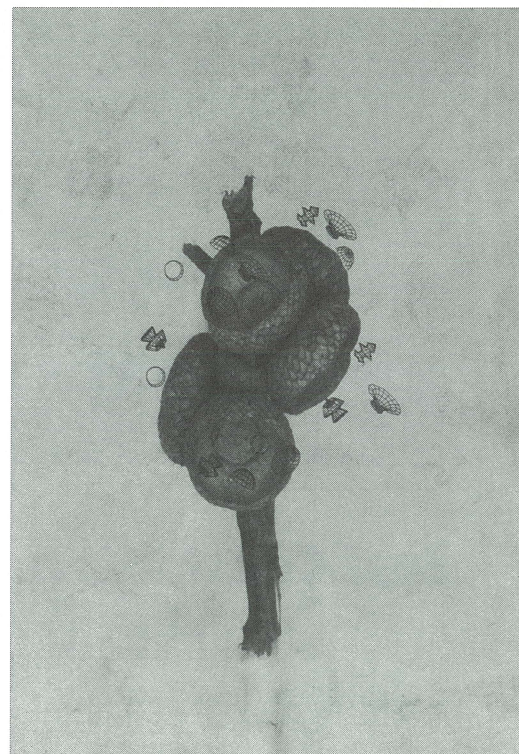


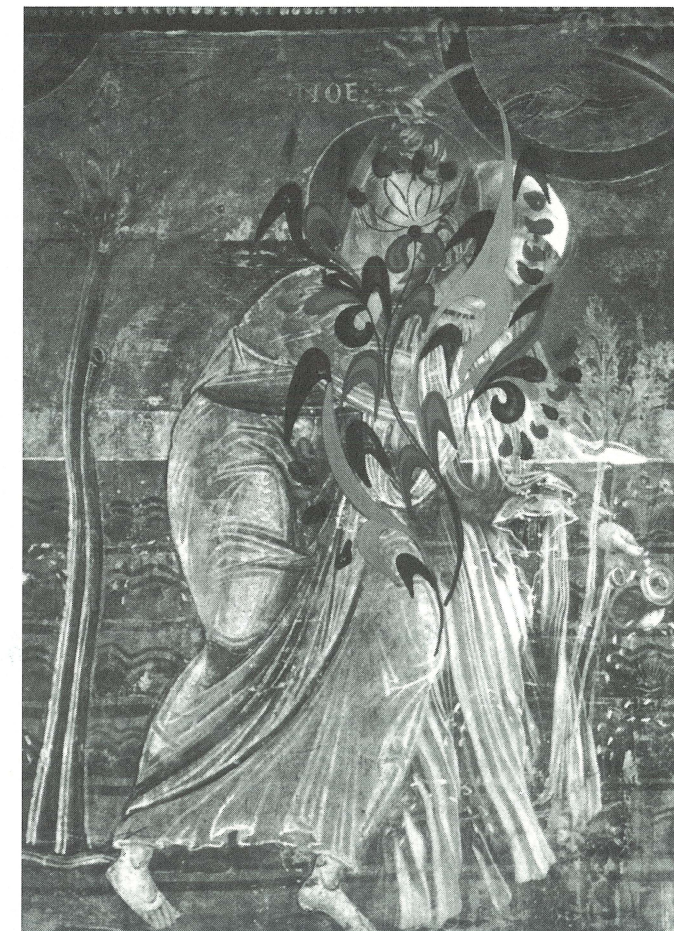
Departure. © 1994. Annette Weintraub (one of the artworks in *From Drawing to Montage*).



Broadcast A. © 1994. Kathleen Ruiz (featured in *From Drawing to Montage*).



TAXI. © 1994. Susan LeVan, LeVan/Barbee studio (one of the artworks in *The Computer in the Studio* exhibit at the DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park and *The Computer Museum*).



1993EC001. © 1993. Emily Cheng (featured in *The Computer in the Studio*).

# Contemporary Art and Computers

Digital technology has spread to virtually every area of contemporary life. Computer-aided design dominates the production and marketing of consumer goods. Scientists rely on data gleaned from computers running simulated experiments. Newspapers bring us digitized photographs of events across the globe hours after they happen. Computers enable the fast editing and photo-realistic special effects that define television and the movies. Teachers, entertainers, stock brokers—even criminals—use computers and communications networks to join them to their far-flung colleagues.

If you have ever wondered how this proliferation of computer-mediated imagery and connectivity affects your imagination, you are not alone. Increasingly, visual artists are exploring the computer as a creative tool, its effect on the imagination, and its impact on the

world. The Museum created the Media Arts Program in 1993 to present outstanding examples of artists' interpretations and experiments with the computer through short-and long-term exhibits, weekend festivals, seminars and discussions.

From July 16-September 5, *From Drawing to Montage: Computers in Art* will be on display in the Museum's Skyline Room. Organized by Michael Dashkin of New York's Parsons School of Design, the exhibit's 25 pieces range from computer prints on tree bark to backlit steel and glass wall sculptures. All nine artists began using the computer as an art tool after working for years in more traditional media, such as painting, drawing, sculpture, photography, or video. Through their work, these artists echo the 19th-century writer Charles Baudelaire's fears about photography by questioning whether computers will "steal the soul of art."

Annette Weintraub's *Departure* is a montage built from vintage and contemporary photographs of buildings, street scenes, and the city at night. Weintraub says, "Architectural imagery has become a means of creating a continuum between the past and present. Software enables me to selectively pick up parts of a photographic image, to dissolve, process, or manipulate that image, changing brightness, contrast, resolution, and sharpness."

Kathleen Ruiz's *Broadcast A* depicts computer-generated yet organic-looking images reminiscent of plant cuttings, over-ripe fruit, or cellular division, all printed onto pieces of bark. She says, "What is secret and invisible or visually insignificant is often more powerful than what is evident."

The show's other artists are Leah Siegel, Kevin Crawford, Kenneth Sean Golden, Kathryn Greene, Kent Rollins, Mechthild Schmidt, and Madeline Schwartzman.

From September 24-November 27, *The Computer in the Studio* will show how New England artists use computers in concert with traditional media, such as painting, collage, drawing, and sculpture, and how they increasingly integrate digital technology with photography, installation, and animation. The exhibition will also explore how artists use computers to usher in a new age of interactivity and virtual reality, transforming viewers into active participants. The culmination of a collaboration with the DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park in Lincoln, Massachusetts, *The Computer in the Studio* will be shown simultaneously at both museums. This partnership, the first of its kind for either museum, will feature cooperative admissions, shared educational programs, and members' events at both museums.

One of the artworks, *The Automated Confession Machine*, by Greg Garvey, is a computer-based interactive that "acts"

as an electronic confessional. The viewer/confessor goes inside a kiosk, where they enter the frequency and severity of their sins into a humorous, irreverent Macintosh computer program created by the artist. After calculating the magnitude of the sins, the confession machine prints the viewer/confessor's absolution onto a paper receipt. *The Automated Confession Machine* was featured recently in *Wired* magazine.

Boston painter Ron Rizzi has used the computer as a creative partner for over five years. Rizzi scans textile patterns and images from contemporary life and art history into the computer, prints them out, and arranges and rearranges groups of the prints together on his studio walls. He uses these collages as his inspiration to create large paintings. His *Tibet*, for example, includes an interpretation of a traditional Tibetan decorative pattern juxtaposed with dark images of the

Chinese persecution of Tibetan monks. *The Buddha's Tooth* shows images of the Dalai Lama crossing into exile in India against a brilliant blood-red sunset.

Other artists to be shown at *The Computer Museum* include Emily Cheng, Steve Gildea, Tom Krepcio, Frank Ladd, Susan LeVan, Richard Rosenblum, Deanne Sokolin, and Janet Zweig.

The artworks in *The Computer in the Studio* address contemporary topics such as politics, race, gender, perception, and aesthetics. When looking at—and interacting with—artistic interpretations of computer technology, we may be inspired to reconsider the cultural roots and social implications of the computer.

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