

## **On artists that write code and artists that do not**

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Regarding "code" as a medium (once again). I think we have to look a ways back in time to get at the real issues here. We could almost say that differing opinions regarding artist's use of code are Marshall McLuhan's fault but I think it's actually the way that his work has been taught in new media art programs that is at fault. McLuhan talks about media as the end mediator. That which delivers the "message" to the consumers and because of the way this has been taught, that has become the "defacto" definition of a medium even within the arts. However, that's the exact opposite of older definitions of media within an art context. An artist's medium used to be the material that he/she manipulated to deliver a message. Both are equally correct but occur at opposite ends of the scale. A medium is simply something that occurs in between and can occur at any point between the artist and the viewer. Netart and the way various artists have approached it has made this whole "system" a bit more complex.

Amongst the median elements of a work of netart we have things like; code, concept, network, computer, screen, etc. It's important to determine what the "medium" is because as McLuhan tells us, that's the "message". One thing that really makes this complicated is that, as an artist who writes code, I don't think that "my medium" is the same as the "viewer's medium". My medium is the code. That's what I shape and manipulate to convey my "message". The viewer's medium can be something else. It could be the Internet or the computer or the screen, depending on how they regard the work. It could even be the code as long as I reveal it. But I'm not really in a position to dictate to the viewer what they may or may not refer to as "the medium". That's dependent on their own experience. Regardless, whatever I consider as "my medium" has a big impact on the nature of the work itself. In many ways it defines and guides the creative process.

Artists who produce netart but rely on collaborators to write code for them, will naturally produce different types of work. The code is not their medium and therefore doesn't "define and guide the creative process". Something else does. This does not produce a qualitative difference, just a difference.

This is why it "matters" whether an artist writes code or not.

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