Philip Galanter

Paper: Truth to Process – Evolutionary Art and the Aesthetics of Dynamism

Topic: Art Theory

Author:
Philip Galanter
Texas A&M University,
Department of
Visualization,
College or Architecture
USA
www.philipgalanter.com

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Abstract:

After a great deal of initial promise and enthusiasm, evolutionary art seems to have hit a premature and disappointing plateau. This paper proposes a difficult but necessary program for the advancement of evolutionary art.

First two significant problems are discussed. The first is the problem of creating aesthetic fitness functions that would allow evolutionary art systems to execute unattended with industrial sized populations and generations. In this context a quick survey of computational aesthetic evaluation is offered. Then it is suggested that progress in perceptual psychology and neuroaesthetics, coupled with advancements in connectionist computing, may provides new techniques for scoring aesthetic fitness.

The second problem is the sense of "sameness" and lack of innovation exhibited by typical evolutionary art systems. In this regard the related technical problem of genetic representation is noted, various types of genetic representation are reviewed, and a critique is offered relative to evolution in nature. It is noted that evolution in exercises multiple levels of complexification and emergence.

Finally an implication for generative art aesthetics and theory is discussed. It is suggested that current evolutionary art systems and projects are incoherent in so far as they don't focus on the essential virtue of generative art, i.e. a focus on process rather than final form. It is suggested that the general shift from nouns to verbs that is essential to generative art should be pushed to the fore. An aesthetic of truth to process and dynamism is proposed as foundational for evolutionary art.

Contact:
galanter@viz.tamu.edu

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