

# Editorial

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This special issue of the CITAR Journal of Science and Technology of the Arts is dedicated to the 2016 edition of xCoAx, conference on Computation, Communication, Aesthetics and X, which took place in the beautiful city of Bergamo, Italy, last July. The authors of some of the most interesting and best reviewed papers were invited to extend and elaborate on their work and submit new papers for this issue.

Right in the middle of the reviewing process came the news that, for the first time in its 115-year history, the Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded to a songwriter, Bob Dylan. The decision of the Swedish Academy made big waves in the news, and sparked more than one heated discussion on whether Dylan's work qualifies as Literature. His songs are unanimously recognised as exceptionally valuable, but the consensus on their status in the galaxy of human culture is not as universal. Do the lyrics to a song count as poetry? Are songwriters writers *tout-court*? Some people may have thought about these questions in the past, but the decision of the Swedish Academy has brought the issue to the foreground and compelled every person with the slightest interest in culture to deal with it. To all these people we say: welcome to our world. Computer Art theoreticians and practitioners have been dealing with the struggle of defining, classifying, explaining, justifying things forever or, at least, since the dawn of this endeavour. The struggle is real, even double. By choosing to work at the intersection of two fields, they have inherited the issues from both sides: not only the millennia-old

questions on Art are still there, but also the century-old, relatively new questions on Computer Science have joined the party. To put it in a simple, maybe too simple, way: it is not only "Why is this Art?" anymore, but also "Is this still Art if a computer does it?" On the bright side, questions are what research lives for, so it should not come as a surprise if Computer Art is bursting with interesting issues that so many brilliant minds and skillful hands have been tackling with new papers, installations and performances every year. Given the particular characteristics of the computational artefacts that are used to create Art, or that are proposed as Art themselves, every time we try to investigate on the nature of these works to answer the questions above, new ones arise that, starting from the latest technological innovations, take us back to the beginning, making us question the very fundamental entities upon which we build not only Computer Art, but our thought itself.

In this issue, Andreoletti and Rzezonka investigate on the material aspects of programmability and the programmable aspects of matter, Cardoso analyses the nature of interaction through a myriad of video games, Daudrich compares early Computer Art and traditional Art in terms of algorithms, geometry and randomness, Hernández-Ramírez depicts a non-quantitative interpretation of artworks as informational entities, Lee illustrates several alternative ways to elaborate text with a computer for artistic purposes, Mikulinsky and Toister start from an automated YouTube channel to question the nature of authorship

and, finally, Rutz proposes a new interpretation of the concept of algorithm from the perspective of Sound Art.

All these works can be interpreted in two juxtaposed ways: as expressing computational issues in artistic terms, or as expressing artistic issues in

computational terms. Either way, the discourse goes on, drawing on the long standing contrasts between Man and Machine, Analog and Digital, Random and Deterministic, Material and Abstract.

To those still struggling with a Literature Nobel Prize awarded to a songwriter, again, welcome.