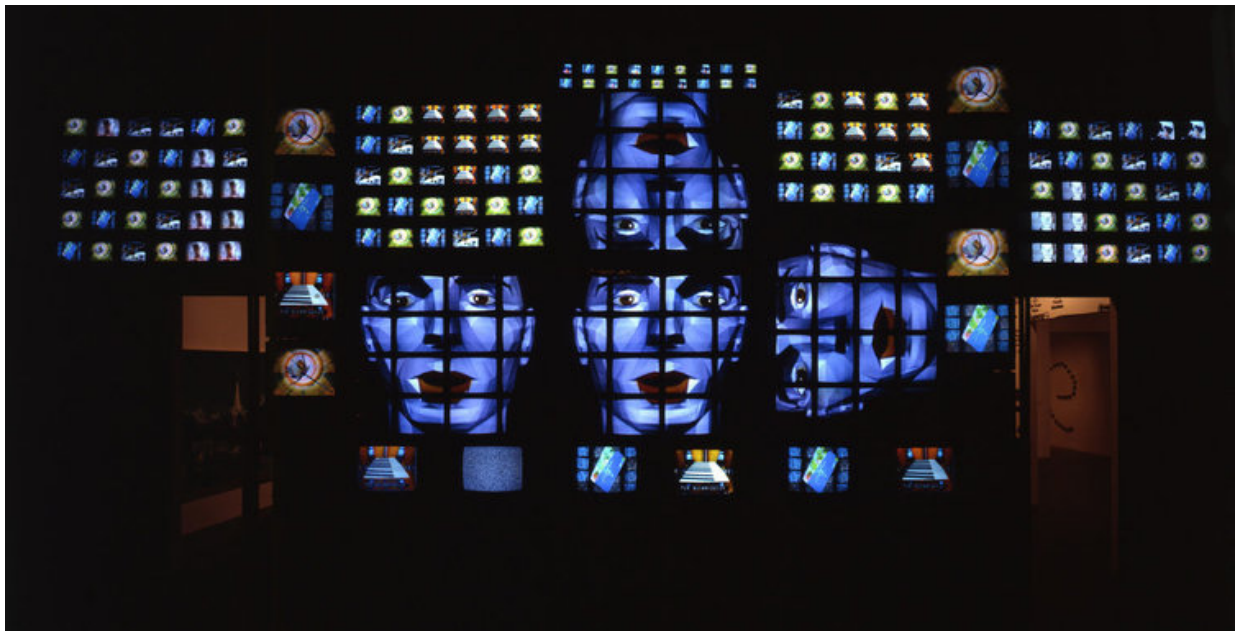


OCT 17

Programmed: Rules, Codes, and Choreographies in Art

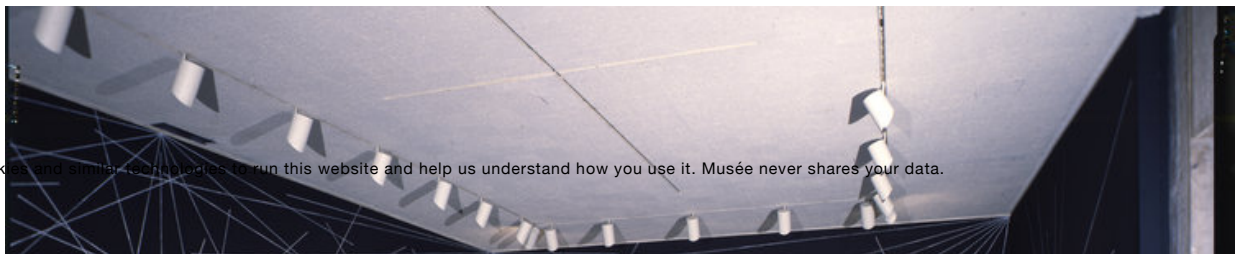
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Fin de Siècle II, 1989. Seven-channel video installation (partially restored), 207 televisions, sound, 168 × 480 × 60 in. (426.7 × 1219.2 × 152.4 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of Laila and Thurston Twigg-Smith 93.139. © Nam June Paik Estate

By Erik Nielsen

The phrase “Digital anthropology” could best describe the new Whitney Exhibit *Programmed: Rules, Codes, and Choreographies in Art, 1965–2018*. As we get a glimpse of our history and how the advances in technology, systematic thinking and computing code have transformed the way we perceive the world, what will the digital remains of our civilization look like? Will we be remembered for our Twitter feed discourse on reality shows, the way we programmed ourselves into the computer or our voyeuristic tendencies to huddle around the television set like a fire-place?



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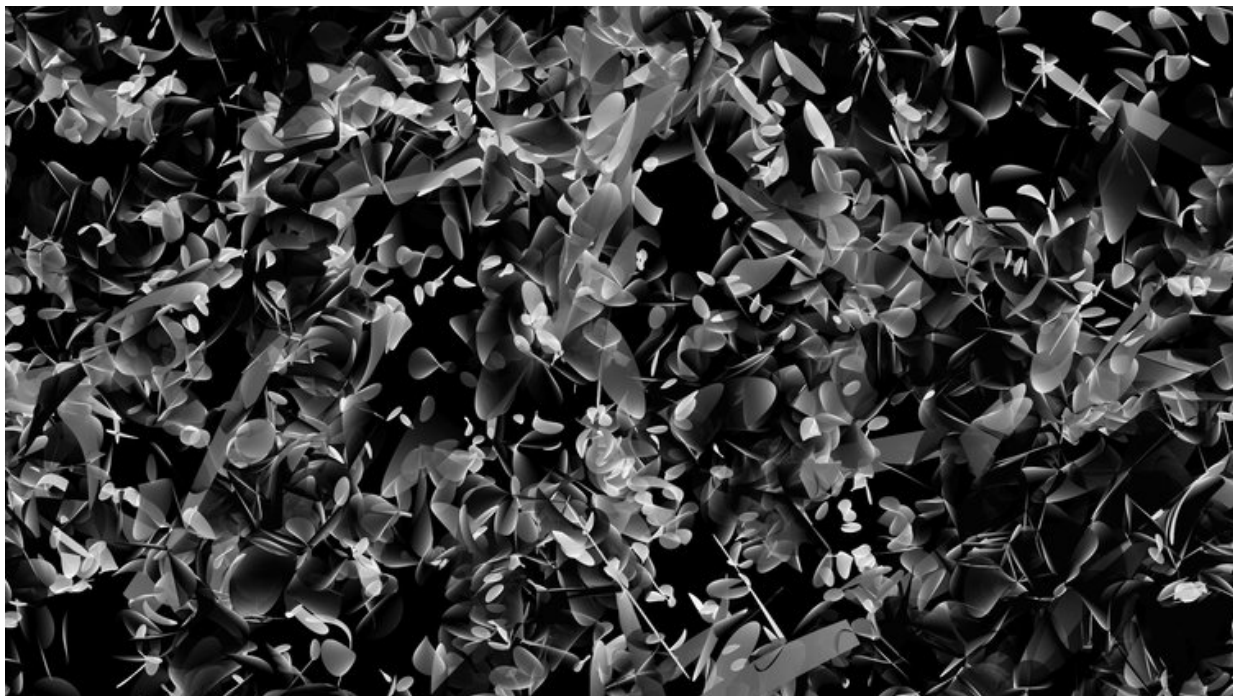
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Sol LeWitt (1928-2007), *Wall Drawing #289*, 1976. Wax crayon, graphite pencil, and paint on four walls, dimensions variable. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the Gilman Foundation, Inc. 78.1.1-4. © 2018 Sol LeWitt/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

The perfect muse for an understanding of our technological evolution are our creations. When you first walk in to the 6th floor of the Whitney Museum you are greeted by the mammoth eighty foot television installation from Nam June Paik's *Fin de Siècle II*. The televisions are perfectly sequenced with choreography from a David Bowie video featuring close ups and similar movements from other programs creating a dazzling pattern of technicolor and movement.

The sequences from 1980s television sets continue on to the very first computer programs showing what footprint is left where. Be it the C-SPAN television installation *Alphaville* that informs us of our early Bush Era politics to a humdrum living room that's like looking at a dinosaur exhibition from the Museum of Natural History, complete with TV dinners and antenna bound boob tubes. We have rapidly changed in the way we receive information and in what spaces we exist.

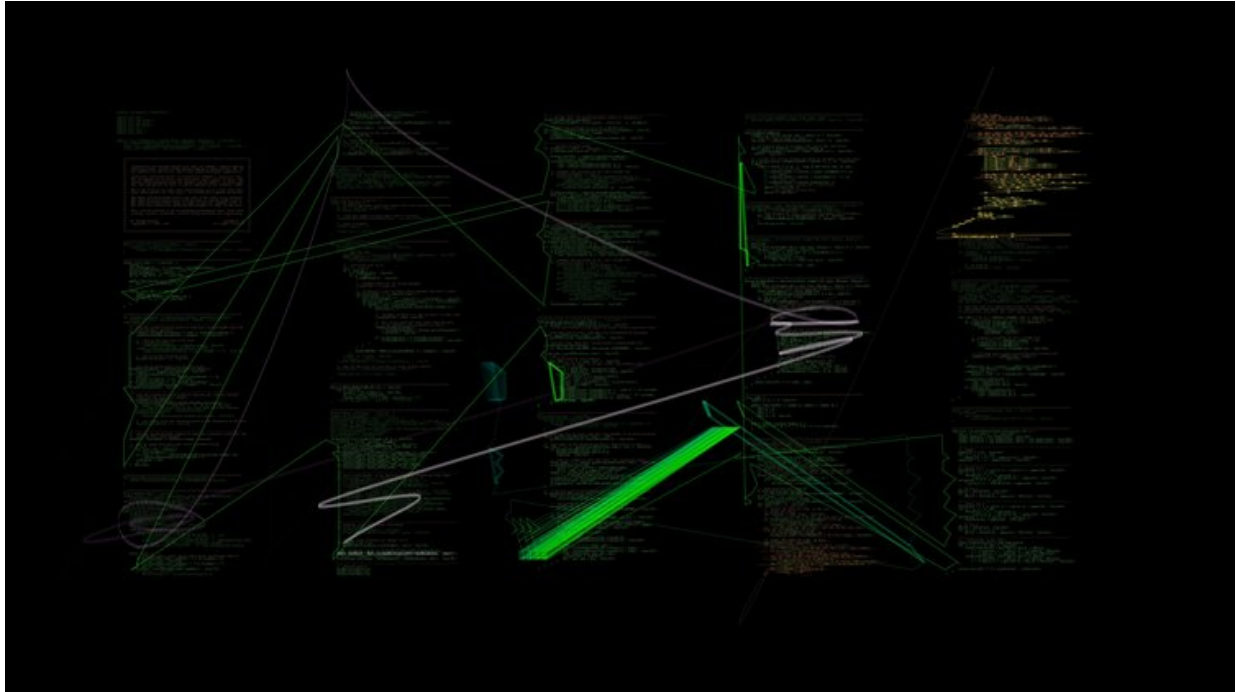


Wall Drawing #289, 1976. Wax crayon, graphite pencil, and paint on four walls, dimensions variable. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the Gilman Foundation, Inc. 78.1.1-4. © 2018 Sol LeWitt/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

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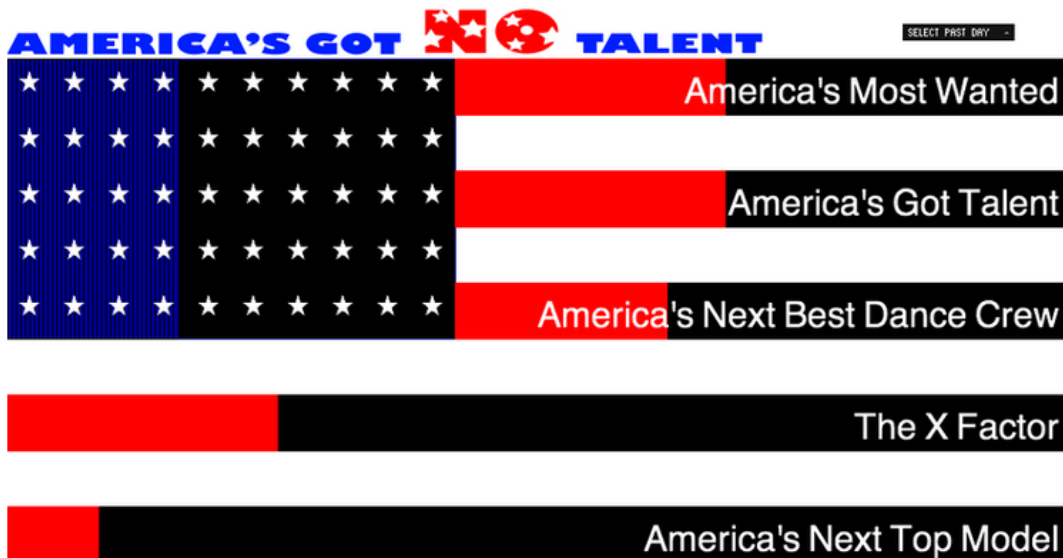
VANGUARD

"It all a dance." W. Bradford Paley tells me as we discuss his installment *Code Profiles*, which shows us how programmers write code, how people read it and how it's executed by the computer. "Some of my heroes are dancers, so I focused intently on the nature of the motion of the lines.." Three lines zig and zag across the screen in perpetual dance in a symphonic array of greens and oranges. It's his way of showing us that computers can perceive and think like we do, humanizing our own creations, ones we see as distant from ourselves.



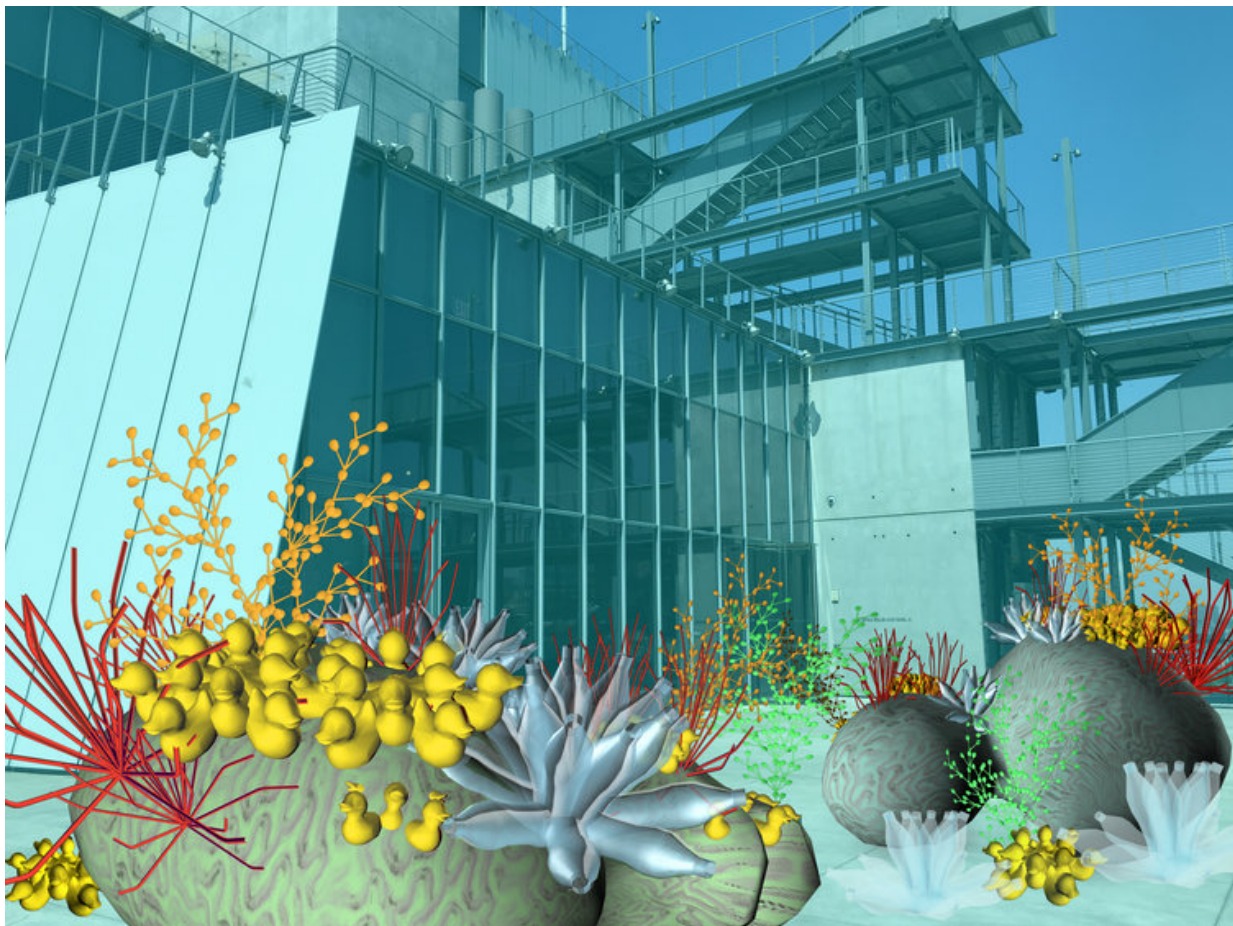
© W. Bradford Paley (b.1958), *CodeProfiles*, 2002 and 2018. Java program. Commissioned by the Whitney Museum of American Art for its artport website AP.2002.11

The dance continues in interactive pieces like *America's Got No Talent*; allowing you to move through our mud-pile of twitter trolling revolving around the most popular reality shows with a scrolling American Flag. Exemplary of how interactions have been coded and colored differently but also showing how art has instilled itself into the rules we've created.



The final piece may be the apotheosis of our digital interactions. VR has begun its course and will cement itself into our lives in the near future. Enabling us to use the computers we hold in our pockets, artist Thamiko Thiel creates a world (one that may be near) submerged in water. A world that is quickly accessible with the download of her app.

As the Whitney Exhibit ends with our latest innovations it may also mark the end of us.



Unexpected Growth, 2018. Augmented reality installation, healthy phase. Commissioned by the Whitney Museum of American Art © Tamiko Thiel

I also had a chance to discuss the exhibit with artist John F. Simon, whose work *Color Panel v.l.o.*, was featured therein.

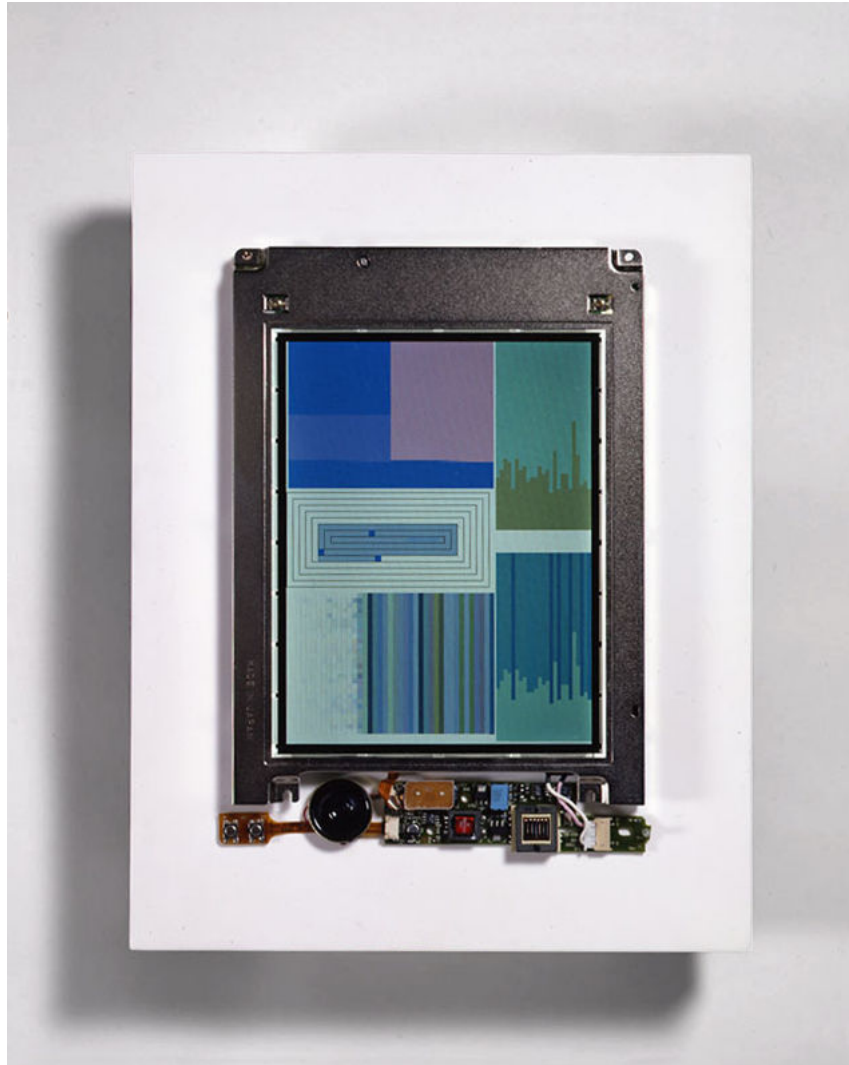
Q: I remember talking to W. Bradford Paley about the exhibit being digital anthropology. Do you agree? And do you think art will continue to be decoded and digitalized?

A: Art is a mirror of our world, so in that way studying it is anthropology. If you think our culture will be increasingly driven by algorithms and wired into technology, then you can expect art to reflect that, as this exhibition shows.

MUSEÉ

I have lived the technology trajectory, starting from no one owning a personal computer in the 1970's to almost no one being able to walk around without a computer in their pocket. This show highlights that development of systematic thinking. As I don't see our use of technology as a culture slowing down, I expect art to be more and more a part of the digital world we build.

VANGUARD OF PHOTOGRAPHY CULTURE



Color Panel v1.0, 1999. Software, altered Apple Macintosh Powerbook 280c, and plastic, 13 1/2 x 10 1/2 x 3 in. (34.3 x 26.7 x 7.6 cm). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase with funds from the Painting and Sculpture Committee 99.88a-c. © 1999 John F. Simon Jr

Q: What does it mean to be amongst these artists and to be part of this exhibit?

A: *Programmed* is a beautiful summary of the systematic approach to art making. It highlights methods from art history that feel like they were naturally inclined to be incorporated by computer artists. I am so happy that Christiane Paul and the other curators were able to make these connections.

When I began making software art, I found that Modernism enacted systems on paper without having the active media of computer graphics and I hoped to explore that systematic thinking and take it further with software. Being in this show is gratifying because it connects the code I wrote to its conceptual sources.

Programmed: Rules, Codes, and Choreographies in Art opened on September 28th and will run until April 14th, 2019.