

The Digital Art Movement

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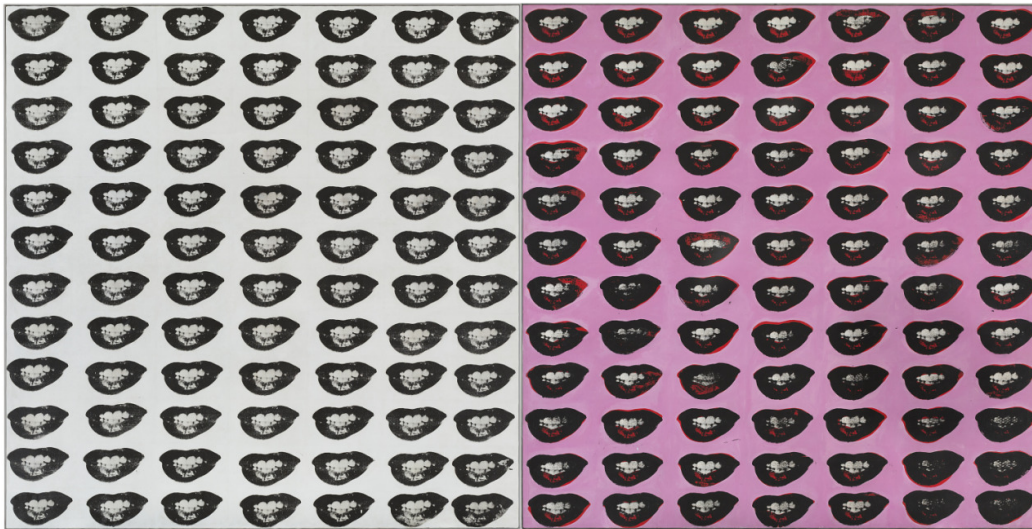
The Digital Art Movement

Digital art has been viewed as an inferior process than that of the more historically-accepted and traditional mediums. The transformative art processes of the 1960s-1990s have bred and influenced an exciting and talented new generation of digital artists in the twenty-first century, including David Mcleod, Sara Ludy, and Alberto Seveso. Most digital artists have taken inspiration from artists such as Jackson Pollock, James Nachtwey, and many more. Although, the new movement has not been brought into the art space without its own obstacles.

Contemporary art is a newer medium to be added to museums and galleries across the world. We first began seeing the start of contemporary art in the 1960s with creations from artists such as Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, and many more. Contemporary art can be defined in numerous ways, some may say it is an art form that “questions and adapts to the changing definitions of art”¹. Although, through research it is clear that there are an endless amount of ways to describe contemporary art, and what better way to describe it than to view some of the most well-known artworks done by influential contemporary artists themselves. An artist that inspired digital artists such as David Mcleod is Andy Warhol, as mentioned prior. Warhol, born in Pittsburgh in 1928, began his journey with graphic design and advertising, which led to his work *Campbell's Soup Cans, 1961-2*, and then began to explore a newer method of creating, which was transferring “ a picture photographically onto a silkscreen”².

¹ “Mission & History.” MOCA, www.moca.org/about/mission-and-history

² Fineberg, Jonathan. *Art Since 1940: Strategies of Being*. 3rd ed., London, Laurence Kong Publishing Ltd, 2011.



Andy Warhol, Marilyn Monroe's Lips, 1962. Synthetic polymer paint, silkscreened and pencil on canvas, two panels, 6ft 10 ³/₈ in x 6ft 8 ³/₄ in (2.10 x 2.05m) and 6ft 10 ³/₄ in x 6ft 10 ³/₈ in (2.18 x 2.11m). Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1972.

Which leads to the artwork shown here, *Marilyn Monroe's Lips, 1962*. One of Warhol's most famous artworks that inspired millions around the world to try new methods of creating and not being afraid of bold color choices. Warhol also believed in creating an “imperfect” print appearance and he claimed that he himself wanted to be a machine and believed “it would be terrific if everybody was alike”³ so that he could mass-produce works similar to *Marilyn Monroe's Lips, 1962*.

Contemporary art was welcome into the art world to create change, and bring boldness into artwork, with no necessary expectations set. Some artists, such as James Nachtwey used their work to voice global and personal issues found during their life. James Nachtwey was a war photographer during the 1990s and, *RWANDA, 1994*⁴ is just one example of the break-through

³ Fineberg, Jonathan. *Art Since 1940: Strategies of Being*. 3rd ed., London, Laurence Kong Publishing Ltd, 2011.

⁴ Nachtwey, James. “RWANDA, 1994.” Hood Museum, hoodmuseum.dartmouth.edu/objects/2006.39],

art he created through people's real-life stories. Nachtwey took a more head-on approach with the way he presented material, he often would avoid sugar-coating the reality of what was going on for not only soldiers but innocent victims injured within war.



Nachtwey, James. "RWANDA, 1994." Hood Museum, hoodmuseum.dartmouth.edu/objects/2006.39], "James Nachtwey: War Photographer: Life, Inspiration and Witness." Aperture Buzz, 20 Dec. 2018, www.aperturebuzz.com/james-nachtwey-war-photographer/.

Nachtwey had a rough start to his career, often questioning if he wanted to drop everything and pursue such a risky career with no hesitations, but the fuel of others not believing in him was enough to push him in headfirst. Today, Nachtwey is known for taking risks while in the field, and putting his own life in danger solely to get the realistic shots from the war⁵, and *RWANDA* is just one example of someone who risked their life, and the way Nachtwey shot this photo brings a sense of discomfort because every detail is shown within the contrast of black and

⁵ "James Nachtwey: War Photographer: Life, Inspiration and Witness." Aperture Buzz, 20 Dec. 2018, www.aperturebuzz.com/james-nachtwey-war-photographer/.

white, the focus is on the scar, and the pain can still be felt within the subject's eyes. The discomfort felt within this photo was truly Nachtwey's intent, he believed his work was a way to communicate, and if someone can not be there to see it themselves, a photograph can speak a million words.

Warhol and Nachtwey are only two of thousands of artists who left their impact on generations to come. That being said, the new digital age had to take inspiration from these artists and contemporary art opened new doors for digital artists to be able to express themselves with no boundaries in the way.

Digital artists began their entrance into the industry through various methods. Products such as photoshop, illustrator, and procreate opened the door for artists to now be free in a world where technology has taken over. Some would argue that social media is a large reason as to why these artists began creating in the first place, but digital art began flourishing years before social media was a career method. It all began in the 1980s when Harold Cohen began using an application called AARON which was created by a group of engineers⁶. His work influenced millions and led to new creations and software, which have brought us to where we are now, with new talent changing the way we view art.

The first of three artists that will be discussed is, Sara Ludy, an artist from Bluemont, VA, who creates both canvas abstract art paintings and digital art enjoys pushing the boundaries of what

⁶ Cohen, Harold. "Digital Art ." *Tate.org*, www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/d/digital-art.

we are used to seeing. From majoring in painting to becoming a 2D & 3D creator, Ludy still sees herself as simply an artist of many different forms. The painting “*Untitled 4.*”⁷ is a beautiful representation of her stylistic choices. Ludy enjoys creating a world in which a viewer can shift from a physical to a virtual view. Her use of color is purposeful to present the view she has that there is a 3D representation within this 2D painting. Throughout each work of art she submits, they are all heavy in color and rarely on the neutral side of the color palette, she enjoys creating movement and energy within the work she creates.

Ludy often refers to a digital sublime being her main source of inspiration within her own life and her work, she describes it as something that “emerges from a collectively built hyperobject that globally connects our nervous systems”.⁸ Many, amongst myself, believe her work creates a world in which everything we can see is combined into one, and with a touch of her own imaginative reality we are able to see into her mind and her emotions. Sara Hudy is the epitome of what the next generation of digital artists can be.

⁷ Ludy, Sara. “Untitled 4, 2020.” SaraLudy, 2020, www.saraludy.com/untitled-4-2020

⁸ Flanagan , Rosie, and Sara Ludy. “Digital Sublime.” *Taupe Magazine*, 23 Jan. 2020, www.taupemagazine.com/digitalsublime.



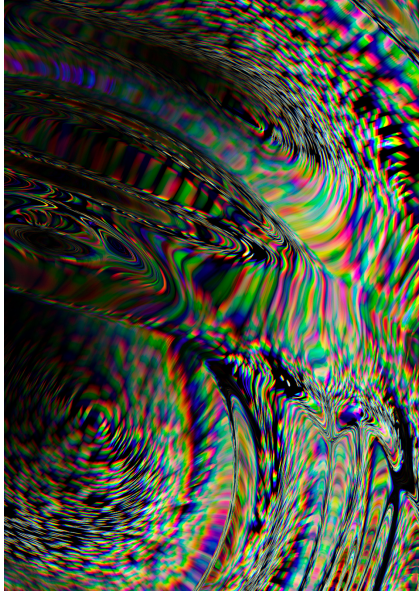
Ludy, Sara. "Untitled 4, 2020." SaraLudy, 2020, www.saraludy.com/untitled-4-2020.

David McLeod is an Australian digital artist who considers himself to be driven by pushing boundaries within the art industry and seeing what new limits he can create. A lot of McLeod's work is heavily influenced by movement and real-life elements, similar to Sara Ludy's train of thought. The artwork that stands out amongst others is one of two from his Dispersion collection⁹. This artwork is a representation of the way light and color disperses within our world. He uses tools in order to stimulate objects and makes still and moving works of art to express the beauty behind it. This work reminded me so much of Larry Bell's 1978¹⁰ interpretation of light reflecting and moving on metallic film. Larry found a way to create a

⁹ McLeod, David. "Dispersion." DavidMcLeod.com, davidmcleod.com/dispersion/.

¹⁰ Larry Stuart Bell, 1978. SF 6.20.11A (Small Figure). Mixed Media on Paper, W 25.5 in; H.33.5 in; W 64.77 cm; H. 85.09 cm. American, b. 1939, Chicago, Illinois, based in Venice, California

work of art that is 2 dimensional and makes it appear as though it is a 3-dimensional piece moving around due to the colors and reflections.



Larry Stuart Bell, 1978. SF 6.20.11A (Small Figure). Mixed Media on Paper, W 25.5 in; H.33.5 in; W 64.77 cm; H. 85.09 cm. American, b. 1939, Chicago, Illinois, based in Venice, California

Both of these art pieces explored a new limitation of art, as McLeod had hoped, and he took it almost a step further by digitalizing the media, giving it more depth, and more of a feeling of movement.

Alberto Seveso, born in Milona is a digital artist who began his work in the 1990s, due to his interest in “skate decks and album covers for metal bands.”¹¹. Seveso refrains from considering himself an artist, he believes his work is simply a mix of methods that form art but to

¹¹ “Artist Profile: Alberto Seveso: JMC Academy.” JMC Academy , 1 June 2015, www.jmccademy.edu.au/news-and-events/news/artist-profile-alberto-seveso/#:~:text=Alberto%20Seveso%20is%20a%20graphic,album%20covers%20for%20metal%20bands.

him, the word artist is a bit aggressive¹², although some would argue otherwise. Like most digital artists, Seveso has been inspired by many artists who framed what traditional contemporary art is, he lists Pollock as one of his examples and you can truly see the hits of inspiration taken within his color method put into play. *Various Portrait*¹³ is one of twelve pieces in his bundle focused on creating portraits out of natural elements and powerful colors. His use of black background allows the 3D element of the piece to be experienced in a more realistic and impactful manner. Seveso uses pieces of a human portrait along with pieces of natural elements, nature, smoke, and hand-drawn designs to fill in the rest of the portrait. His use of these elements and color are his signature and what sets him apart from other artists.

Seveso continues to push his creativity to new levels every time his new artwork is released, he has stated that he is now working on pieces for a “movie of a famous fairy tale.”¹⁴ It will be easy to spot his work with his signature color and smoke use brought to life once again.

¹² Feeldesain. “8 Questions With Alberto Seveso.” Feel Desain | Your Daily Dose of Creativity, 2 Feb. 2015, www.feeldesain.com/8-questions-with-alberto-seveso.html.

¹³ Seveso, Alberto. “Various Portrait .” Burdu976, www.burdu976.com/phs/portfolio/portraits/.

¹⁴ Feeldesain. “8 Questions With Alberto Seveso.” Feel Desain | Your Daily Dose of Creativity, 2 Feb. 2015, www.feeldesain.com/8-questions-with-alberto-seveso.html.



Seveso, Alberto. "Various Portrait ." Burdu976, www.burdu976.com/phs/portfolio/portraits/.

Each of these artists have fought to prove their place is in the art industry, as many digital artists are questioned regarding their worth and talent. Through real-world experience, it is clear that digital artists second guess all aspects of their work, from pricing to meaning, and even if there is enough complexity behind it to be treated as art. Most digital artists start out putting their work on social media with no charge necessary and others will steal and resell their work. This occurs because in order to be taken as a serious creator in this society we must first prove ourselves, but the question is, who gets to decide what is real art or not? On the other spectrum

of the argument, some would say digital art is superior to traditional art. The effort and knowledge it takes to learn each software, compose an idea, and execute it to its fullest potential is in and of itself revolutionary and stands alone as an element to prove all digital artists' worth.

In order to inspire future digital artists, museums, and colleges have taken it upon themselves to deliver the best education possible, through degrees, and through smaller workshops. The Tate Museum for instance now offers a “Modern Art”¹⁵ Workshop where the attendees are encouraged to “explore the boundaries of participation and interaction through digital experiments”¹⁶. Courses such as the one that The Tate Museum offers are the reason why digital artists today are able to expand their knowledge. Once universities began encouraging creativity and pursuing it as a career, doors were opened for this new generation. Digital artists are now sharing their work and making a living off of the art that was only ever able to happen due to previous artists in the modern and postmodern times.

Jackson Pollock, an artist who introduced abstract expressionism, a form of artwork. Pollock is a perfect example of going against the grain, his artwork is a perfect example of why he was a pioneer in creating innovative work that has still been carried on in 2021 and has been inspirational for other artists in many ways, from his use of bold color to the linework, and shapes introduced, his methods were extremely revolutionary.

¹⁵Sedek, Grzesiek. “Digital Making Art School: With Digital Maker Collective, University of the Arts London – Workshop at Tate Modern.” *Tate.org*, 2017, www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/tate-exchange/workshop/digital-making-art-school.

¹⁶ Sedek, Grzesiek. “Digital Making Art School: With Digital Maker Collective, University of the Arts London – Workshop at Tate Modern.” *Tate.org*, 2017, www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/tate-exchange/workshop/digital-making-art-school.



Jackson Pollock, Male and Female, c 1942. Oil on canvas, 6ft 1 ¼ in x 4ft 1 15/16 in (1.86 x 1.24m). Philadelphia Museum of Art. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. H. Gates Lloyd.

Although now artists like David McLeod, Sara Ludy, and Alberto Seveso are showing that their work is no longer inferior and has the same worth as those traditional mediums that inspired them.

While both digital and traditional art have similarities and take inspiration from one another, it is clear that there will always be a debate on who is more inferior and superior. The new generation of digital artists in the twenty-first century, including David McLeod, Sara Ludy, and Alberto Seveso are only a few of the many fighting to make digital art known and well respected. Digital art and traditional are both extremely difficult mediums to master and each should be respected equally, there is no need for comparison regarding two crafts that in some

ways can be polar opposites to one another, in the method it is created. Artists should not have to fight to prove that they are artists, it is not a simple yes or no answer, and no one person has the power to label someone an artist or not, we as a society must come together and embrace all works of art, digital, traditional, and all other mediums in between.

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