Scribble Square / Scribble to The Count of Five

Dr Jill Townsley

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Project Description

Scribble Square and *Scribble To The Count Of Five* are artworks that employ mathematically-based systems in the production of rule-based drawings, and explore extreme repetition in a drawing process involving hand-produced wall-based works and digital-media installation. *Scribble Square* is a system-based artwork consisting of an installation of five drawings, and the five-channel video installation, *Scribble To The Count Of Five* uses time-lapse recording to animate the drawing process.

Project Duration:
2015

Funder:
Glyndwr University ITA15, North Wales School of Art and Design.

Research Partners, consultants, collaborators:
The work was exhibited in Carbon Meets Silicon, curated by Dr Susan Liggett and Professor Rae Earnshaw at Oriel Sycharth Gallery, Wrexham, in conjunction with the 6th International Conference on Internet Technologies and Applications.

Scribble Square and *Scribble to the Count of Five*, Townsley

Research Aims
& Objectives

Research Aims:

• To employ mathematically-based systems in the production of rule-based drawings.

• To explore extreme repetition in a drawing process involving hand-produced wall-based works and digital-media installation.

• To investigate the relationship of hand-production and mechanical or digitised processes and their relative effectiveness in systematised rule-based structures of art production.

Research Objectives:

• To produce systems-based artwork in response to the idea (Sternberg, R.J and Kaufman, J, C., 2013) that the relationship of the human and the mechanical system is materially represented as either carbon or silicon—the carbon-based brain or silicon-based computer.

• To observe and demonstrate the slippage and failures inherent in artworks made through adherence to a system of pre-determinate rules, through the comparative use of both manual and digital processes.

Scribble Square detail, Townsley

Research Context
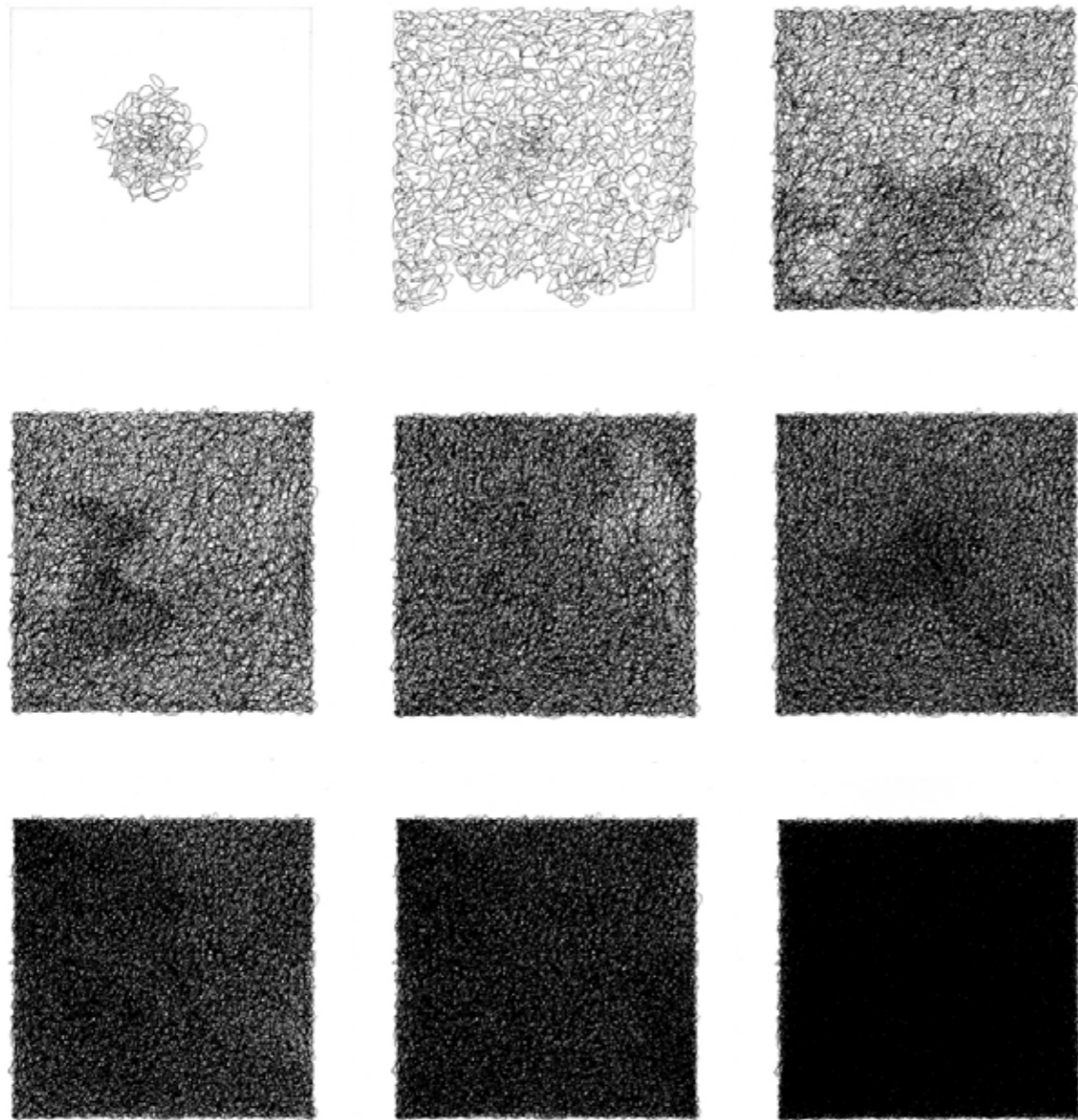
This art practice-based research was presented as a contribution to the exhibition *Carbon Meets Silicon* curated by Dr Susan Liggett and Professor Rae Earnshaw which presented the work of 16 artists and designers utilising new or emerging media or used creative technologies. The exhibition was produced in conjunction with the 6th International Conference on Internet Technologies and Applications, which drew together researchers and developers from academia and industry internationally across the fields of internet computing, engineering and art and design.

The specific context of *Carbon Meets Silicon* derives from the proposition of Sternberg and Kaufman (in The Evolution of Intelligences, 2013) that the contrasting nature of human and mechanical systems is materially based in either carbon (the brain) or silicon (the computer). The wider context includes Alan Turing's exploration of artificial intelligence and cognitive psychology with regard to whether thought and consciousness can be produced by mechanical systems; and in terms of art production such ideas have been investigated extensively in the code-generated imagery, algorithmic art-making processes and drawing machines of Roman Verostko.

The processes utilised in *Scribble Square* and *Scribble To The Count Of Five* refer through a process of reversal to the iconic work by Robert Rauschenberg, *Erased De Kooning Drawing* (1953). Rauschenberg's drawing begins densely full and illustrative and ends empty, with only the residue of the action of labour present. Similarly, but in reverse, the *Scribble Drawings* start as empty and white and through the application of repetitive labour conclude in a full and black surface, reflecting a binary process of both erasure and regeneration.

Scribble to the Count of Five, video stills (from one of five videos), Townsley.

Research Methods & Process

A simple but strict system was devised for the production of *Scribble Square*. Each of the five drawings consisted of an area one-meter square throughout which, using a black gel pen, a process of scribbling was carried out until the whole area was black with ink. In the resulting five black squares, this process was only visible through careful study of the surface and the drawing edge, places where the continual scribbled line was barely visible. Each square constitutes a singular object into which the extensive time of its production is condensed, with each individual action of the multiple actions involved lost to the whole.

To recapture and visualise the moments of process within the initial series of five drawings, a new work, this time digitally produced, was generated. *Scribble To The Count Of Five* began with hand-scribbling in just the same way, but on A4 paper. Digital scans were made during the process to record the development of the repetitive labour. Each scan was taken after an interval of five seconds of scribbling, and this was repeated 500 times. The images were then animated in sequence to make a time-lapse animation; 500 images, offering a series of 5-second insights into the development of the drawing. Five drawings were completed to the same strict process, thus making five time-lapse animations. These animation were then presented in a video installation comprising of five screens each portraying the development of a different drawing made to the same rules. The most immediate observation revealed through the time-lapse animation is that the process erases itself through its own progression. Moments of action are in turn obliterated or over-written by the gesture of the next five-second process and so process in this case is taken to its illogical limit, to the point of its own destruction or erasure. The time-lapse made visible the hidden process of the whole in a fluid sequence, and the installation of the five animations offered a comparative opportunity to see the generative process of the five drawings that were otherwise concealed by the repetitive overlaying of each set of scribbled marks. What we actually see within the repetitive process is a series of 'singular' marks, each 'different' from the next and without comparison across all five drawings.

Scribble Square and *Scribble to the Count of Five*, Townsley

# Research Outcomes & Dissemination

The two artworks *Scribble Square* and *Scribble To The Count Of Five* were exhibited in *Carbon Meets Silicon* at the Oriel Sycharth Gallery, Wrexham, curated by Dr Susan Liggett, as part of the ITA(15) 6th International Conference on Internet Technologies and Applications, held at Glyndwr University, Wrexham. The conference drew together researchers and developers from academia and industry across all fields of Internet computing, engineering and art and design.

The exhibition was documented in a catalogue *ITA (15) Carbon Meets Silicon* which Includes Townsley's text *The Digital and The Hand* (pp. 34-35), accessible online at:
http://glyndwrpix.co.uk/carbonmeetssilicon/mobile/index.html

Townsley participated in a public event involving talks and workshops held on 9 September 2015, followed by an open discussion, *Art, Design, Science, Technology and Applications – Interface Issues, Challenges and Opportunities*, chaired by Professor Rae Earnshaw and Dr Susan Liggett.
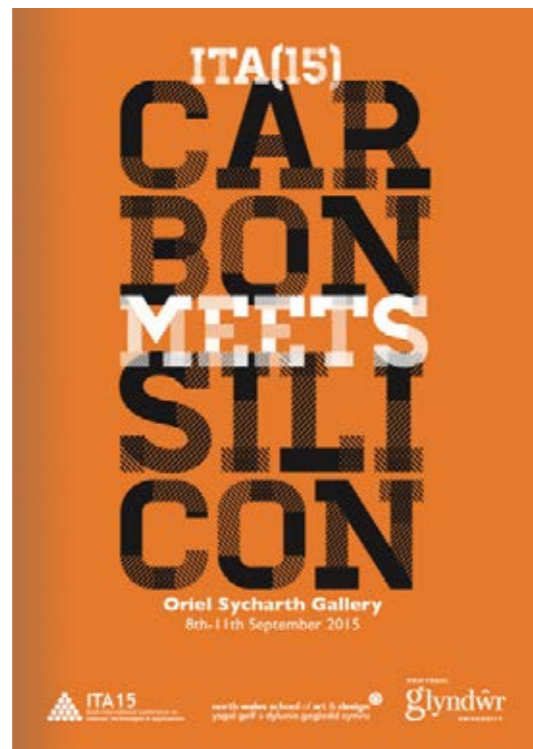
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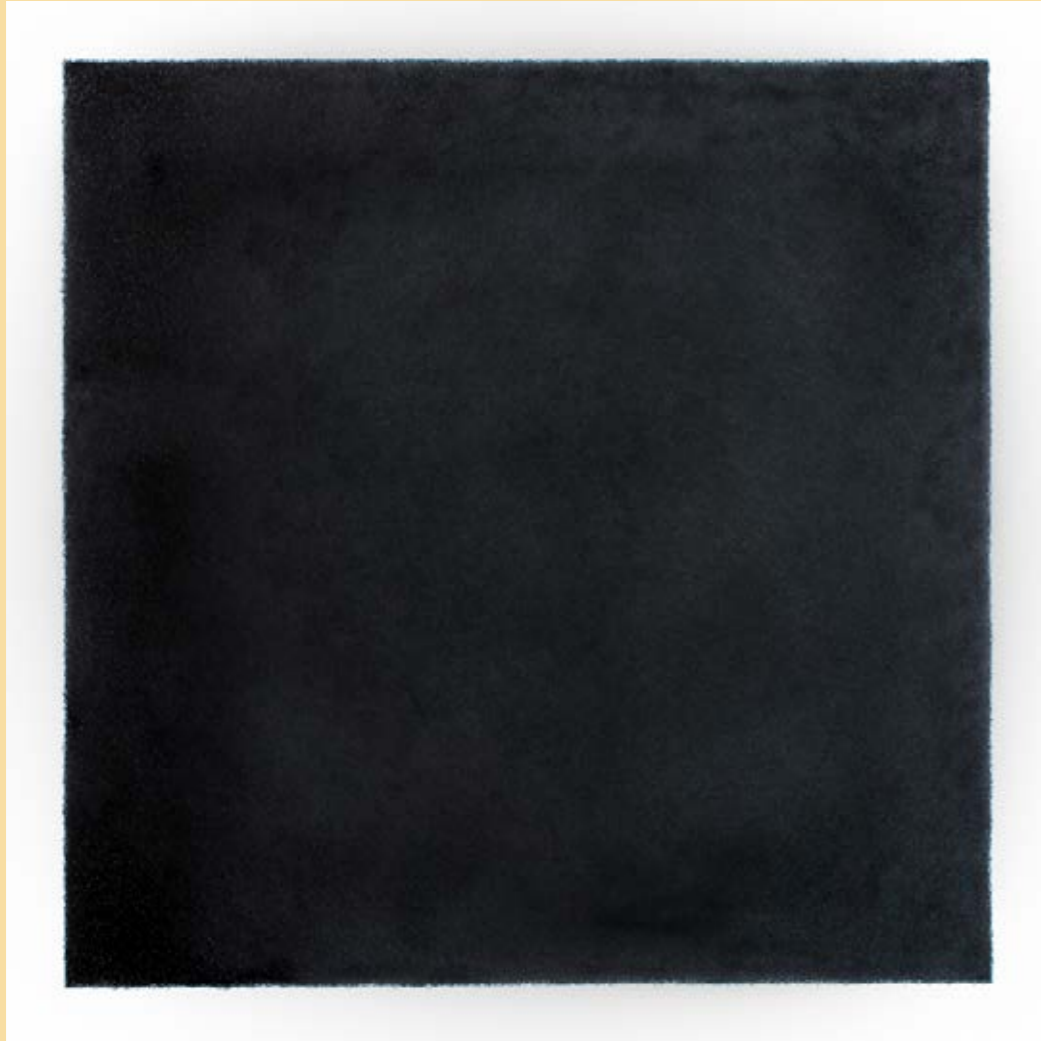
Scribble Square (one of five drawings, Townsley

Output Type:
Original artistic works, creative body of enquiry,
contribution to collaborative group exhibitions,
textual, visual, or aural content encountered as
part of the user experience on websites