

What Is the Nature of a Digital Drawing?

Core Competencies: Critical Thinking

To create *Floating Cloud (h22b)* (figure 5.30), American artist Roman Verostko did not make any marks—virtual or real. Instead, he wrote an algorithm (coded instructions). An algorithm is like a recipe. If you gave a friend a recipe for cookies, the friend could follow the directions and make the cookies, even if you weren't there to measure or mix. Similarly, Verostko focused on the procedure needed to create the drawing and left the mark making to a machine. An ink pen mounted on the arm of a pen plotter "drew" the image on paper. Verostko's algorithm directed the pen plotter in what color to use and where to place the marks. The image, made up of thousands of exactly placed lines, creates an illusion of a three-dimensional form with its soft, modeled tones.

Part A

Write down your answers to these questions that have no "correct" answers. Many people would have different responses:

- If drawing is all about an artist making marks, and if an artist such as Verostko is only writing code, is the work really a drawing? Why or why not?
- What about the fact that Verostko can create numerous printouts? Are these printouts original works of art or reproductions, since drawings have traditionally been single works of art? How can you defend your answer?
- What if Verostko emails his code to someone else and that person prints the drawing out when Verostko isn't even there? Is that work a drawing? Why or why not?
- Is someone else's printing out Verostko's drawing so different from what an artist's apprentice would have done in the past? (These apprentices worked alongside their masters, so that they could learn a trade, but they often created whole sections of works of art that were credited to the master artist.) Why?
- Does digital drawing present us with similar questions about the nature of drawing that have been questions for centuries?

Part B

Once you have written your answers, reach out to one of your classmates, ask if you can share answers, and inquire what his or her answers were to the same questions.

- Did you both answer the questions the same way?
- How did your classmate's answers broaden your thinking on the topic of digital art?

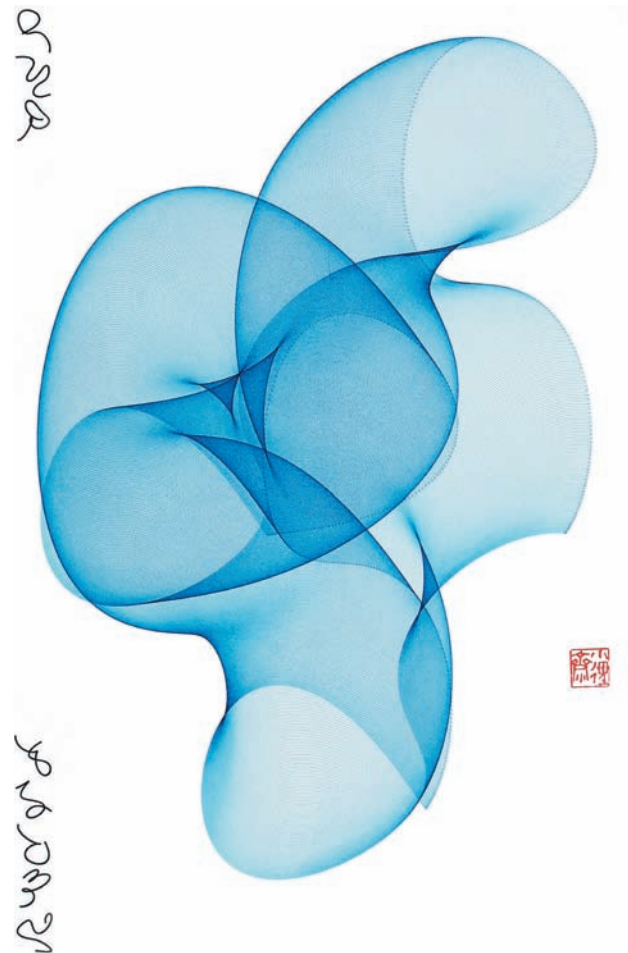


FIGURE 5.30. Roman Verostko. *Floating Cloud (h22b)*. 2010. Algorithmic pen-and-brush drawing on paper, 2' 6" × 1' 10". Digital Art Museum, online.