
Coursework reports 2013–14

C03343 Computing art and image effects

Coursework assignment 1

General remarks

This coursework assignment comprised four parts including essay type as well as design and implementation questions. It dealt with issues related to minimal art and repetitive spatial structures and motivated students to explore the work of related artists and engaged them in designing and implementing a virtual sculpture of their own using *Processing*. Overall, there were some very good submissions earning distinctions, while there were only a few borderline ones.

Comments on specific questions

Part A

This asked candidates to choose two or three works demonstrating the use of repetitive spatial structures by Sol LeWitt or Donald Judd and describe these using appropriate illustrations and references, focusing on how these works reflect the theoretical approach of the artist(s) at the time. Students were also asked to present views that have been expressed regarding the works' perceptual and emotional effects and provide their own analysis. Students were expected to explore various sources, to present and analyse the demonstrated ideas, comparing between different writers, and to synthesise their own viewpoints.

Generally, the choice of works by candidates was extremely satisfactory, succeeding to illustrate the artists' use of repetitive structures. Some outstanding submissions carefully chose their sources and combined them nicely to provide links to the artistic and political background of the period and show how the selected works of art were positioned in this context and the way they influenced it. These submissions were accompanied with appropriate referencing, comparison of different views and syntheses of their own. There were also some attempts that provided their own comments and intuition inline, together with the analysis of their sources, creating an unconventional but nice creative flow.

However, there were also some submissions that failed to go further than sheer reproduction of sources and which did not demonstrate adequate depth in their analysis in order to gain high marks in Part A. Answers also existed that were mostly restricted to the description of the sculptures, giving details of materials, positioning, dimensions and colour without making use of these or linking them with other attributes in order to demonstrate a point. Finally, problems with referencing were fairly common, as material from the reference list was at times not cited in the text, not providing an indication of how and if it had been used.

Part B

This asked students to define their own vocabulary of basic shapes that would be used, in the following parts, for the construction of a virtual sculpture. Furthermore, it asked for a description of the way the provided software could facilitate the construction of such sculptures. More than

a very simple description of software features was required to this end. For high marks, a thorough understanding of such features needed to be demonstrated, together with their benefits and deficiencies identified in relation to the specific problem set out in Part A.

The majority of students made good selection of their visual vocabulary and demonstrated good insight regarding the use of *Processing* for this task. However, there were occasions where the analysis was too short and thin. Moreover, a number of students introduced the notions of extrusion and revolution at this point. These were not particularly relevant here, as this coursework assignment focused on minimal art constructed by repetition of simple structures.

Part C

Candidates were asked to make a sketch of a scene constructed with the shapes of the vocabulary defined in the previous part. The sketch should be accompanied with a description of the intended visual and emotive effects. In this question it was important that a hand-drawn sketch was made, providing the basic starting point for development, as specified. Using a drawing package at this stage would not be appropriate. Also, it was important that the rationale, for any artistic and emotional effects, should be well argued, explained and justified; claiming that some effect was achieved, would not be sufficient.

Most students provided suitable sketches. Simple but well conceived ideas, accompanied with sufficient justification and illustrations from multiple viewpoints earned high marks. On the other hand, there were also submissions that suffered from a poorly thought-out rationale for the scene and its effects. Some students diverged from the artistic context of the coursework assignment and designed scenes that were rather realistic and, at times, quite complex and overly difficult to implement. Finally, some ideas – though very interesting – were not accompanied with a thorough description, as many of the students did not follow the guideline number of words.

Part D

This asked candidates to implement a faceted representation of the scene they described in Part C. Students were allowed to use code from the subject guide or other sources, but it was very important to clearly distinguish between their own code and code borrowed from elsewhere. Furthermore, the description of the modelling approach should be concise but complete and the discussion on how well the computer graphics representation relates to the sketch, and the intention, should be convincingly argued. Also, awareness of additional computer graphics facilities that would be useful should show good understanding, while including relevant knowledge gained outside the course and from additional reading within it. Finally, navigation and view manipulation should be explained and their use documented, with a short user guide as appropriate.

Generally, students did well in this part. There were some outstanding submissions with well-documented, high-quality code, good discussion and insightful evaluation.

Overall, the submitted implementations offered adequate navigation functionality in the scene.

However, in some cases the answers were not balanced between implementation and analysis and description. To this end, there were a number of excellent programming attempts that lacked proper explanation and contextualisation with respect to the artistic background and the intended effect. On the other hand, there were also students who demonstrated excellent understanding and intuition of the artistic concepts, but their implementation did not come up to these standards.

Other problems that appeared in certain cases included lack of clarity regarding which parts of the code were implemented by the student, lack of controlled navigation capabilities and absence of evaluation of the degree to which the implementation demonstrated the initial idea.