DESMA 2: Social Software Studio — Art & AI

Broad Art Center, Remote
Monday–Friday, 10am–1pm and 2–5pm

This course explores the past, present, and future of how artists engage with digital media through its remix and adaptation of increasingly more automated algorithms. Starting from early collage and montage practices, we'll explore how artists have used cultural fragments as their medium to explore meaning through juxtaposition and appropriation. We will then turn towards how computational methods enabled artists to explore such practices in increasingly surprisingly fidelity and magnitudes of data, leading to new aesthetics but also new questions surrounding its process and the underlying data. Finally we'll speculate on the future of culture and machine learning in order to ask "Where is it all going?" Throughout, we will also extend the discussion into topics such as perception, augmentation, deep fakes, surveillance, privacy, and automation.

Assignments

This class is built around three exercises and a final project. Each exercise has an in-class workshop and a discussion about your finished exercise on the day that it's due.

Evaluation

Grading is based on the Exercises and active engagement. Focus, articulation of ideas, keeping up with the work and assignments, and contribution to class discussions are all part of class engagement. All work will be evaluated based on (1) the fundamental idea you develop and (2) the craft, meaning the details of the images, motion, and interaction.

The numeric breakdown for all assignments follow:

15% — Exercise 1
15% — Exercise 2
15% — Exercise 3
35% — Final Project
20% — Engagement

I have the strong expectation that you will join for each class and workshop session. If something happens and you can't join the class, please email me. If you feel frustrated or you come across other problems, please communicate with me directly and quickly.

Commitment To Equity And Diversity

We understand the classroom as a space for practicing freedom; where one may challenge psychic, social, and cultural borders and create meaningful artistic expressions. To do so we

must acknowledge and embrace the different identities and backgrounds we inhabit. A collaborative effort between the students and the teacher is needed for creating a supportive learning environment. While everyone should feel free to experiment creatively and conceptually, if a class member points out that something you have said or shared with the group is offensive, avoid being defensive; instead approach the discussion as an opportunity for everyone to grow and learn from one another. All class members are encouraged to discuss such instances with me so they can be addressed with greater care in the future.

Exercise 1 — Generative Text

Explore the use of text generation tools presented in class. Create many experiments that show the wide range possibilities. Edit your text to 200 words and write a response. The presentation format is open to student preference, but should be limited to 3-5 minutes.

Exercise 2 — Generative Images

Explore the use of image generation tools presented in class. What kinds of images are you most interested in creating? Does AI create some kinds of images better than others? Explore and be ready to discuss. Generate many images and narrow down to a final selection. The presentation format is open to student preference, but should be limited to 3-5 minutes.

Exercise 3 — Generative Video

Explore the use of video/animation/moving image generation tools presented in class. Create videos, artworks, etc.. related to your emerging interests. The presentation format is open to student preference, but should be limited to 3-5 minutes.

Final Project — Synthesis

After exploring this area for one week, what has captured your interest the most? Combine what you've learned about generating text, images, and video into one artwork of your own imagination. We'll work on this over multiple days and we'll check in to discuss it as it emerges.