Jim Lambie's *ZOBOP* (1999, remade for Tate Liverpool's *Op Art in Focus*)

This site-specific installation for *Op Art in Focus* at Tate Liverpool has largely influenced my work and studio practice when I first saw it in September 2018. This installation in particular caught my attention (amongst viewing other similar psychedelic pieces, inspired by the counterculture of the 1960's, from the exhibition) because not only does it flood the floor of the entire room, but also forces the viewer to look down for once, and instead of viewing a plain wooden floor, they're forced to look at the hypnotising rhythm that Lambie has created, with borders that surround the shape of the room, as well as highlighting features such as pillars, and being greeted by brutally clashing and bright colours that all mix with each other (although none of the colours *actually* mix with each other since they've all been neatly and meticulously arranged in order to make the piece seem as psychedelic as possible, but in a subtle yet loud way).

Although the installation is essentially an abstract piece, I've understood the work in different ways, mainly by having to view it bit by bit rather than seeing it all at once (since it's practically impossible unless you somehow manage to view it from a bird's eye view, and I doubt Tate would let you (a member of the general public) do that). Due to the overall nature of this piece, I've interpreted it differently, looking at the details and the contouring of the lines, as well as how those lines have been formed and how they all collectively react to the room they've been confined in for the duration of the exhibition. Also, this piece (unlike most other pieces) demands that you walk on it, forcing you to interact with the piece rather than just merely looking at it for a few seconds before walking away and moving on to the next piece, instantly forgetting about the piece you just saw, and this can make one wonder how many people have been in that room interacting with the piece, looking down and viewing it from different angles and therefore creating their own interpretations about the piece, and how they have to actively engage with it through having to slowly wander around the room in order to fully appreciate and understand the piece as a whole, rather than just viewing a small piece of the piece itself before moving on. So, this piece is essentially a larger than life piece, and there is no possible way to view all of the piece all at once, so the viewer must walk around, try to follow the lines, the curves and the contours which essentially create the piece in order to make some sense of it.

The fact that this piece basically overflows from one room to another shows that it demands attention, and lots of it, as well as acting as a signifier that this is essentially the largest piece that any one person will ever see. The fact that the piece is

situated in a minimalist space goes to show how loud and disruptive this piece actually is, and how the overall psychedelic aesthetic can be viewed as something that is also loud and disruptive, as well as how pieces that are a part of this whole aesthetic can literally make waves to the world as a whole, and how different people would go about it (i.e. aesthetic minimalists would argue that piece is distasteful and is essentially ruining an otherwise good and decent space with white walls galore whereas maximalists would say that this piece already has a lot going on, but it can be improved and crawl up on to the walls instead of just staying down on the floor). Additionally, the space itself makes the piece stand out much more, causing viewers and passers-by to stop and stare at the piece, as well as admiring the contours and the lines that make this piece, as well as how it adds life to an otherwise empty and bare room.

This larger-than-life piece also has a series of hidden photo opportunities, and since it makes the floor an interesting place to stand, it allows viewers to show that they've actually been to the exhibition and viewed the piece through the use of taking a FWIS (From Where I Stand) photo that usually involves the viewer taking a photo of where they're standing, as well as the floor itself (which can be a bit boring if the floor is plain and normal, but can be really interesting if the floor is visually different and has some interesting aspects to it, such as this piece), although this can also be seen as an attempt to take a photo of the whole thing so that one can essentially take the piece home and view it again later on (which is physically impossible in the attempts to view all of the piece at once). This piece is essentially a win-win situation amongst avid fans of the psychedelic aesthetic/60's countercultural movement and so-called Instagram influencers who want to impress their followers (who probably couldn't care less unless they haven't had a chance to view

the piece in full yet, at its physical place rather than just seeing snippets of it online); chances are, no two photos will be the same due to the position that the viewer stands at, along with how they interpret the piece, whether they see it as a whole, or in bits and pieces, viewing one bit at a time.

So, this piece is essentially an immersive collage, mainly due to the fact that it floods the floor and overflows in the room next door, asking to be stepped on if you want to have a closer look. Again, it's impossible to view it all at once, so you must have to view it in bits and pieces in order to view the work, and as a result, having to put all of those pieces back together again to see the work for what it is.

"Art is what you can get away with." - Andy Warhol

I believe that art is anything that you want it to be, and that you can be as broad or as specific as you want. You can step out of your comfort zone or you can stick to what you already know. However, anything can be seen as art if one decides to call it art, whether it's actually a piece of art or not to begin with. The most absurd things can be covered up by calling it art, and by justifying the fact that you can get away with it just because you've decided to call it art. No one will begin to question it since it's under the guise that it is in fact art, whether they understand the meaning behind it or not.

A crime can be seen as a performance piece as well as an activist and political piece; it was done to prove a point, in the attempts to try and overthrow authorities (such as the government) whilst also trying to make a statement. Under the guise of calling it art, the general population will slowly begin to accept it and why it happened, as well as the reason behind it and what the artist's motives were when creating this so-called piece. However, in any other context, the crime is a crime and nothing more. The general public will see them as a criminal, not an artist, and the crime that they commit will land them in jail, but changing the context and calling it art will probably justify why they did it in the first place.

Whilst crime is generally seen as a bad thing, doing something as simple yet absurd as taping a banana to the wall has been considered as art and has even made its way into pop culture. Although this would have normally been a weird thing to do, calling it art takes away the absurdity of the piece itself, and makes the viewers wonder what the meaning behind it is. The duct taped banana is seen as a temporary sculptural piece, which will rot because of how bananas work; the piece itself would leave a reminder that nothing really lasts forever. However, without this context, it's just a banana taped to a wall and a waste of a perfectly good banana.

Although I don't advocate crime or sticking fruit to the wall with duct tape, I believe that this quote applies to my practice since I have done things that I wouldn't have normally done (such as creating a site-specific installation using inflated rubber gloves hanging at different lengths and essentially vandalising Vogue magazines by taking the images from it out of context by brutally adding my own interpretations and contexts to it, amongst other things I've done over the past couple of months). Those things seem absurd on their own, but by putting them under the guise of art, it becomes art, and depending on who sees it, they'll generally accept it and won't really question it because of the context of the piece itself.

"What would life be if we had no courage to attempt anything?" - Vincent van Gogh

I also believe that art is made from attempts as well as trials and errors, and that new things can be made from mistakes. However, this applies to all aspects of life, not just art, and without the courage to attempt anything at all, we'd still be stuck in the stone age, doing what we'd be comfortable doing and nothing more, but the ones who dare to make a difference are the ones who make changes and essentially make history in the process since they had the courage to attempt to do something different to the norm. Major movements in art were mainly born out of an attempt to go against the status quo as well as experimenting with different mediums at the time and creating new techniques as well as broadening horizons through showing others that these things (that they thought were impossible and unrealistic) can actually be done. Without the courage to attempt anything, those movements wouldn't have existed, and those techniques (along with different materials) would have been unknown, if not deemed impossible to do.

Although a majority of the population tend to stick to what they already know, there a few certain individuals who have the courage to "think outside the box" for once, and to bring new perspectives and ideas to things that already exist, looking to improve them or to create something new and original entirely. Without these few individuals far and wide, there wouldn't be much else to add to the world, but to carry on living with what we already know and nothing more.

Again, I believe that this quote is relevant to my practice as a whole since I usually have the courage to try out new things, which could potentially enhance my practice, as well as adding to my curiosity about how and why things work and why they are the way they are. I have let go of the idea that everything needs to be perfect, and I have begun to trust the process of creating rather than by focusing on the final piece itself; I believe that by letting go of the idea of perfectionism (especially in a time where everything is seen in way so that it is to the highest standard, and therefore very unrealistic and extremely hard to achieve) has helped me a lot with my practice since I have had the courage to attempt to do things that I wouldn't have otherwise attempted before due to the fear that it won't be perfect. However, I feel that if I don't attempt anything new, I'll be stuck in an endless loop of doing the same things over and over again, and won't have anything new or original to show, other than the things that I've already done countless times. There are probably countless other artists (and people of different occupations) out there who probably think the same things and dare to experiment and attempt new things all the time to avoid repetition and boredom of all things.

How do you think that the use of technology is evolving in working practices in Contemporary Art and Illustration? Consider the making, disseminating and viewing of work.

The use of technology is evolving in working practices in both Contemporary Art and Illustration, with new technologies being available and evolving over time, making it possible to create work in ways that wouldn't have been possible before (such as creating immersive installations using Virtual Reality and using code in a creative, rather than functional, way). I understand the theme to encompass how the use of technology changes art and how technology can be used in conjunction with art (excluding the basics), as well as how combining the two can potentially open new doors in

both industries, along with merging the two together so that there's less of a gap between art and technology. In this essay, I will look at how the use of technology is evolving in working practices, how it changes our definition of art as a whole, how combining both art and technology can be merged into one, and how certain technologies such as net art, virtual reality and creative coding/generative art help define this as well as merging both art and technology together so that both artists and those in the tech industries can benefit from each other through collaborating and innovating in new ways.


Internet art (commonly known as net art) is self-explanatory, as it involves publishing digital artwork on the internet. Whilst it's a common practice to post photos of artwork (including digital artwork) in this day and age, net art (as a movement) goes beyond the basics, and simply posting digitised versions of images don't count as internet art; instead, contemporary artists use the internet (or rather, the World Wide Web) as an artistic medium, according to Shanken (2012), and this is the result of the history of conceptual art being relevant to using the internet as an artistic medium. Additionally, pioneers of the movement have used this relatively new medium to challenge what technology (along with the evolving internet itself) was able to do since 1994, by creating art that could only be experienced on the internet. However, like how the internet generally was in the late 90's/early 2000's, none of the pieces are aesthetically pleasing, and artists of that movement focused more on the novelty of the internet by seeing what this new and exciting medium could do. Whilst a majority of the pieces are typically outdated according to today's standards, they have essentially paved the way for combining both art and technology together, and introducing new technologies such as virtual reality and using code as an artistic medium (both in terms of making art from the code itself and coding in order to create an art piece, where the source code itself is hidden, rather than using it in order to create something functional).

Although the two are generally unrelated to each other, virtual reality is essentially the contemporary version of net art, and artists are beginning to use VR as an artistic medium similar to how artists used the internet/World Wide Web (as an artistic medium) in the mid 90's/early 2000's. Despite virtual reality gaining popularity during the 2010's, Kim (2016) explains that "Virtual reality as a technology is nothing new. VR technologies have been employed for decades, and the concept of the VR system has existed for even longer" and implies that it "has long been considered impractical to mainstream users" due to the headsets' physical aspects (i.e. the headsets were large and clunky, which made them annoying to wear) as well as their technical specifications (i.e. low resolution and a narrow field of view). However, Kim (2016) also explains that "virtual reality as an aesthetic medium is still something relatively new", and although the technology for it has existed for decades, it's only within the past few years that VR is being viewed as an artistic medium, with the technical side evolving so that VR experiences become as realistic and as immersive as possible as more physically effective (i.e. more lightweight) headsets are being designed. Similarly, Gottschalk

(2016) states that "virtual reality is the most powerful medium of our time", both in terms of it being used as an artistic medium (with Gottschalk being in conversation with Rachel Rossin, a multi-media installation artist and self-taught programmer) as well as an innovative and technical medium.

Although the technologies I have pointed out so far are widely uncommon in the working practices of Contemporary Art and Illustration, I believe that these technologies in particular can be incorporated into those practices and can introduce (as well as offer) a new perspective on technology by exploring its full potential as well as its limitations and experimenting with those two aspects, by innovating and creating new technologies along the way. Due to the overall nature of technology as a whole (and using technology as an artistic medium rather than just a technology), the viewing of work will be different, and some pieces of work will actually encourage the viewers to interact with it rather than just merely looking at it hanging up on a gallery wall. However, like traditional artworks, the piece can be interpreted and experienced in different ways by everyone (such as interacting with a piece of net art for the first time and not knowing how to go about it or how to view it properly).
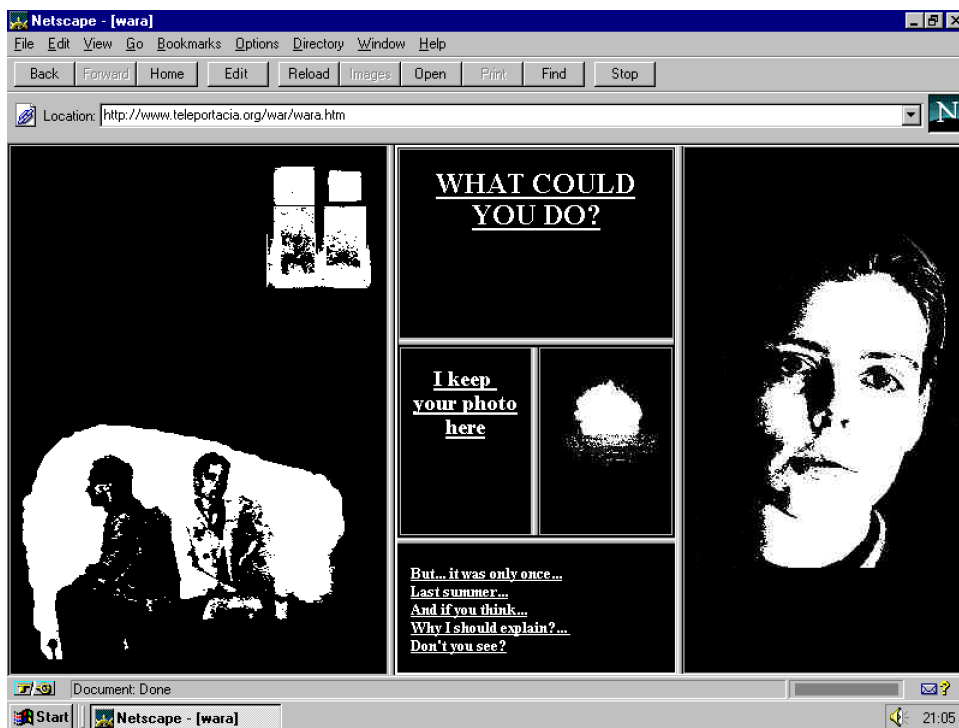

An example of an interactive net.art piece is Olia Lialina's *My Boyfriend Came Back from the War* (1996), which is a browser-based piece that has a narrative (almost similar to the choose-your-own adventure stories) and allows the user to interact with the piece itself, listening to a disembodied voice have a conversation with their boyfriend, which almost makes the user feel like an eavesdropper and an outsider to this couple having a personal conversation. Moreover, net.art *has* to be interactive, one way or another, in order for it to be considered as net.art because the viewer/user expects the piece to be interactive since the piece itself is based in a browser (and their expectations, right from the birth of the internet, are that web pages are interactive, and clicking on a link takes them to a different place on the internet, rather than just pretending to look like a link); if the piece isn't interactive at all, it's simply another (probably bizarre) image on the internet with its own domain and web address.

Similarly, Charlotte Davies's virtual reality pieces *Osmose* (1995) and *Ephemere* (1998) force (if not, encourage) the viewer to interact with the pieces. Although the pieces focus on scenery above anything else, it allows the user to become fully immersed into a virtual environment that has realistic and naturalistic aspects to it, paired with its painterly and otherworldly aesthetics. However, instead of clicking on links in a browser window, the user
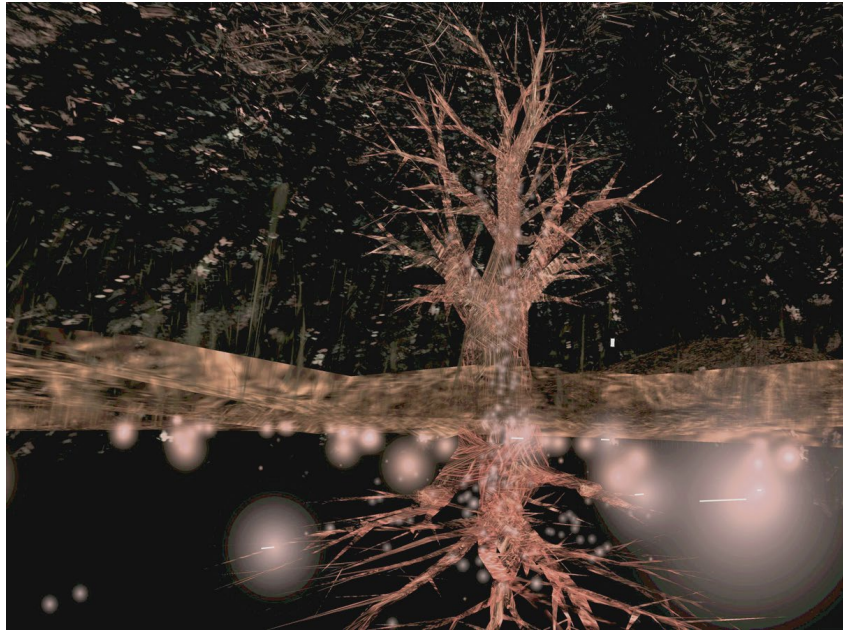
has to wear a VR headset in order to enjoy the whole experience as well as having the opportunity to be fully immersed into a completely different world, which according to Paul (2008), a "full immersion into a simulated world that allows users to interact with every aspect of it is still more of a dream than a reality, although the technology has made considerable advances". Despite the fact that the technology for virtual reality has advanced over the past 20 years, the experience itself is still dreamlike rather than realistic, and the users of VR headsets essentially experience an out-of-body experience when using the technology, regardless of what they're viewing in the headset, along with whether they're interacting with it (i.e. playing a videogame designed and optimised for VR) or not (i.e. viewing a piece of artwork/video designed for VR); the dream likeness and experiences of using a VR headset are down to the fact that the user is fully immersed into the virtual world and essentially has no contact with the outside world, which makes them feel as though they're in a dream for as long as they're immersed within the virtual world (and "wake up" when they take the headset off and return back to the real world). Although net.art is interactive, it's not entirely immersive, if it's even considered immersive to begin with since it's aesthetically clunky and seemingly outdated, whereas virtual reality is a constantly evolving technology and is seen as a timeless technology (although some aspects of it are outdated, but are seemingly forgotten about as new updates come).
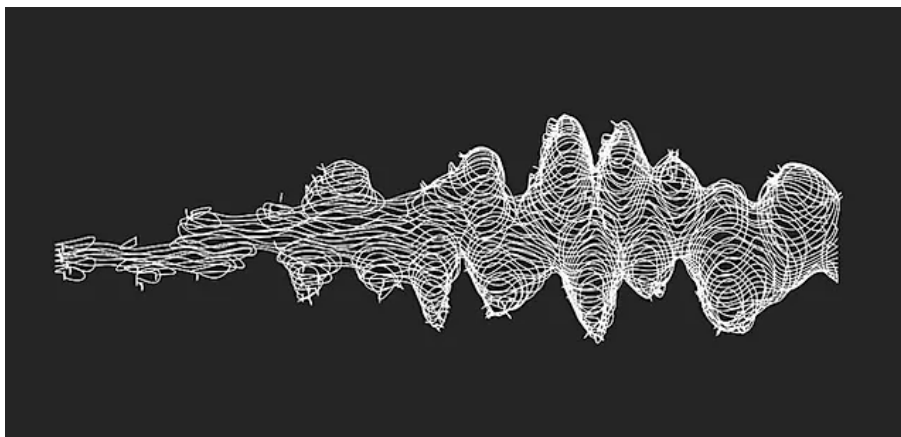
A more abstract way of using technology is through the use of creative coding (also known as generative art and sometimes software art), and while this is evident in both net.art as well as virtual reality, generative/software art focuses on the art of creating a piece of art by using software that is usually made from scratch and is run locally on a

computer rather than being based in a browser/on the internet (although the source code for software art can be found online so that it can be installed onto another local machine). Paul (2008) explains that "what distinguishes software art from other artistic practices is that, unlike any form of visual art, it requires the artist to write a purely verbal description of their work. In traditional art forms, the 'signature' and 'voice' of an artist manifests itself in aesthetics of visuals and execution. In software art, the visual results of the artwork are derived from the language of code. The aesthetics and signature of artists who write their own source code manifest themselves both in the code itself and its visual results". So, as a result, these artists have to explain the whole process of creating the piece, sometimes explaining the meaning behind it, as well as how they did (i.e. what programming language and other materials they used), similar to how a traditional abstract artist would explain their work; since generative art is mainly abstract, it can be hard to distinguish whose work is who's, although certain artists of this discipline can have their own signature style, both in terms of what they produce visually, as well as their language of choice and how they write the source code (again, similar to traditional artists and illustrators who favour one medium over the other, and how they use that medium). Creative coders/software artists/generative artists are still seen as artists, and although their practices are slightly unconventional, they're working with a fairly new medium (that hasn't been around for as long as something such as paint), and choose to draw with code instead of with more conventional and tangible materials.

Although I haven't focused on using technology as an artistic medium (apart from creating a few digital illustrations, however, this doesn't count since it's essentially the same as creating illustrations without the use of technology) during my studio practice so far, this is something that I'd want to explore sooner or later, along with how using technology as an artistic medium differs from other types of mediums and how the process of creating art varies depending on the medium, along with the experience of the process of creating art by using this technique as opposed to the process of creating with more traditional and conventional mediums. I also think that the idea of creating something with a slightly unconventional medium is interesting, along with the experience of the process of creating, along with how and why the processes/experiences vary as well as the final product itself. Additionally, I also want to look at the idea of whether something created with these techniques can even be considered art to begin with since creative expression (along with authenticity) is essentially traded for the more technical aspects, and how aesthetics are traded for the novelty and experimentation of a relatively new medium, along with how two very contrasting areas can be brought together through using (and also seeing) technology as an artistic medium, rather than merely just technology, although the experiences of creating and seeing the final outcome will be very different to the things done traditionally.

So, although these aren't typically common practices within Contemporary Art and Illustration, technology is evolving and certain aspects of technology are gradually being recognised as artistic mediums as more artists begin to warm up to the idea of using technology as a creative medium rather than just seeing it for what it is. The original objective of the essay was to look at how the use of technology is evolving in working practices, how it changes our definition of art as a whole, how combining both art and technology can be merged into one, and how certain technologies such as net art, virtual reality and creative coding/generative art help define this as well as merging both art and technology together. The points that were made were how browser-based art (net.art) changes the experience of creating art, along with how virtual reality is essentially a more modern version of net.art (and how VR completely changes the experience of viewing art altogether), and how creative coding/generative art is a relatively new medium that focuses on drawing with code rather than with traditional materials, which therefore changes the experience of creating as well as viewing the piece. These aspects were chosen since they all overlap each other and have some similarities,

although they are all vastly different in their own right. Overall, these aspects essentially bridge the gap between art and technology, as well as being recognised as artistic mediums rather than just the technology itself.

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