

TEACHING COMPUTER ART WITH THE MICROCOMPUTER

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The computer has introduced a new medium into the field of art. Historically, art has both preceded and succeeded technological developments. The computer has intrigued technicians to experiment with art and artists to experiment with the computer.

We can imagine the artists of the future sitting in front of a computer screen verbally instructing the computer, e.g., "A horizontal brush stroke in the upper left corner . . . not so blue . . . a shorter stroke . . . a little wider." The artist would in fact tell the machine to do what he subconsciously would tell his hand to do.

The course I teach at Marist College differentiates between computer graphics and computer art. It stresses the personal microcomputer, in short, machines that the student can afford as opposed to the more expensive minis or mainframes.

The course is geared to the non-science major, students who generally have little interest in the computer. I seldom use word programming software and for the most part my students do not use packaged programs. The students learn how the computer operates and how a picture is formed. They examine each instruction individually, working with that instruction until they are comfortable with it.

Students start by learning how to put a colored point any place on the screen. Then they learn how to develop a series of points, a line, a curve, etc., and the process of filling a form with color and producing a texture. From there students move forward to animation and the use of mathematics to relieve the tedium of creating forms and shapes. Advanced students may wish to experiment with fractals.

Most students become so engrossed in the images they create that they begin to enjoy working with the microcomputer and learning advanced computer art techniques. One of the biggest surprises teaching the course was seeing the impressive individuality of the art work submitted. My completed paper will contain further discussion of technique, classroom pedagogy, and results.