THE MANIFESTO OF COMPUTER ART

I.

Computer Art does not yet exist.

This is exactly why we have to write, talk, and think about it, to call it into being.

The computer was not invented for us, artists.

The computer was made for military purposes, then it served and continues to serve scientific purposes, and when a flicker of hope for artistic use appeared for the first time, it fell prey straight away to advertising and commercial filmmaking.

In order to create art with the computer, we have to cast off all clichés of present commercial forms.

The computer is just a tool. We are heading down the wrong path if we want to use it to conceal the lack of vigour in our message under a more fascinating guise.

If we just use it to make our work easier, we are giving in to our innate idleness.

We have to be fully aware of ourselves and of the world around us to be able to use this device well.

People say the computer will transform the world. They say this in the same way that they proclaimed it about radio and television; as if communicating even huger masses of information in ever quicker transactions could only be a positive line of development.

In reality, though, the computer can be one of the most effective means to increase the danger of war, the stress on mankind. It is also a means for further manipulations in the mass media.

The computer is a typical example of an instrument Man has created and now does not know how to use.

We have to face up to the fact that the computer will by no means change Man, the decisive unit of our world.

We can make another go at the eternal subject, perhaps shooting the film from a slightly different angle.

Taking a picture of an old model with this new device might bring to light some details never seen before, and those already familiar might be put into a new perspective.

We can only produce new visual relics of similar quality to the old with this new device, however, when we are aware of the possibilities.

If we approach the computer with our old way of thinking, grounded in old means and devices, we will be knocking our heads against brick walls and miss a magnificent opportunity to create a new world.

Establishing new quality is much more vital – at least from an artistic point of view – than turning out works of the traditional kind a hundred times faster than before.

Computer-based art has not really been figured out yet. Let's figure it out for ourselves.

The traditional art trade, criticism and art history have not yet built walls around this kind of art. It is in our hands how we will shape their future relations.

(The task of sensible criticism would be to assess works of computer-based art by the standard of art. Artistic quality should be the decisive factor, and not the level of "computer-made".)

There have not yet been bids on these pictures at auction. We should recognise that transforming these artworks into marketable goods is not the highest objective.

Censors' attention has not yet been so clearly focused on these works of art. Why should we then be our own censors? Why should we build barriers in our own minds?

The right form for exhibiting computer-based art has not been determined yet. The solution to this also lies in our own hands.

II.

Why should we think that better equipment will make better works? Good equipment is by all means justified, but is only secondary to the force and clarity of concept.

The computer can become a new means to understand the world. Long forgotten knowledge about geometry, mathematics, logic and about the thousandfold forms of reality might once again come to light.

Science and art can be joined again.

We may lose the unique irreproducible gesture of the artist, but we will gain a new way of thinking. Perhaps we will recognise that the stroke of the artist might not even be of such importance, and that works of art have always shone through with their content.

We can become aware of the workings of hidden mechanisms. Using a drawing programme, I can become conscious of the subconscious processes which direct my hand when painting.

Imposed limitations, such as picture resolution and colour, can inspire innovation. These limitations can help us to recognise what advantages brevity of expression can have, how few elements can be used to construct the visual, and what simple means are enough to make a picture.

III.

Working with the computer can be a pleasure. It is an extremely interesting invention: a source of experiences which could never be accomplished through any other means.

When we have made a three-dimensional model on the computer, we have had a share of an experience so far unknown to the human mind: we can create a statue while sitting in

front of a two dimensional screen, a statue which extends in all dimensions in space, has a surface, has mass, colour, is capable of absorbing and reflecting light, i.e., it is therefore a real statue in every sense; it is just that according to traditional notions, it does not exist. Thus, we might then wake up to the fact that if we have ventured so far into a new world, then clinging to traditional notions will be nothing but pedantry.

Whereas a video and a film projector can only be played forwards or backwards, frames of films stored in the memory of a computer can be projected in a random order; if you like, a computer can run not only forwards and backwards, but also sideways, downwards and upwards. No other device has ever been capable of this up till now. Let us not pass by this new three-dimensional forrn of projection method, but take full advantage of this new possibility.

The new means of projection alters the dramaturgy.

Traditional film music is transformed from its very foundation.

The relationship between the artist and the viewer has to be newly shaped as soon as we turn away from a simple plot with a single thread.

Movement on the computer has no beginning and no end. There is no filmstrip, no celluloid or metal tape of measurable length. Why should we then cling to conventions dragged along by the limitations of the filmstrip and the videotape?

IV.

Let's establish a much better relationship with programmers. Because they become our co-authors even when we buy programs ready-made, and our work will bear their mark as well.

Programmers develop software for us, the users, to use. Unless we know the capacities of the computer, we cannot sufficiently formulate our needs. Unless we sufficiently formulate our needs, we will receive nothing but traditional replies, programs that mimic the usual logic.

Electronic brushes will then follow in the footsteps of traditional brushes, instead of seeking out their own special forms.

Electronic filmmaking will then mimic traditional filmmaking, although we have seen the new paths, yet undiscovered.

We should not let customary programs force us to make customary films.

V.

Only in very few works made with computers can you feel presently the artist's desire to conquer a new world, the desire to create a new kind of recording with a new medium, and to be enriched by it.

We could even take as an example computer graphics made for purely scientific purposes: the motive is obvious, the demand for clarity of thought compels the scientist to create a simple and precise formulation of his ideas. But our aim is not science, but creation.

The responsibility of artists is the responsibility of those who create signs: the signs we leave behind will inform people of the coming centuries how we lived and what we thought.

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