Programmable States?

Paul Brown | Vladislav Knežević | William Latham

16 August – 20 September, 2015

Programmable States? will open at the Highland Institute for Contemporary Art on Sunday 16th August, 2-5pm. Developed through ongoing curatorial discussions between HICA and grey) (area space of contemporary and media art in Croatia, *Programmable States?* will be linked, conceptually, to a concurrent exhibition at grey) (area (also16 August – 20 September), and include some of the same works.

Programmable States? explores the German philosopher Max Bense's identification of the 'aesthetic condition', and his proposition that 'the aesthetic condition is as material as the physical condition of any observed object'. His analysis pursued the goal of 'programs for the production of aesthetic conditions', using early computing machines.

Materials relating to the infamous clash at a 1970 panel discussion between Bense and Joseph Beuys, which has been described as 'the visibly spectacular finale to the project of a rational, mathematically oriented aesthetics', will be included in the exhibition. Works by Paul Brown, Vladislav Knežević and William Latham may then be seen as responses to or developments from this point of questioning, prompting reflection on whether more recent technologies, greatly more sophisticated than Bense had access to, enable an engagement of aesthetics in ways sympathetic to his ideas, or whether they can only ever present something of some different order?

Croatian filmmaker Vladislav Knežević's, film *Binary Pitch* (2013) shows an auditorium where seats are raised and lowered in a manner reminiscent of a typewriter. The random seeming patterns generated by the seats play out select phrases from Max Bense's essay *Aesthetics and Programming* (1968) coded in zeros and ones; a presentation that draws the viewer's attention to the interplay between artwork, architecture (the space the work is seen within) and audience, and highlights the viewer's role in determining meaning.

Paul Brown's works equally engage the participant both visually and physically. Brown, an artist and writer who has specialised in art, science & technology since the late 1960's, has been described as one of the pioneers of artificial life art. He has a significant international reputation in the field of computational and generative process, with a specific interest in Cellular Automata or CAs; simple systems that can propagate themselves over time. Brown has stated "I look forward to a future where computational processes like the ones that I build will themselves make artworks without the need for human intervention."

William Latham's work has been described as "evolution by aesthetics". Professor of Computer Art at Goldsmiths, University of London, Latham was one of the first artists to blend organic imagery and computer animation using software modelled upon the processes of evolution. Latham was Research Fellow at the IBM Scientific Centre for six years, and met with Benoit Mandelbrot at IBM in the USA. He has used evolutionary techniques for both artist driven aesthetics and algorithmic aesthetics (such as analysis of fractal dimension) which allow artworks to be produced indefinitely by the computer without any need for the artist.

A talk and discussion event with Paul Brown and Bronaċ Ferran will be held in connection with the exhibition, on Saturday 12th September, from 2-4pm.

Programmable States? has been supported by Creative Scotland; Goethe Institut Glasgow; Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, University of Dundee; and New Media Scotland

The exhibition runs from 16 August – 20 September 2015, and will be open on Sundays 2-5pm, or by appointment.

For more information or images contact Geoff Lucas or Eilidh Lucas at:
HICA, Dalcrombie, Loch Ruthven, Dores, Inverness-shire, IV2 6UA, UK
T: +44 (0)1808-521-306   info@h-i-c-a.org   www.h-i-c-a.org