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CART 263

Reflection 2 – Ralph Ammer

Ralph Ammer is a German designer, artist, and professor whose work combines art, science, and technology. He currently teaches at the Munich University of Applied Science, where he encourages students to not just use code as a means to solve problems, but as a creative and exploratory medium. Ammer is interested in how we understand and interact with complex systems and how we can use computational thinking to gain a better understanding of the world around us. He views programming as a form of drawing or thinking. It's a way to visualize abstract concepts and patterns. Ammer's work often draws from natural systems, philosophy, and design, specifically focusing on how seemingly simple rules can generate intricate outcomes. This stems from his belief that creativity and learning flourish when we observe, engage with, and reflect on patterns that emerge through process, rather than focusing on just the results. What distinguishes Ralph from many others working with code is his philosophical approach. He doesn't just create generative art interactive design for aesthetics. Instead, he's interested in how these works reflect the human condition and how they influence the way we think. He writes extensively about creativity, uncertainty, and curiosity. Those 3 ideas are central to both his teaching and his artistic output. He often emphasizes that mistakes aren't failures, but necessary parts of any meaningful project. His website doubles as a sort of digital sketchbook / blog / portfolio, filled with all sorts of reflections that combine visual media with science and philosophy. Ammer's commitment to making complexity approachable and beautiful makes his work resonate with me. I often feel overwhelmed with information and rigid systems. By showing how coding can lead to playful, open-ended creation, he invites us to rediscover wonder.

One of Ammer's most thought-provoking works is his visual essay titled "*Henri Bergson – Why we live in the past*". In this piece, Ammer interprets and illustrates a philosophical idea from Bergson: We don't perceive reality directly as it happens, but rather with a slight delay. Bergson argued that the human mind requires time to interpret sensations, and therefore we live just a fraction of a second behind the present. Ammer brings this abstract concept to life through an interplay of text and drawing, using simple animated visuals to guide the viewer through the idea in a meditative manner. The drawings are minimal with just lines, circles and arrows, yet they manage to convey layers of meaning. Through this simplicity, Ammer makes philosophy feel accessible and even playful. This piece isn't just about visualizing a concept; it's about slowing the reader's perception down enough to feel the idea in action. He deliberately spaced the text and images out, pacing the viewer's

experience so that comprehension is gained gradually, almost mimicking the lag in our perception that Bergson describes. Technically, the work is presented as a webpage with embedded SVG-like visuals that animate with scrolling. It's not flashy. But it doesn't need to be. What's powerful here is the rhythm and emotional resonance. Ammer's careful balance of interaction and meaning encourages the viewer not to just understand Bergson's theory intellectually, but to relate it to everyday experience. Moments when we feel detached, when we hesitate, or when reality seems to move slightly ahead of us. The work reflects Ammer's larger artistic goal of using code and design to deepen people's understanding rather than to dazzle an audience. He makes timeless philosophical questions feel close and personal. "*Why we live in the past*" stands out as an amazing example of how digital media can bring abstract ideas to life in engaging ways, and how art can bridge between the worlds of science and philosophy, and our minds.