

G DIGITAL FINE ART

RARELY DO COLLECTORS have the opportunity to get involved at the beginning of a new art movement, when significant work by new artists is most unaffected and affordable. But that opportunity has arrived in the form of original Digital Art prints. Some collectors are already familiar with the term giclée, which has come to refer to high quality digitally printed reproductions of work

revolutionized commercial art, photography, television, music and film and, as such, the term "digital art" can be applied to so many artistic endeavors that this revolution has been virtually transparent. However, as artists who employ digital tools make inroads into the world of Fine Arts it has become time for some serious consideration as to what this art has to offer. A good place to begin to get a handle on this new kind of art making, would be to identify the basic genres of digital art that are currently emerging.



JD JARVIS "JUNGLE GYM" SOFTWARE: ADOBE PHOTOSHOP®

created using any number of traditional media. This work is captured and imported into a computer by either scanning or digital photography for the purposes of making multiples. The time has come for a different group of artists to come to the forefront. These artists use the computer and a wide array of digital imaging software in the direct-to-disk creation of original Digital Art imagery. While this work may be printed using the same digital printing systems as giclée reproductions, Digital Art imagery is recognizably unique in that a different set of creative tools, which reside in the computer itself, are used to make the art in the first place.

The use of computers in the creation of art is nothing new. Computer art has been with us now for well over twenty-five years. In fact, the majority of the images flooding our senses each day via a number of different media are created digitally. These new art making tools have

PHOTO-MANIPULATION AND COLLAGE

Photography, with its own long history as a populist image-making technology, turned mass-media-device, turned Fine Art, is both a model and a material for Digital Art. Digital imaging technology has served photographers well, with 2003 marking the first year

that digital cameras outsold traditional film cameras. Beyond standard photographic techniques, digital tools open up a whole world of expanded image manipulation and printing techniques. In particular is the ability to resize, reposition, select, cut, paste, color and blend almost limitless layers of divergent photographic images into seamless and amazing digital Collages. These collages are often fantastic and surreal in their appearance and thereby often draw into question our modern dependency on the photograph to present a picture of truth and reality. Digital Art techniques have freed photography from its own finality. In the hands of a digital artist a photograph is just the beginning, neither real nor unreal.

NATURAL MEDIA

The Chameleon-like ability of "natural media" software to mimic the appearance

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of many traditional media, such as chalk, pastel, ink, watercolor, oils and airbrush makes this genre of Digital Art hard to spot, at first. This work is often created totally freehand using a pressure

out of these patterns is just one way that human beings make these tools work for them. So, in addition to hand drawn or photographic imagery, a digital imaging system can produce art based on its own internal functions.

In the mid-1970's, mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot brought to attention what he called Fractal Geometry. He showed how fractals occur in many different places in both mathematics and elsewhere in nature. With the aid of computer graphics, Mandelbrot who then worked at IBM's Watson Research Center, was able to demonstrate how his mathematical formulas could describe



MYRIAM LOZADA-JARVIS "UN POQUITO DE BORRAS" SOFTWARE: COREL PAINTER

sensitive drawing tablet to transpose linear movements into digital line and variations in stylus pressure to vary this line's thickness, color or texture. Depending on the artist's intent, there can be very little to tell this work apart from any other art medium that is built up mark upon mark.

The nature of original Digital Art is such that this "original" artwork is created and resides in a place separate from physical material. That is, digital art cannot be presented in physical form without it first being expressed either as a light image on a computer screen or as a print. This "patina" of technology gives Digital Art an entertaining "trick-the-eye" quality and a once-removed appearance that also found expression in the aesthetics of Pop Art. The resulting work has a distinctive fresh quality that one can easily train one's eye to recognize and appreciate.

ALGORITHMIC OR MACHINE ART

Algorithmic patterns and mathematical potentials course through the computer's digital nervous system. Creating visual art

complex natural structures, such as cloud formations, the distribution of leaves and



JD JARVIS "SMOKEY WOOD" SOFTWARE: ADOBE PHOTOSHOP®
COREL PAINTER, KAI'S POWER TOOLS, XAOS TOOLS—PAINT ALCHEMY

twigs on a tree, the shape of a coastline or the infinitely self iterating forms of a sea shell. To do this he had to develop not only new mathematical ideas, but also he had to

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develop some of the first computer programs to print graphics.

Fractal imagery is highly seductive and patently beautiful work, which is inherently new to the development of digital imaging. Beyond this distinctive imagery, fractal algorithms direct the behavior of "filters" and other image manipulation sub-programs that digital artists regularly employ to generate special visual effects that are in turn integrated into their artwork. Furthermore, fractal geometry has made it possible for artists to model in

from nearly any form of input and to then integrate and compose this material into interesting work is astounding.

Just as photography and collage can be combined, digitally, with traditional painting techniques and then integrated or further shaped by fractal manipulations into something fresh, the visual styles of art which we have accumulated over the last six hundred years of art making—that is, all the art movements of the past that were identified as fostering unique imagery—these styles can be integrated into one

another to make Digital Art. In this respect, Digital Art is the ultimate Mixed Media Art.

What this all means to the collector is that we have new frontiers of art-making to explore and examine. It means that, here at the turn of another century, there is an emerging form of art that comes directly from the technological invention that promises to define the culture of this century. For the interested collector



JD JARVIS "PILGRIMAGE"

SOFTWARE: ADOBE PHOTOSHOP®, COREL PAINTER, KAI'S POWER TOOLS

virtual three-dimensional space their own photo-realistic landscapes, architecture and environments, which are also part of this genre.

SYNTHESIS OR INTEGRATIVE ART

This final genre is more or less the crown jewel of Digital Art because, by definition, it suggests the computer's ability to combine, in one composition, all of the aforementioned genres. This ability, to integrate divergent input into a common binary language, means that artists now have imaging tools that can manipulate such things as sound, motion, text or light as if these were a common material. Beyond mixing visual genres, the computer's potential to synthesize patterns of light

there is a fresh batch of art and artists to research, new things to learn and relevant art to appreciate.

To those who are just starting off on this journey, what does digital art look like? For the time being, if the work forces you to wonder whether it is a photograph, a painting or a print—and the answer is "Yes" to all three—then it is probably Digital Art.