The grid of cells made up of black and white circles and squares continuously pulsate in the projection of George Legrady’s “Polyptic Algorithmic Visualization,” the central work in his exhibition at TELIC. Within the darkened space the rapid movements of the oscillating shapes become the focal point. The dynamically generated pattern is a programmed algorithm and part of an ongoing body of work in which Legrady investigates the visual properties of computer generated data—in this case the idea of how temperature change of one cell can affect its neighbors. According to Legrady “Each cell's decision to change from one state to the other is dependent on their binding relationship with their neighbors. Under normal temperature conditions, cells have an energetic preference to be the same value as their neighbors, but with the increase of a variable metaphorically simulating 'temperature increase', the bond breaks down leading to continuous flip-flopping activity.” While specifics of the algorithm might not be an obvious ingredient in the work’s aesthetics, it is the motivating factor for the visuals. In this particular work, Legrady has programmed the cells to be in a continual state of flux, morphing continuously as they transition from one stage to another.

Legrady has long been concerned with the visual presentation of data. His works incorporate sophisticated programming that is embedded in the computer or apparatus, masking the complexity of the visual allusions. Trained as a photographer, Legrady eventually tired of making documents of the world, and turned to investigating the properties of photography itself. This investigation evolved into the study of the relationship between signal and noise and how pixels function within an image. Legrady’s work led him deeper into issues of technology so he learned computer programming, and allowed the concepts that directed the technology to have influence over the visual aspects of his work. He became interested in issues of interactivity as well as how data can be interpreted and visualized.

The three works on view at TELIC reflect the scope of Legrady’s endeavors. Specific moments from the animation have been stopped, saved and presented as large scale black and white digital prints. The prints preserve an instant in time and reflect the complexities, beauty and elegance of the computer generated patterns. These prints reference the patterned works created by 1960’s Op Artists, yet differ because they are mechanically generated. In addition to making works for a gallery setting Legrady has also been involved with public art and presents selections from two recent projects in this exhibition. For the Vermont/Santa Monica Metro Rail station, Legrady will create an 18 x 24 foot enamel panel that leans over the station’s entrance. The graphic reflects a computer rendering of the movement of people accessing the station. Using an algorithm that
maps the kinetics of the downward flow, Legrady has created a visual presentation consisting of modulated sign waves that represent the idea of movement. The installation shares Legrady’s process and offers numerous color renditions for the final work. For the newly opened Seattle Library, Legrady created a visual display that maps the circulation of checked out items. Six LED screens are positioned behind the information desk that constantly present different aspects of the data. The visual display moves from text to graphic as different modes of analysis are presented. At TELIC two small LED screens replicate the data transfer at the library.

Systems of display and data transfer and presentation is at the core of Legrady’s work. He states that while “making invisible determining systems visible” is one goal of his work, the conceptual and social significance of the data and how it is interpreted is also a vital component. While making data visual he also makes it beautiful. Because Legrady has a sophisticated sense of design he is able to fuse the aesthetic and the technological creating complex works that engage with real time and real systems in new and innovative ways.

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