

## **Electronic Art - Contemporary Art**

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It seems that art is in a bad way. Some even say art is dead. At the same moment electronic art is developing and already generating its own academicisms, schools and plagiarists of all kinds. Electronic art, so it would seem, might therefore not belong to Contemporary Art. Some of its characteristics do as a matter of fact differentiate it fundamentally from a Western art that has been dominant until now.

### ***Popular art - High culture***

In electronic art there is a remarkable permeability between popular culture and learned culture. Recent works are directly inspired by the aesthetics of video games. This is the case as well with many CD ROMs but also with some installations which employ interfaces, situations or settings borrowed from these games. At the same time, videos and TV shows incorporate elements drawn from high culture and experimental art.

### ***Disappearance of the artist and the collective work***

In the 20th century the Artist has become an established figure. Though electronic art seems to question this status, this is less due to any supposed "death" than to his/her being gradually eclipsed by the work of art itself. And the most striking change does not consist in the artwork no longer existing as a unique object but rather in its having lost its unicity. With the two exceptions of computer graphics and hologrammes, the work "produced" by the artist and that seen/experimented with by the public are no longer the same "object". The "work of art" has become a whole comprising three distinct components: the concept created by the artist (created work); the physical system which results from it (perceptible work), which can be material or immaterial and realised by the artist on his/her own or in collaboration with other people, or else by other persons than the artist; the system acted upon by the public (perceived work) which overlaps with the other two dimensions only in part, according to the complexity of the created work, the degree of autonomy given to the public as agent, the public's culture and its ability to explore the perceptible work, etc.

It is within this context that the debate on the collective work has appeared (and gained particular prominence since the explosion of the Net), the main issue being the prospect of the artist-creator disappearing to the advantage of an emergent collective creation. In this case what we could in fact be

witnessing is the telescoping of the now dominant perceptible and perceived works into a "work acted upon".

***Public art - Private art: from art for every one to art for each person***

In the 20th century art for all with its museums and art centres has become an institution. Whoever the financier (government bodies, companies or patrons), the ideology has remained identical: art and culture must be accessible to all and our duty lies in building appropriate temples where the good people can gather together in communion with art.

From this point of view, electronic art contains an interesting contrast: on one hand, ever "heavier" installations continue to involve costly machines, specialised maintenance, and sizeable exhibition spaces and budgets; on the other, parallel to this "public art", a "private art", to be consulted at home, is gaining ground, be it in the form of works on floppy discs (all the trends in computer-generated literature and poetry), on CD ROM or via the Net. Art for each of us constitutes a fundamental break in the history of art, which can be compared with the impact of printing or, later, of the paperback on culture and thought. What's more, thanks to electronic networks and despite its being centred on the individual, this art can also become a collective art.

Reflecting a world order in the throes of de-structuration/re-composition, electronic art is a field of contrasts and apparent paradoxes, where trends towards institutionalisation and a deep questioning of established orders coexist. In this sense, more than being contemporary art, it is an art of the now, a living art.