Post-Reflection Assignment

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CART 253 B Creative Computation I

December 1st, 2025

Technology can be extremely intimidating to harness. It enables us a cyborg body experience: the tool becomes an extension of our body, or as artists, an extension of our creative being. We communicate with technology, and in return it mediates our artistic vision with the world. Learning to write in a programming language allows us as artists to co-create with the technology. It allows us to appropriate it, to subvert it, or even to break it, all in the interest of making art. I have found that my relationship with this learning has metamorphosized during this course: from a troubled relationship to a healed one, I now have a changed vision of my capacities as a creative coder.

At the start of the course, I considered myself an intermediate p5.js programmer. I had used the JavaScript library in CÉGEP, as an Interactive Media Arts student, and had developed a few projects with it. I had learned of the setup( ) and draw( ) functions, of the ability to define my own functions, of the ability to have my own assets, of mouse tracking, I had played around with loops to produce interesting sonic and visual effects – such as in *Sound Void* (2024)[1] – and I had heard of arrays, but only as something I would learn about later. Yet despite having this experience, I felt intimidated by the idea of getting back into programming, especially since I knew it required a high amount of logic at every step of the development of a project and devotion to the testing, iterating, and debugging steps. I was terrified at the idea of encountering bugs in my programs. I had been somewhat traumatized by loops not working properly due to a lack of conceptual understanding of events in the projects I had previously developed. I felt that code was something fragile, that broke often, and that required a lot of attention. I did not want to commit to redefining my relationship with code. As I progressed along the semester and completed the modules outlined in the course my view on code changed. As the conceptual complexity of the modules increased,

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[1] *Sound Void* (2024) : https://editor.p5js.org/phiko/full/n9rxaMlYf

I gradually regained confidence in my skills. I came to understand that if my code had previously been fragile, it was because I had attempted to reach higher levels of complexity without the proper scaffolding.

Healing my relationship with programming enabled me to raise my complexity threshold. Having rebuilt a foundation on understanding functions, events and objects, I became able to implement properly more advanced tools. The concept of arrays, for example, allowed me to handle sets of objects in a way that made a lot of sense to me. I understand better now how to create objects, handle them, and even store them as data in their own JavaScript Object Notation (JSON) files. This understanding of the basic elements of my code has brought me to a place where I now feel confident that I could take a shot at implementing a novel idea with the tools accessible to me and my logical reasoning. In my Variation Jam Assignment, *FROG TRIALS* (2025)[2], for example, this manifested itself in my use of JSON files and object replication to easily iterate on colours, text, or other visual elements present in my game. The highly organized quality of my code allowed me to focus on my artistic choices. Over time, I would like to build an understanding of various dynamics to implement in my projects – reliable functions that I can easily bring in a new project, building blocks that I molded myself. I doubt many of the projects for which I would use this will be games, since I tend to gravitate towards experimental interactive experiences more, but I would like to be able to implement my ideas quicker by relying on my conceptual understanding. I also feel like using version control in GitHub made me a much more intentional programmer – every change I implemented was accompanied by a comment on what it was and what it brought to my project. Having to comb back through my changes, notice, and reflect on what I had implemented made me a lot more aware of my process and made it feel a lot more

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[2] *FROG TRIALS* (2025) : https://philippe-bn.github.io/cart253/topics/variation-jam-assignment/

organized and linear to me. This meant that it avoided me on multiple occasions having to open my code after a week and squinting at it, trying to decipher what I added and what bugs were popping up.

As a creative coder, I use my code to create novel visual and conceptual experiences. I want to use code to create spaces in which people become co-creators with the artwork. I want to give power back to the people, to reappropriate the powerful tool that is technology. My understanding of creative code has shifted from using code to create artworks that speak to the viewers towards artworks that asks the viewers for their input. I still believe that art is a powerful tool for semantic messaging, but I also believe that there needs to be a consideration for making art and technology accessible to its participants. I look forward to being able to ask viewers to become participants, to co-create by entering the space, by reflecting, by playing, by experiencing wonder, awe, curiosity. I know that with the understanding of programming logic and data structures I gained from this course I will be able to create works that become living, enticing, open, breathing entities. I strongly believe that using programming to create art means making a subversive use of the technology to create pieces that inherently critique the paradigm of the tool being used for capitalist interests, especially in warfare and surveillance. I look forward to creating art that makes use of data in a meaningful way, that uses information not as a material to extract but as a tool for sharing and community-building.

This course allowed me to hit the reset button on my experience with programming. From rebuilding a strong foundation to gaining novel conceptual understandings of the elements and systems of code and data, I was able to build a rudimentary mental model of the JavaScript programming language. It has changed my vision on my future as a creative coder, and I now look forward to creating more experimental spaces for participants to enter and co-create with me.