

ACM SIGGRAPH Distinguished Artist Award for Lifetime Achievement in Digital Art

Manfred Mohr



Manfred Mohr.
Photograph courtesy of
Estarose Wolfson.

The 2013 ACM SIGGRAPH Lifetime Achievement in Digital Art Award is awarded to Manfred Mohr for his pioneering achievements in creating art through algorithmic geometry. Beginning his creative career in the late 1950s as a jazz musician and painter, he focused on gestural abstraction. In 1962, he began exclusive use of black and white as means of visual and aesthetic expression. After he discovered Max Bense's information aesthetics in the early 1960s, his artistic thinking was radically changed. Within a few years, his art transformed from abstract expressionism to computer-generated algorithmic geometry. Encouraged by the computer-music composer Pierre Barbaud, Mohr programmed his first computer drawings in 1969. The combination of mathematics and music gives his work a core essence of rhythm and repetition.

In 1972, Mohr began producing sequential drawings and started working on the fixed structure of a cube. He renewed his work on the 4D hypercube in 1987, using four-dimensional rotation as a generator of signs. Since 1995, he has been a member of The Algorists, founded by Jean-Pierre Hébert and Roman Verostko. In 1998, after creating in black and white for more than three decades, Mohr began to use color to show the complexity of the work through differentiation. Four years later, he designed and built small PCs to run his "space.color" program, and in 2004 he wrote the program "subsets." The resulting images are visualized on LCD flat panels in a slow, non-repetitive motion. He then developed the program "klangfarben," which encompasses a body of paintings and animations based on the 11-dimensional hypercube, using its diagonal paths as compositional building blocks. The program runs on a PC, and the resulting images and animations are visualized in real time on two square LCD flat panels. His latest software, "Artificiata II," creates digital paintings and animations that are based on the 11- to 13-dimensional hypercube and uses diagonal paths as graphic elements. The animation algorithm contains random variations of speed and suites of stills that add a musical rhythm to this work. Mohr's creative exploration of visual complexity continues to the present day.

Among his accomplishments are the Golden Nica from Ars Electronica, Linz, 1990; Artist Fellowship, New York Foundation of the Arts, 1997; and the [ddaa] d.velop Digital Art Award, Berlin, 2006. The ARC, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, hosted his first one-man show of computer-generated images in 1971. Other venues for his solo shows include the Digital Art Museum, Museum for Concrete Art, and the Kunsthalle Bremen. The ZKM | Media Museum in Karlsruhe, Germany, is hosting a retrospective of his work—The Algorithm of Manfred Mohr, 1963—from 8 June to 1 September 2013, and he is a Featured Artist at Art Basel 2013.

Mohr has been represented in many group shows and museums, including the SIGGRAPH Pioneering Artists; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris; ZKM (Center for Art and Media), Karlsruhe, Germany; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo; Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; New York Digital Salon; MoMA PS1, New York; and the Leo Castelli Gallery, New York. His work is included in the collections of the Centre Pompidou; Joseph Albers Museum, Bottrop, Germany; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, Stuttgart; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Kunsthalle Bremen, Bremen, Germany; Daimler Contemporary, Berlin; and the Musée d'Art Contemporain, Montréal.

ACM SIGGRAPH is honored to recognize Manfred Mohr, one of the pioneers of digital art. His exploration of n-dimensional hypercubes is a wonderful example for future artists using algorithmic techniques. His dedication to his craft, unique form of visual expression, and evolution as an artist from abstract expressionism to digital art all speak to his creative ingenuity.