This special section in Leonardo highlights presentations and artworks from the IEEE VIS Arts Program, or VISAP, which includes both an art exhibition and peer-reviewed papers sessions. Together they provide a forum that encourages dialogue about the relationship between aesthetics and visualization, and for discussing the potential roles of artists, humanities scholars and designers in foundational research in information visualization. The IEEE VIS conference is the premier venue for advances in visualization, bringing together researchers and practitioners from academia, government, and industry to explore their shared interests in tools, techniques and technology. VISAP, taking part concurrently within the larger IEEE VIS conference each year, provides an opportunity for artists and scholars to interact with these communities and to learn about the latest developments in visualization, while at the same time exposing visualization researchers to current topics and trends in the media arts.

The theme for VISAP’13 was Art+Experiment. Visualization research encompasses not only data representation, but also the development of interaction techniques, explorations of display aesthetics and examinations of applied perception. Increasingly, empirical justification for new visualization techniques is derived through well-designed experiments. What might it mean for an art installation to produce experimental results? Could an artwork be expressive, challenging and conceptual, yet simultaneously rigorous, practical and empirical? We invited artists and researchers to think about the connections and chasms between art and research, and to explore the nature of experimental design and creative experimentation. Featured in this special section are a selection of the VISAP’13 artists and authors who approached the theme of Art+Experiment in a compelling way.

VISAP’13 took place from 13–18 October 2013 in Atlanta, Georgia. It was co-chaired by Angus Forbes and Lauren Thorson. For more information about VISAP’13: <http://visap.uic.edu/2013>.

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