

Imaging the Unseen

A statement on my pursuit as an artist, Roman Verostko, 2006

Form Source. My algorithmic work is rooted in the tradition of early 20th Century artists who sought to create an art of pure form. Influenced by the work and writings of artists like Malevich and Mondrian my work turned to a lifelong quest for an art of pure form. This quest, to create visual form with a life of its own, has dominated my work for over 50 years. All of my current work, generated with coded procedures, continues the same quest for "pure form" that seduced the first generation of early 20th Century purists.



Frame from Roman's *"Magic Hand of Chance"*, a program of *algorithmic* form animations.

Transition to algorithmic form generators.

In 1970, through a programming course at the Control Data Institute in Minneapolis, I experienced the awesome "form-generating" possibilities of coded procedures coupled to computing power. Clearly the dreams of those pioneers could be realized! With this technology we could create instructions for generating visual forms; we could now compose the "score" for drawing!

With the advent of personal computers, I began writing elementary drawing instructions, "algorithms", that mimed methods I had been using to create art forms. The awesome power of recursive drawing drew me to a full commitment and studio conversion. Since then my work has concentrated on developing and refining a program of procedures based on my practice as a painter. For the past 25 years all my art forms have been generated with original algorithms.

These procedures have brought me to a new frontier of visual forms, forms we could never envision without the awesome power of algorithmic recursion driven with computing power. These art forms do not describe or refer to other realities - rather they have a visual life of their own.

Titles. Title sources vary. Some titles derive from evocative qualities I see in the finished form. Some works remain untitled and are given numbers much like musical compositions. Often works are titled to celebrate a text, commemorate a person, or mark an event. However the art forms themselves are always presented as visual realities to be experienced, similar to the way one might experience a musical form, a flower, or a tree.

Meanings. My art reflects coded procedures driving the technologies that shape our culture. Each drawing visualizes the code by which it was generated. With surprising grace and beauty, these visualizations invite us to ponder the power of form-generating code with its seemingly stark logic. By doing so, this art celebrates the mysterious nature of coded procedures that underlie the shape of our evolving selves.

Roman Verostko, 2006
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Technical Procedures.

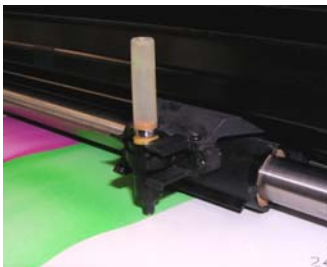
Notes on my tools and techniques with algorithmic procedure.



Houston Instrument DMP52 plotter
Executing a brush stroke.



Oriental brushes (above) and
ink pens (below) with adapted
to fit the plotter drawing arm.



Plotting a drawing.



Plotting with a brush.

By 1982 I had developed some elementary instructions for initiating and improvising art-form ideas. These instructions included "form-generating" routines that continued my quest for pure form. With these generators I could explore visual possibilities, make choices, refine forms, and compose a procedure for creating art. The finished work is drawn with ink pens mounted on the drawing arm of a pen plotter. Controlling algorithms for all procedures are under continuing development in a program of routines I have titled "*Hodos*", the Greek term for "*pathway*".

Materials.

Most of my algorithmic works are original pen and ink drawings on rag paper. Technical pens with refillable inkwells employing permanent acrylic inks execute the drawings. Since the mid 1980's all drawings have been executed with Houston Instruments multi-pen plotters coupled to PC's. Currently I am using HI 7000 machines coupled to PC's operating on DOS. Some works include occasional brush strokes. For this purpose I devised an interactive routine with the pen plotter; the routine pauses the machine, as needed, so I can load a paint brush and mount it on the pen plotter drawing arm for executing brush strokes. The plotter uses the brush in lieu of ink pens. In some instances I have also used self-inking brushes in lieu of pens.

The Code.

My software is written in elementary BASIC with DMPL as the command language for driving the plotter. Historical routines dating back to the 1980's can be called on from the controlling program. A new work could be created today with routines dating from the 1980's.

As an artist my great interest has always been mastering a technique for creating an art object. Elementary pen plotting tools and simple programming techniques have provided me with more challenges than I can exhaust in my lifetime. After more than 50 years and thousands of drawings I have learned a lot about ink viscosities, pigments, paper surfaces, the honing of pen tips, and writing software fixes. Yet, I feel that I have only begun to explore the art of drawing with pen and paper.

Roman Verostko, 2006, Minneapolis, USA

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