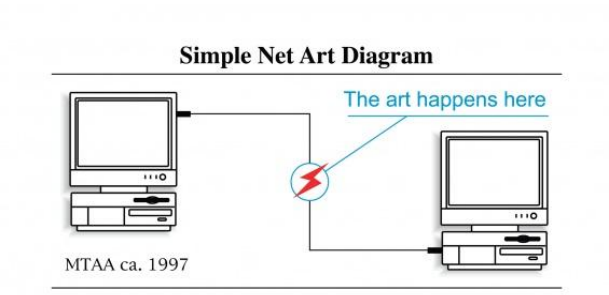
INTΞRNΞT ΛRT 1

MAAD 23631 1 (Autumn 2021)



> *The Web represents a grand emotional, sensory, and intellectual adventure for anyone willing to explore it actively. [...] For artists, ignoring the imperative to grasp the cultural implications of the Internet means risking irrelevance. [...] As human discourse adapts to its new home, everything we do and think as human beings will be and is being shaped by new values. [...] If it's ever fair to say that anything has "changed everything," it's fair to say so about the Internet.* — Virginia Heffernan

Course Description

We generally accept that computers and the Internet evolved outside of fine art contexts, in fields like science and mathematics. That said, the history of these technologies is a history of creative individuals collaboratively shaping one of the most important narratives of our time, "the Internet is the great masterpiece of human civilization" (Heffernan). In this studio course, we'll learn what the Internet is, how it works, how it got here and how to engage with it as an artistic medium. This means we'll be learning how to craft it from code, specifically HTML (hypertext markup language) and CSS (cascading style sheets), but also studying its aesthetics, conventions and practices. We'll be drawing inspiration from various Internet art movements, from the net.art scene of the 1990s, to the digital folk art of GeoCities at the turn of the century, to the Web design and CSS art scenes of today. The goal of this course will be to cultivate our own piece of Internet art, informed by the research, discussions, exercises and experiments we'll make along the way.

where:	Crerar Library 134 ;
when:	Tues, 11AM - 1:20PM;
professor:	Nick Briz ;
email:	nbriz@uchicago.edu ;
office hours:	*by-appointment-only* ;
class website:	http://netart.rocks/uchicago ;

Learning Goals

- Foundational understanding of what the Internet is and how it works (specifically the Web)
- General background on various canonical and niche cultural figures, movements and ideas which have informed the development of Internet art
- Working knowledge of HTML and CSS, specifically how to hand craft works of Internet art as well as how to publish them on the Web

The Schedule

- 10.05.21: Class Calibrations
- 10.12.21: WTF is the Internet?
- 10.19.21: HTML && the World Wide Web
- 10.26.21: net.art: when artists discovered HTML
- 11.02.21: CSS art: Irrational Virtuosos
- 11.09.21: CSS art: (cont'd)
- 11.16.21: Digital Folklore: home pages vs profiles
- 11.23.21: Web Design: tropes, trends, techniques
- 11.30.21: Cultivating the Web
- 12.07.21: Final Critiques

For more info regarding the schedule above, refer to the class website, there you'll find detailed notes on the assignments and topics being discussed each week.

Class Structure

This quarter I'll be experimenting with something similar to a "flipped classroom" model. This is my first quarter back in the classroom after teaching remotely the last few quarters. During the pandemic I created an online "Internet art" learning platform with my collaborators at netizen.org called netnet.studio which will serve two purposes in this class: first, it will be a space to take online tutorials, which will be both technical workshops as well as Internet art history/theory lectures. Secondly, it will also be the code editor we use to produce our work in class (although you can optionally use another editor if you prefer, *see Class Materials section below*).

At Home: Each week I'll be assigning online tutorials/lectures, some weeks you will also be asked to complete an experiment, or other assignment (*see Evaluation section below*), these are meant to be completed at home, on your own time (adhering to the suggested class schedule as best as you can). **In Class**: Each week we'll be using our class time for group Q&A and conversations pertaining to the material being covered for homework each week (*see Evaluation section below*)

Class Materials

In order to participate in this course you will need to have a decent computer (desktop or laptop with 8-16GB of ram or more) and a modern Web browser like Firefox, Brave, Chrome or others (**do not use** Internet Explorer or Safari, those are subpar browsers).

You will not need to purchase any additional materials for this class. We will be using an online code editor and hypermedia tutorial environment I built called netnet.studio to produce our work this semester. All videos and readings will be provided on the class website. You will, however, need to create a free GitHub profile, we will be discussing in class how to connect your GitHub profile to netnet. (*if you are new to GitHub, consider signing up for the GitHub Student Developer Pack*)

If you have some experience in Web development already, and prefer to use your own code editor to create your work (like Atom, Sublime, or VSCode) you're welcome to do so. You will need to create a GitHub repo for each of the projects you produce and submit the URL to that repo in place of the netnet URL.

Evaluation

- 30%: participation in class discussions
- 30%: completion of tutorials and experiments
- 40%: completion and critique of final projects

class discussions

So much of what we're going to cover in class, both in terms of the theory and practice, can be gleaned through your own online research. The most valuable aspect of learning this material in the classroom, rather than on your own, is the chance for realtime interactivity with your professor and peers. I can not stress enough how important it is to take advantage of class discussions. These can be technical discussions (about how the Internet and the Web work, about coding tricks and techniques, and/or any other topic relating to the technology and craft we'll be covering), theoretical discussions (about any of the concepts and ideas introduced in the online lectures and/or addressed by any of the Internet art referenced throughout this course) and/or historical discussions (about any of the various histories we'll be covering this quarter). There will be discussion pages set up on the class canvas to collect thoughts/questions/etc between classes, these will form the basis for our in person discussions each week. To receive full credit for class discussions you need to come to class on time and ask/answer questions and/or share your comments/thoughts on the topics being discussed, either in person or online in the discussion page the week prior.

tutorials and experiments

In addition to a few readings and videos, and the *Internet Travelogue* assignment (due **10.19.21**) you will be assigned online interactive tutorials (linked on the class website), as well as accompanying creative coding experiments. You are encouraged to cover this material at a pace that feels right to you (so long as everything is complete by the end of the quarter), below are the experiments being assigned this quarter along with their *suggested* due dates:

- **11.02.21**: net.art HTML experiment
- **11.16.21**: CSS Art experiment
- **11.30.21**: Home Pages vs Profiles experiment

These creative coding experiments will be focused on learning prerequisite skills, relevant histories and core concepts that we'll need for the completion of our final project. To receive full credit for these experiments they must:

- engage with the corresponding prompt in some way
- be hand crafted (coded in HTML and CSS)

- be accessible through a Web browser (ie. hosted online, we'll specifically be using GitHub to host our work this quarter)
- be submitted on the class canvas before the end before the quarter

final project

For our final project you will be creating a piece of Internet art informed by the various conversations we'll be having and concepts we'll be exploring throughout the quarter, specifically: net.art, CSS art, digital gardens, digital folklore (Lialina, Espenschied) and the notion of the Internet itself as art (Heffernan). The final project can be based on one of the experiments produced earlier in the quarter, which you expand on or polish for the final, or it can be an entirely new piece. To receive full credit for the final project, your piece must:

- be informed by one (or many) of the various discussions, themes or online art scenes discussed this quarter.
- be hand crafted (coded in HTML and CSS)
- accessible by anyone with an Internet connection (ie. hosted online, we'll specifically be using GitHub to host our work this quarter)
- have clean code, as free of errors as possible (with the exception of any intentionally exploited bugs)
- be submitted on the class canvas by the last day of class (**12.07.21**)