions

McDaniel has found a partial solution. "The system I use has something called 'Big Paint,' which enables you to take 512 by 485—I think that's the resolution—and multiply it by 16. The image gets harder to work with because you have to break up the screen in eight parts, but it just gets finer and finer until it's almost realistic."

Moderator Darcy Gerbarg's experience attests to artistic bafflement with the computer: "I didn't make paintings for about seven years because I was distracted by the computer. A lot of artists get very excited and start to imagine all kinds of things that may be possible.

"The truth is that there are actually a lot of limitations that you may not run into at first.

"There are all kinds of plotters and printers that will produce, on paper and in various sizes, an image in black-and-white or a reasonable number of colors, but not reasonable enough to make it

really wonderful art very often." After avoiding the computer for several years, however, Gerbarg says that "the ability to create the image itself in a non-physical medium is so powerful and tuned to my sensibilities that I continue to use my system to do the initial imaging. It allows me to explore color aspects in a more interesting way than when I used pigment."

Stream of Imagery

"What I like," says Louie Grenier, "is that you can change some elements and designs very quickly. There's a certain kind of flow; you can keep going.

"What's missing," says Grenier, "is texture; you can't achieve or come close to what's in painting."

Should an artist even try, though? Or should computer art be viewed as a new medium altogether?

"In the beginning," says Carole McCauley, "the reaction I got from artists was total fear and terror. They'd say, 'You're going to replace me with that?' I'd get smiles from computer programmers—they just didn't take the art seriously. Only within the past two years am I getting anything I'd describe as sincere interest or appreciation. This is thanks to the personal computer—it's made everyone more aware of computer art."

"It's just another tool," says Moran. "If you're a decent artist, you're going to produce decent work. If you're a lousy artist, you're going to produce lousy art. The amount of bad work coming out of computers for the next 20 or 30 years is going to be astronomical."

"I don't believe this medium is going to replace all other media," says Gerbarg. "I think that young people find this technology exciting and interesting. How many of them continue to use this tool rather than something else—I don't think that's clear."

"The computer is really a new tube of paint," says McDaniel. "I remember when Grumbacher dumped a whole new kind of paint on us. The first tubes of acrylic paint dried before you could get the paint out; they were horrible, horrible. The computer is a little beyond that.

"Still, what you bring to it has to be something intelligent. You can't be a clod." **CGW**