

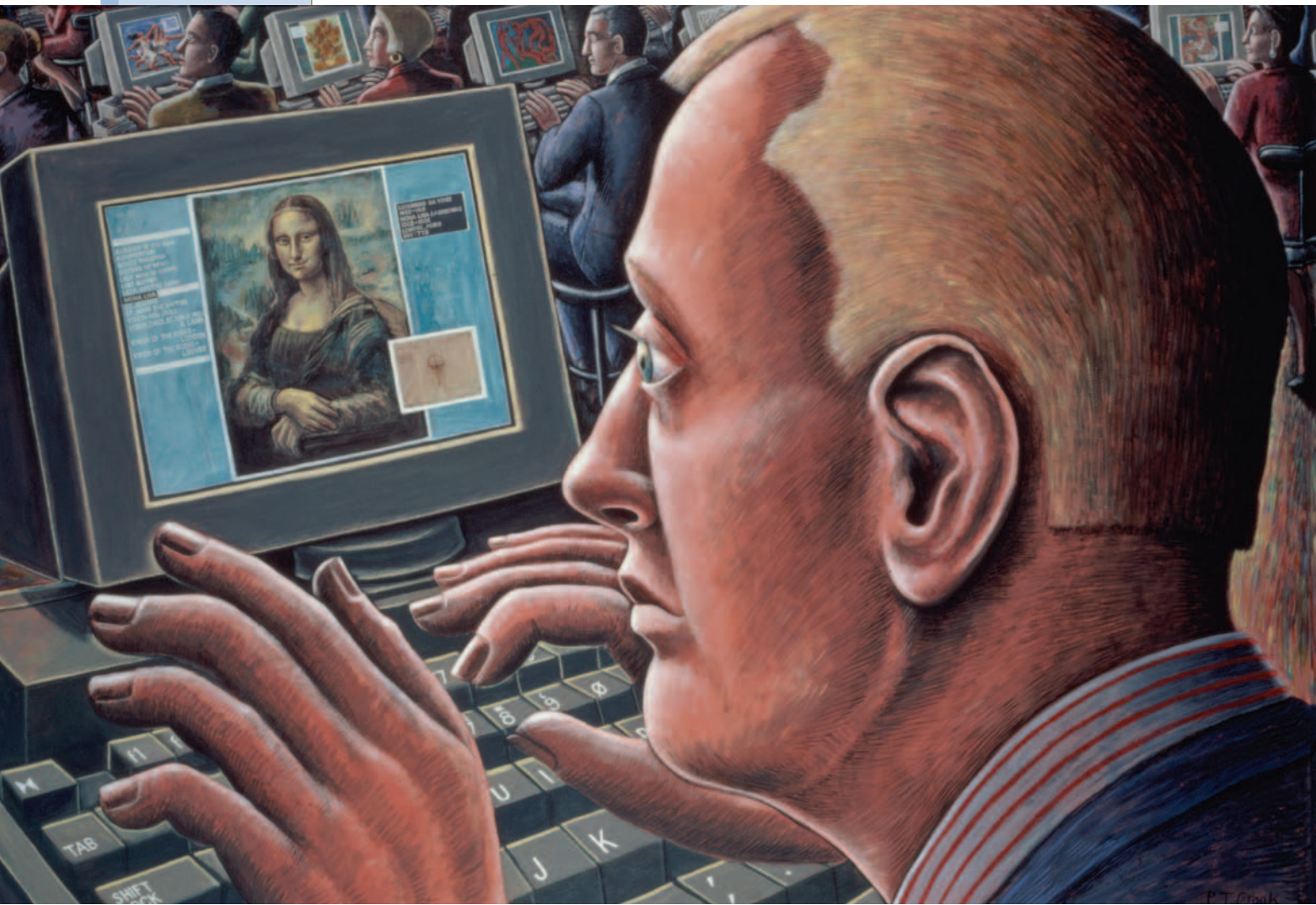
TECHNOLOGY

da Vinci, Say Hello to Next-Generation

By Trent Flood THE DIGITAL ART MOVEMENT FINDS ORLANDO



In the sixteenth century, Leonardo da Vinci completed what has become one of the most admired and discussed paintings ever created. So, what happens when this beloved piece, the *Mona Lisa*, meets the digital age?



LEONARDO - THE BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

AS A HUB OF DIGITAL MEDIA, METRO ORLANDO HAS A GROWING NUMBER OF DIGITAL ARTISTS THAT HAVE EMERGED FROM COMPANIES WITH A LOCAL PRESENCE...

Welcome to digital art, a new artistic medium introduced in the mid 1950s when programmers began using analog computers to make art animation and images. Since that time, digital art has permeated everything from the Internet to mainstream pop music to big screen feature films.

As a hub of digital media, Metro Orlando has a growing number of digital artists that have emerged from companies with a local presence, such as Electronic Arts (EA), and educational institutions, including the University of Central Florida (UCF), Full Sail Real World Education and Rollins College.

The trick has been introducing this cutting-edge art form to the world. To help address this challenge, several community organizations recently came together to showcase the work of some local artists working at EA's Orlando-based Tiburon studios.

Running throughout the month of December 2004 at Orlando's Downtown Media Arts Center, this one-of-a-kind display was titled, *EA Artists—Offline*. The show will remain in town, allowing Central Florida art lovers to continue experiencing the work of EA game developers.

"There is so much talent within the walls of EA. In addition to the unrivaled work these artists do day-to-day in their jobs, they have incredible offline talent," says Steven Chiang, general manager of Electronic Arts Tiburon.

WHAT'S NEXT

While the EA exhibit was a great step, it certainly wasn't the first time that Orlando got to "download" some of the exciting things happening in the world of digital art. In 2003, the Florida Film Festival added a new program to its award-winning line-up called *NextArt: Dynamic Media and New Forms of Entertainment*.

From the outset, this new program featured installations, performances and panel discussions aimed at nurturing visionary artists by providing them with a unique venue and access to like-minded creators. In collaboration with, and support of, Orange County and the Dynamic Media program at

UCF, the NextArt program included exhibitions and a two-day academic conference focused on digital art.

Great things have come from that beginning. Today, NextArt has given birth to an organization representing 14 of the 18 universities that participated in the inaugural program. Called the International Digital Media and Arts Association, this new organization allows academic departments of Digital Media and Digital Arts throughout the country to exchange information on curriculum, conduct joint planning on research projects, and cooperatively develop corporate and governmental alliances.

Aside from these academic benefits, NextArt has also featured performances and displays including:

» *Provocations: Digital Art Takes on the World* was an installation curated by Marc N. Weiss and Suzanne Seggerman of WebLab.org. *Provocations* included projects encompassing robotics, historical virtual tours and video game modifications. The event also featured Trailer A-Go-Go, a team of four filmmakers (including *The Blair Witch Project* producer, Michael Monello) that used the latest "off-the-shelf" digital video technology to create 10 movie trailers in 10 days, a feat never before accomplished at a film festival.

» The ILL Clan is an independent animation studio based in New York that uses 3-D computer game technology to create animated shorts. Known as *Machinima*, the process involves creating 3-D animation within a real-time computer game environment. The ILL Clan program featured live 3-D shows that were animated, performed and shot while simultaneously being projected on a large screen in front of the audience.

» In *Toy Symphony*, Tod Machover, and his team from the MIT Media Lab, bridged the gap between professional musicians and children, as well as between audience and performers.

Through the use of innovative technologies, the team created musical instruments and compositional tools that allowed children to compose music while playing with toys. The program featured a weeklong workshop that culminated in an integrated performance with children and professional musicians.

The 2005 edition of NextArt is currently under construction and promises to be even more exciting than previous years. On the drawing board is a video game competition and exhibition/performance by the most innovative artists exploring the fusion of digital media and entertainment. Look for final result at the 2005 Florida Film Festival, April 8-17.

More information is available at floridafilmfestival.com.

DIGITAL CINEMA

Orlando's Downtown Media Arts Center (DMAC) offers a unique film-going experience. The 80-seat digital cinema upstairs, combined with the art gallery and cafe downstairs, is an ideal setting for those who are interested in film and art. The cinema screens independent/art house films from all over the world, as well as from local filmmakers. The future of DMAC also includes film-related workshops, lectures and discussions, equipment rental and editing facilities. DMAC looks to educate, encourage and entertain everybody who walks through its doors. www.dmacorlando.com