dataesthetics
curated by Shannon C. McMullen, PhD.

Mara Battiste
Jordan Cleland
Esteban Garcia
Michael Hoerter
Yagiz Mungan

Rueff Galleries, Purdue University
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The works shown in the exhibition are part of the ETB graduate seminar AD61600 *Form Follows Data*, in which we have been investigating the artistic approaches and responses to data visualization, a term that seems to be expanding to include scientific visualizations, information graphics and more recently a set of approaches to art production. In the first third of the class, we collaborated with the Envision Center for Data Perceptualization to put together a series of talks on data visualization from scientific, engineering and humanities perspectives. These talks were video-recorded and can be viewed here:

http://www.gardensandmachines.com/AD61600/data-visualization-presentation-videos/

With these perspectives and visualization examples in mind, the graduate students in AD61600 began to develop their own artistic strategies for data visualization. Relatively new programs, such as Processing, have made code-based visualization more accessible to non-programmers (like many artists), providing a new community with the opportunity to respond to and capitalize on the overwhelming amount of data in the world today. Processing was used to realize projects like those from Yagiz Mungan and Esteban Garcia. Mara Battiste took advantage of the functions in Photoshop to develop images of family resemblance—making connections between computer and genetic code. Michael Hoerter combined animation software limitations in producing realism with cultural references to humanoid robots to ask questions about the uncanny. Jordan Cleland combined analog and digital processes to create a synesthetic experience in which you can hear brightness.

Unlike scientific visualization or info graphics, these projects do not attempt to analyze or represent objective data. Each of the works represents a subjective and sometimes very personal relationship to data. In some cases, the artists have engaged in a collaborative relationship with the computer, allowing the aesthetics to be a negotiation between their inputs and desires and the algorithm-driven functions and outputs from programs such as Processing, Photoshop and 3D animation software. This is in contrast to many scientific visualizations which allow computer algorithms to almost entirely determine the aesthetics produced--aside from color choices (for example, MatLab graphics, SciViz, etc.) As a result, these artists show us a highly individualized perspective on data and address contemporary culture through a variety of digital media.

You can also follow the process of project development on the course blog: http://www.gardensandmachines.com/AD61600/

Who are other artists that work with dataesthetics, subjective representations of data and/or large datasets? Here are just a couple of examples:

- Corey Archangel
  http://www.coryarcangel.com/things-i-made/supermarioclouds/)

- Jason Salavon
  http://salavon.com/

- Jose Duarte
  http://www.flickr.com/photos/joseduarteq/5559830026/in/photostream

- H-57
  http://firstfloorunder.com/2011/05/typodesign_strips-darth-vader/

- Iohanna Nicenboim

Exhibition pictures: