

Workshop: The Museum of Modern Art

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Currently, the Museum of Modern Art on 11 West 53rd Street New York, NY, has an exhibition with paintings, sculptures, architecture, fashion designs, and more from the 1880s to today. From the second to the fourth floor three different collections (e.g. 1940s-1970s collection) are presented in many small galleries (e.g. Gallery 402 - In and Around Harlem). Of course, the exhibit features works by several world-renowned artists including American abstract expressionist Jackson Pollack (Gallery 403 - Action Painting 1), Belgian surrealist Rene Magritte (Gallery 517 – Surrealist Objects), and Dutch post-impressionist Vincent Van Gogh (Gallery 501 – 19th-Century Innovators); however, the sections of the exhibit I enjoyed the most were part of the 1970s-Present collection, which was displayed on the second floor and featured many up-and-coming artists. There, one was able to recognize and analyze how the design elements of rhythm, balance, and dominance are created with the help of colors, drawing and painting techniques, as well as visual arrangement. Additionally, I was able to observe how technology influences art, which is something I already discussed in my midterm paper when talking about Dutch designer Iris van Herpen.

Another Dutch artist making use of technology in his works is Joan Heemskerk, who makes up the duo JODI together with his Belgian colleague Dirk Paesmans. Their *My%Desktop* creations from 2002 are shown in Gallery 211 in the form of video records and monitors with the goal of showing how the usage and performance of perfectly rational computers evokes irrationality in people, for example through the immense amount of data available online (MOMA, 2019). People's personalities rub off on their computer; for instance, while playing a computer game, a user might

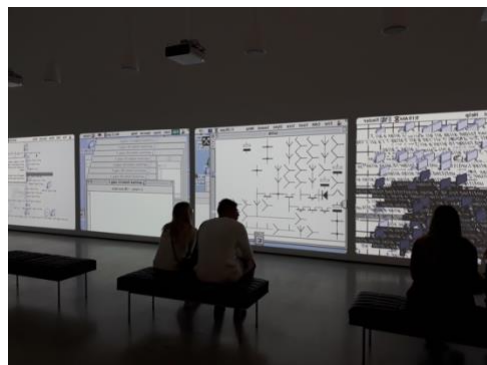


Figure 1. JODI's *My%Desktop* from the Museum of Modern Art

experience delays or desktop freezes that cause his game to lose its progress or his character to die. As a result, the user will get upset and might wildly click around his or her desktop as captured by one of the videos shown in Gallery 211. Another video demonstrated a situation especially students are very familiar with: when your computer is stuck due to too many opened programs and data being processed while completing an important assignment, with the result that one can't finish the assignment on time. An example of a more positive irrationality computers evoke in people, is the receipt of a long-awaited message or email from a close friend, family, or potential employer. The respective *My%Desktop* video showed that although the computer itself is not responsible for the good news and happiness, it is still crucial in creating it. Of course, the Museum of Modern Art's exhibit creates a lot of its appeal through its works by famous artists like the Austrian Gustav Klimt, Frenchman Henri Matisse, or, as mentioned above, the Dutch Vincent van Gogh. Yet, the museum also offers opportunities to lesser-known artists like JODI. That's why the exhibit is not only interesting for students who try to experience the theory they discuss in class but for anybody with a minimal interest in art.

References

MOMA. (2019). *JODI, Joan Heemskerk, Dirk Paesmans; My%Desktop*. Retrieved December 8, 2019, from <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/193145>