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PROJECT 2: *WELCOME TO THE ELECTRIC GARDEN*

Samuelle Bordeleau

CART 263: Creative Computation II

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Taking inspiration from Aram Bartholl's *Dead Drops* (2010) and Cory Arcangel's *Data Diaries* (2003), *welcome to the electric garden*[1] is an interactive web-based project that combines both concepts of "open data" and "data-driven imagery". Albeit sharing information is paramount for individual and collective growth, there is value in challenging our relationship to and exchange with said data, and questioning the ways in which we interact with it. Aware of the abundant and readily available body of online data-exchange platforms, the objective of this project lies in creating a platform that utilizes the raw content of data to create idiosyncratic images. In the context of this project, this raw data could be viewed as organic waste or 'digital compost', which would contribute to the growth of a flower-shaped pictogram-filled garden.

In short, the website would be an online one-way file sharing platform. Upon entering the website, the users would be invited to "drop" data of any format within a designated area. Every instance a unique file is dropped, a flower would bloom in the artificial garden. Its shape, color, and overall aesthetic would correspond to certain predetermined conditions. To factor these flowers' appearance, the metadata of the dropped files, such as the file type, its size, its date of creation, etc would be utilized. Contributions to the website will allow the garden to grow denser, delivering a rendition representative of the user's collective input. By interacting with the website and sharing files, one contributes to this cyber garden's expansion. With this project, I am seeking to create a space where data is experienced in a contemplative fashion rather than a more traditional, utilitarian one. Instead of having the shared data be legible, the users are invited to participate or simply acknowledge the creative potential of open-source data. My goal is to challenge users to question the physical space their data takes, its semiotic and material significance, and how it can be denatured, repurposed, and recontextualized.

My love for community gardens was the starting point for the conceptualization of this project, as these spaces are intended for the cultivation and dissemination of resources, knowledge, and experience through the physical act of sharing with and through the physical land itself. This practice holds an aesthetic value that materializes throughout the process, from planting to cultivation, which I am aiming to expand on using digital resources. The web is a powerful tool to network with people and build communities to exchange, create and empower. In times

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[1] This is a tentative title

where online socializing might be overwhelming for some (taking into account the pandemic), rethinking how we can continue to share in ways that might demand less immediate participation and be less socially draining is somewhat vital for sustainability.

ARAM BARTHOLL'S *DEAD DROPS* (2010)

"'Dead Drops' is an anonymous, offline, peer to peer file-sharing network in public space. [...] Everyone is invited to drop or find files on a dead drop."[2] (Bartholl) Dead Drops are a platform for indirect communication and transmission of knowledge within a remote area. It is a project that is inclusive and accessible in terms of participation and geolocalisation (with some exceptions). The Dead Drop encourages people to reconsider the value of the data they hold and redistribute it for the benefit of the common good. I like to think of Bartholl's project as a series of offline "clouds" that allow micro-communities to connect indirectly through data exchange. This project challenges our traditional means of communication and data exchange while providing a playful alternative, and has me thinking of the possibilities in which the matter that is exchanged can also be experimented with and transformed.

CORY ARCANGEL'S *DATA DIARIES* (2003)

"For Data Diaries [...] Cory Arcangel used the contents of his computer's temporary storage (RAM) as raw material for a series of abstract, glitchy videos"[3]. Data Diaries is an exposé on the guts of Archangel's computer, delivering us a collection of saturated colored patterns representative of a whole month's worth of his data at raw. What we see is the process of the creation of the work itself. While knowing we are looking at all of his private information, it remains illegible. This project recycles raw data into visual imagery and speculates on a visual depiction of our computers capacity as sentient creative beings.

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[2] Bartholl, Aram. "Manifesto." Dead Drops. https://deaddrops.com/manifesto/.

[3] Rhizome. "Data Diaries." NET ART ANTHOLOGY: Data Diaries. https://anthology.rhizome.org/data-diaries-2003.

Upon entering the website, the user appears at the front gate of the 'electric garden'. The user would then have the choice to simply enter the gates and explore the surroundings, or to drop a file in a designated drop zone thus planting their own flower in the garden.
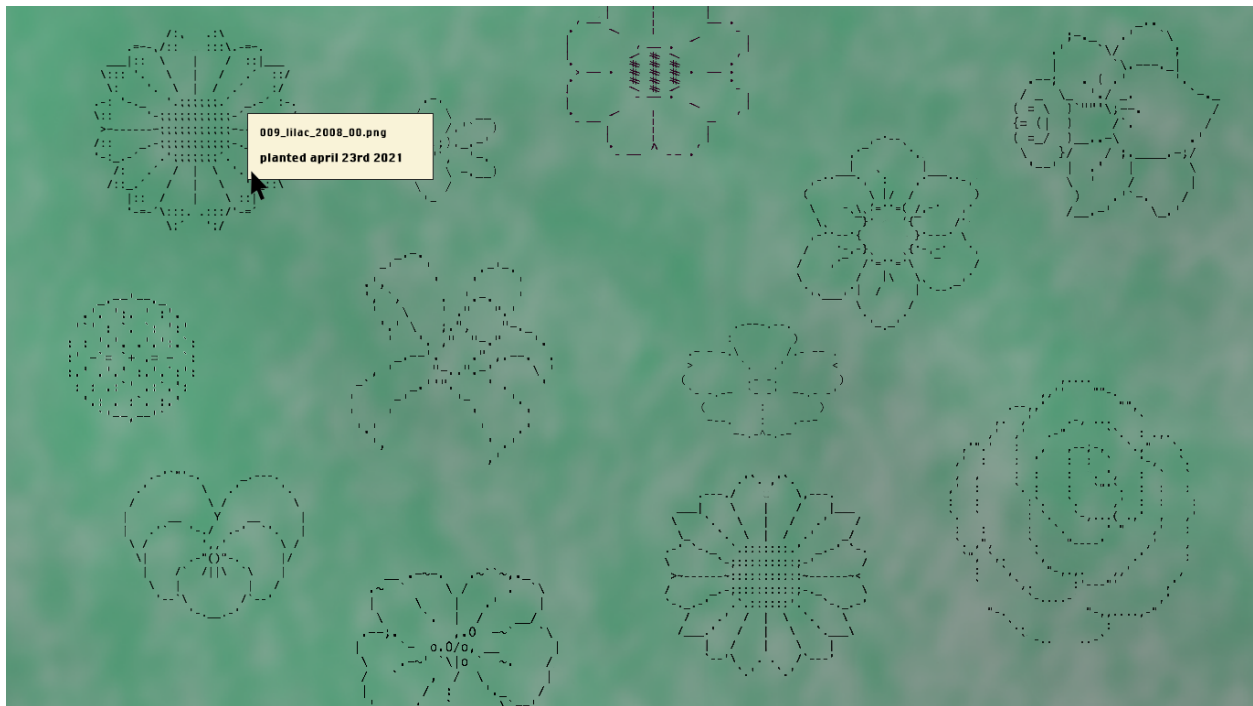
Above is a visual representation of what the digital garden would look like. In this example, every ascii flower corresponds to an individual file. The shape, size and text/symbol content is determined by different characteristics and attributes of the file, as mentioned previously. When the mouse is hovered over a flower, a hover box containing the name of the original file and the date it was dropped or 'planted'.