Note: myartspace.com was closed in 2011

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myartspace is the premier online social network for the art world. The community includes established artists, emerging artists, aspiring artists, collectors, curators, teachers, galleries, art appreciators. Members will be able establish their presence in the community, build and display galleries of their works, promote their works and career, participate in dialog, competition and events, and build an online store to sell products.

Saturday, July 26, 2008

Art Space Talk: Vlatko Ceric

Vlatko Ceric was born in Zagreb, Croatia where he currently resides. Vlatko has background in physics, but during most of his professional life he has been involved in computer modeling. He is a Professor of computing at the University of Zagreb and has over 30 years experience in computer generated graphic art.

Vlatko started exhibiting in 2005, and after that his works were exhibited at a number of international print and digital art exhibitions in Europe, America and Australia. His works are in several public collections in Europe and Australia. They are also exhibited in a number of university classrooms and laboratories, scientific institutes and information technology companies.

His works are represented by the Rhonda Schaller Studio gallery in New York City in the framework of their Art Link network.

Vlatko with *Agglomeration 34*

Brian Sherwin: Vlatko, you have a background in physics, but you have spent most of your professional life involved in computer modeling. Can you discuss how your knowledge of both physics and computer modeling has influenced your personal art?

Vlatko Ceric: Studying physics enables one to understand the power of modeling because discovering physical laws is based on testing hypotheses about how the physical world is functioning. Hypotheses usually have the form of models and contemporary models are computer based, so working in the computer modeling field after a short career in physics was a rather natural orientation for me.

Artists certainly don't spend their time in proving hypotheses, but whatever an artist creates he must have some idea about it and ideas can be represented in the form of models. Now a category of computer art called algorithmic art is oriented toward representing ideas about how visual objects should look like in the form of algorithms, i.e. procedures that precisely describe structure and generation of visual objects. Algorithms are coded in some programming language and thus have the form of computer model. Algorithmic art is precisely what I do as an artist, so you can see how my background helps me.

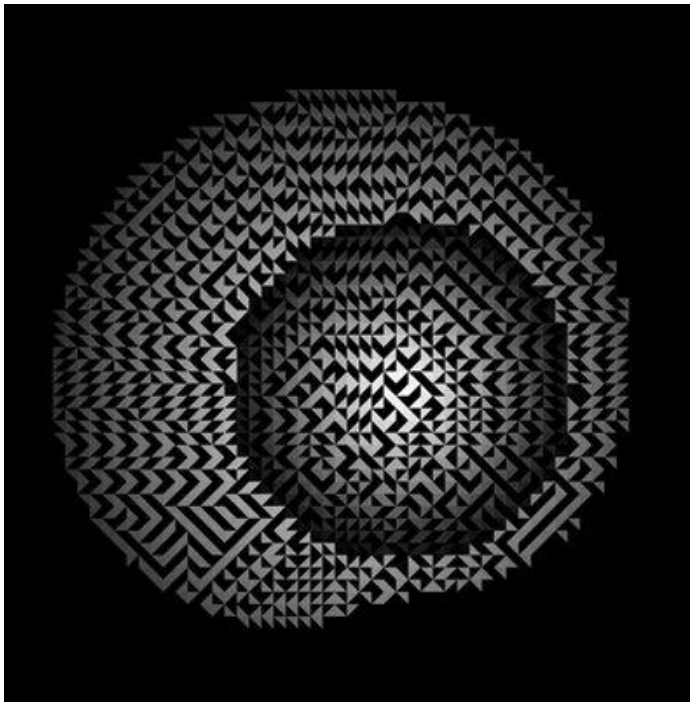
During the study of physics one also learns and get used to visual shapes of different relationships that appear in models. This experience then helps one to do the opposite, i.e. to have an intuitive idea about how should the model that has to produce certain type of visual structure look like and this is quite helpful too in algorithmic art.

Matrix, detail, wood, 63.6 x 63.6 x 6.5 cm, 2006 (inspired by *Cartesian rhythm* series)

BS: So as far as these algorithmic pieces are concerned... is your goal to visualize mathematical objects? Tell us more about the thoughts behind your work.

VC: Algorithmic art should not deal with visualizing of mathematical objects but rather with construction of algorithms that generate images that one has in his or her mind. So this is just the opposite approach than one of visualization of mathematical objects. And in developing algorithms for algorithmic art it is not important whether you use complicated mathematical forms or not - the only thing that matters is whether generated artwork provokes some feelings or thoughts or not.

Some of the issues that are intriguing me are differences between determinism vs. randomness, linearity vs. non-linearity and simplicity vs. complexity in the context of their influence on artworks. Studying influence of these factors expands my experience and helps me to reach the effects I want to get.

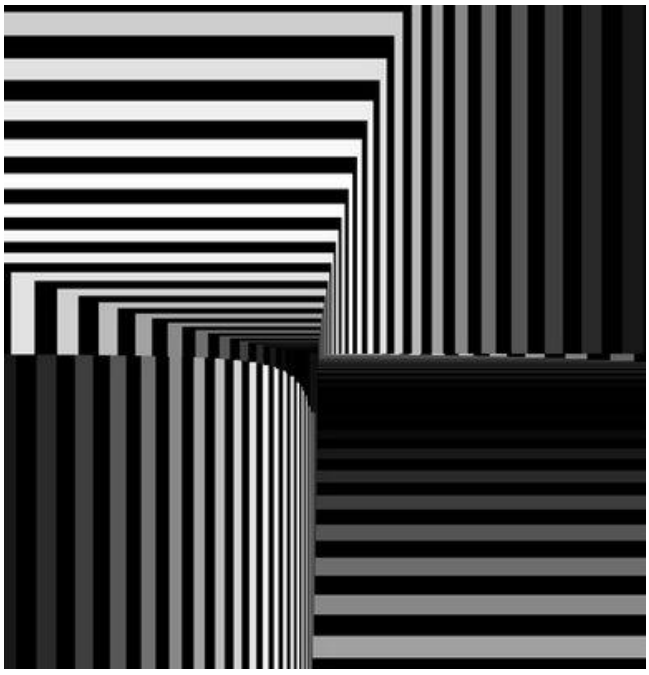


Nexus 13, archival digital print, 59.4 x 59.4 cm, 2007 (example of Vlatko's "mathematical modeling" approach)

BS: What interested you in using computer generated graphics as a medium? Can you recall the point at which you felt an urge to explore that direction? You have over 30 years of experience, correct?

VC: I started experimenting with computer graphics very early in my professional carrier in computing, in the mid 1970-ties. An important stimulus for me was the work of my colleague Vilko Ziljak, one of the pioneers in algorithmic art in Croatia and former Yugoslavia who also has background in physics.

I was excited with the ability that one can use computer in artistic purposes and exploit its distinctive features like programming and precision. The author of algorithm (program) can see how his idea looks like, and it is actually quite exciting to see what will be the visual result of program execution. Experimenting with variations of interesting algorithm often leads to further visual discoveries. A peculiar characteristic of algorithmic art is that author has to possess both rational abilities required to compose algorithms and write corresponding computer programs, as well as intuitive and aesthetic abilities required to select visually promising alternatives.

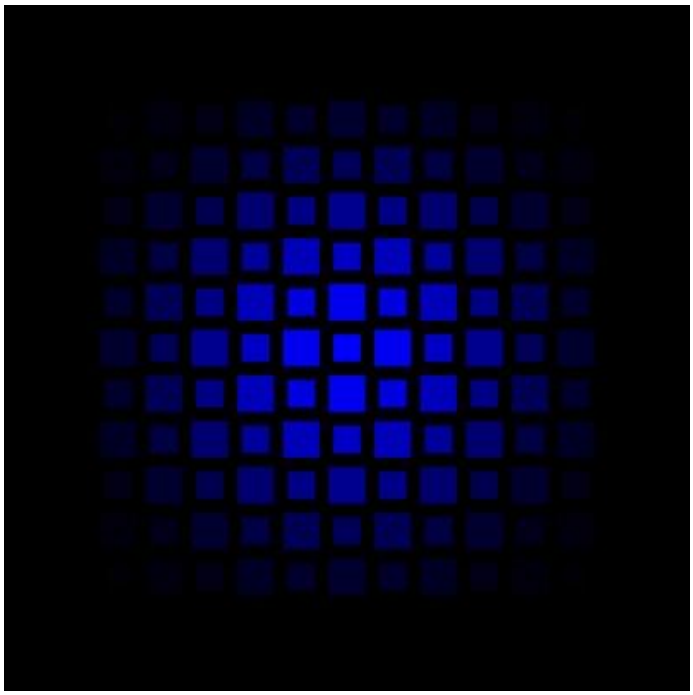


Unclassified Objects 12, archival digital print, 59.4 x 59.4 cm, 2007

BS: Can you tell us about those early years compared to the how you are able to create your work today. Technology has changed... how have those advancements helped you to explore your methods of creation?

VC: Technology has changed dramatically in the last 30 years. In the beginning I used mainframe computers such as IBM 360 and UNIVAC 1100 and the only possible output was with line text printers that printed images in the form of matrix of characters. Besides, one couldn't check on the screen what the output will look like. Later on I purchased Commodore 64 that had visual output on a TV screen. Although resolution was low this was an exciting experience since now one could use colors and have continuous images.

Today I work with powerful yet small PC computer with excellent screen, inkjet printer, digital camera, Internet access plus powerful programming languages and a variety of extremely useful application software. With such technology one can create more complex works and work more efficiently, and perform much more visual experiments. All this enables me to explore much more visual opportunities and to go much deeper into exploration.



Cartesian Rhythm 11, archival digital print, 70 x 70 cm, 2006 (example of Vlatko's “constructivist” approach)

BS: Vlatko, can you tell us about your process... perhaps you can briefly describe how these works come into being?

VC: I use several approaches in my work, let us call them constructivist approach, mathematical modeling approach, and digital manipulation of photographs. Constructivist approach is based on generation of preconceived structures being described by algorithms. This enables fairly fast analysis of numerous variations of image structure.

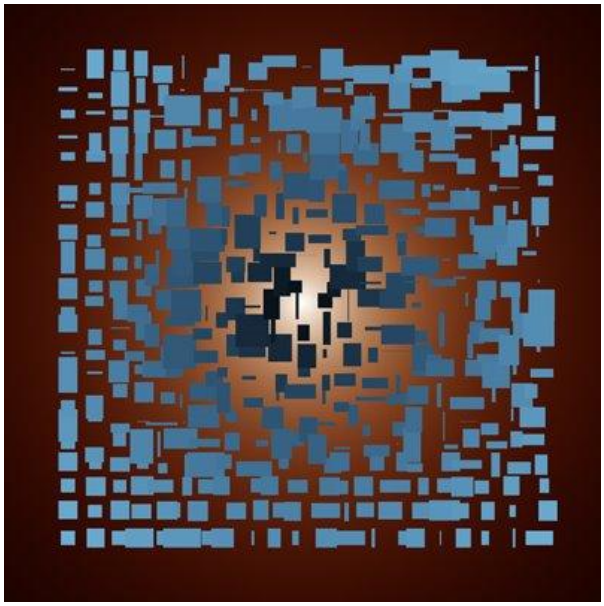
Mathematical models can be imagined as internal forces that keeps together visual objects in specific spatial patterns. This approach starts from the rough idea about how the image could look like, and requires intensive experimenting in order to find an appropriate mathematical model that gives an interesting visual result.

Digital manipulation of photographs is using algorithmic approach for manipulation of pixels of a photograph. Pixels from two locations can be e.g. exchanged, or the same pixel can be copied to the whole vertical line of pixels, etc. Images obtained in such a way can be very complex and interesting, and I also discovered that this approach can lead to transformation of figurative to abstract patterns.

BS: Vlatko, can you discuss some of your influences?

VC: During undergraduate study in physics I also attended art history class and was impressed by abstract art, and especially by Brancusi. I was also inspired by Klee and Mondrian, and later by Nicolas de Staël and Max Bill. Influence of op artists Vasarely and later by Bridget Riley was also important for my development.

All this attracted me to abstract art, and this fascination didn't diminish through all these years. I was especially fond of geometric art, and this was to some extent related to the fact that the *New tendencies* movement that used to be active in Croatia and part of Europe in 1960-ties included excellent geometrically oriented Croatian artists Aleksandar Srnec, Vjenceslav Richter and Ivan Picelj.



Chaos 2, archival digital print, 70 x 70 cm, 2007

BS: I understand that you are a member of the Croatian Association of Artists... can you tell our readers about that experience?

VC: My membership in this association is rather short, about a year, so I couldn't say much about this experience. However, it is still very difficult for me to get an opportunity to exhibit in my country since I didn't study visual arts, and to be worse I work with computer generated graphics. So most art historians in Croatia view my computer prints more as a product of an engineer rather than an artist.

BS: Your work can be found in the collections at Novosibirsk State Art Museum (Russia) and the Reykjanes Art Museum (Iceland). Where else can our readers view your work in person?

VC: Well, although I have over 30 years of experience in computer generated art, I began printing my works regularly three years ago and it was only then that I started sending my works to international exhibitions. So there was not too much chance that my works would be included in more collections.

However, in these three years I was exhibiting in a number of group exhibitions in Europe and North America, including exhibitions in three galleries in New York City, so this is one opportunity that public can see my works. And before my works are included into more collections readers can at least examine my website www.vceric.net with images of all my works.

Spectral Variations 6 in the group exhibition *Coexistence of Silence and Dynamism* held in 2008 in the Rhonda Schaller Studio gallery in New York City (example of "digital manipulation of photographs" approach – manipulation of the small 420 x 420 pixels photo of my head)

BS: Vlatko, some people find it difficult to accept computer based art when compared to traditional methods of artistic creation. It is not hard to find someone who questions the legitimacy of said works. In your opinion, what do people need to consider when viewing computer based works?

VC: Artists always used new technologies so I don't see why computer based art wouldn't be legitimate. But I agree that it is questionable whether computer based art has reached or even whether it may at all reach the quality comparable with one of traditional approaches where artists use their hands directly in the act of painting, drawing, preparing prints etc. In this context I may only cite Michelangelo who said "A man paints with his brains and not with his hands."

Anyhow, there are more than a few artists that reached notable quality in the field of computer based art. Let me only mention here two algorithmic artists, Jean Pierre Hebért and Roman Verostko, so that readers can use Google and see their works.

BS: Finally, is there anything else you would like to say about your art?

VC: I enjoy in diversity of forms and techniques and so I work with computer graphics, digitally manipulated photographs, animation and sculpture, and I use both modern printing techniques like digital print as well as traditional ones like serigraphy.

And thanks for the opportunity, Brian.

You can learn more about Vlatko Ceric by visiting his website -- www.vceric.net. **You can read more of my interviews by visiting the following page --** www.myartspace.com/interviews.

Take care, Stay true,

Brian Sherwin

Note: Brian Sherwin on Wikipedia