Reflection 3 – by Olenka Yuen

December 14, 2022

Visualizing Ourselves ... with crowd-sourced data By Aaron Koblin

Link to TedTalk

In the beginning, Aaron Koblin quoted from a wise media theorist tweet quoting, "19th century culture was defined by the novel, 20th century culture by cinema, the culture of the 21st century will be defined by the interface". As an artist myself, I have only looked at animations and illustrations to convey stories. I thought it was interesting when the author brought up the idea of using collections of data to tell stories, and those do not limit to only data visualization.

In terms of collaborative data, the author has done several Mechanical Turk projects where many people on the internet work together. For example, Aaron had people input their drawings or voices into the system through the imitation of a prompt. Nobody knew what they were really doing until the author had shown the whole piece when it was finished. Another example was the Johnny Cash project where a collaborative music video is made to pay tribute to American singer Johnny Cash. Everyone got to contribute to a part of a whole project, where an individual would draw a frame to put into the music video. The project was unique because the fans could contribute by implementing their own unique style.

This talk has opened my view in many ways to see how the output of collected data from an interface doesn't have to be one way. The whole process from the beginning until the end could very well be collaborative, from the input of data, to the process of putting it together, to the results. Data can take many forms, it doesn't always have to be dots on a graph.

Off-topic, but this thought made me think of AI art nowadays and how people's art on the internet can be treated like data, which can be easily fed into the ai model and reproduce a specific style without the artist's consent. This is starting to become an issue of its own.