

Jean-Pierre Hébert - "One Hundred Views of a Metagon"

This portfolio is a tribute to those who inspired it: MAX BILL and HOKUSAI.

In his work and essay "Fifteen Variations on a Single Theme" (1938) MAX BILL provided us with visionary statements on "how works of art are created". These statements he reinforced in "The Mathematical Approach in Contemporary Art" (1949). Both essays clearly explain why and how mathematics can partake in the creative process in kinship with recognized traditions like De Stijl, Constructivism, Concrete Art, the Bauhaus, or Geometry Painting. As one reads these essays today, it becomes obvious that "mathematics" can be extended to mean "mathematical computer programming".

The main inspiration for this work was a deep personal feeling of empathy with MAX BILL's work and thought. This was reinforced by the elegance, power, energy and dynamism of his Theme and encouraged by MAX BILL's invitation to explore it further. In his "Fifteen Variations" MAX BILL illustrates beautifully "the fact that a single theme - that is to say a single fundamental idea - leads to fifteen very different developments can be considered the proof that concrete art holds an infinite number of possibilities". His presentation of each variation almost reads like *pseudo-code*, but his preamble is not to be ignored: "By a mathematical approach to art it is hardly necessary to say I do not mean any fanciful ideas for turning out art by some ingenious system of ready reckoning with the aid of mathematical formulas".

Another powerful encouragement to embark in the adventure was HOKUSAI's delicious "One Hundred Views of Mt. Fuji" (1835-1847), a model of patiently applied will and dedication to a beautiful idea for any artist or publisher; an illustration of the richness of conceptual and representational diversity.

In this spirited framework, I could recognize in MAX BILL's steps my own method of producing works with computers as it has emerged through the years. Choose an inspiring *theme* for its fitness with your *intents*. Analyze and understand the theme *concept*, its geometric *essence*. Translate this essence into a *text*. *Materialize* the concept so described into an *object* of art using the appropriate tool. Let your eyes, your taste, your intellect *react*. Let your vision of the theme *evolve* freely, but critically, and translate these wanderings into *new* text and objects. Repeat till these steps lead to good work -from a good piece to maybe a complete portfolio. The essence is mathematical, the text is software, and a computer is called to ease and augment the process: these transient facts should be irrelevant for the beholder; the portfolio only matters.

As evidenced by MAX BILL's "Variations", the computer is not mandatory to this process. But it can help those who have become familiar enough with its use so that it does not come in their way. To such artists, *software has become their medium*. The computer and its attachments have become helpers in producing the materialisation of the vision, as apprentices and students were helpers in the eighteenth century painter's or sculptor's atelier. But not only that, it has revealed itself an intimate and invaluable partner in the evolution of the artist's vision and one's creative process.

This is how the "One Hundred Views of a Metagon" happened. First a desire, an inspiration. Then numerous days of programming with Scheme, Mathematica, Metapost, whatever. In a happy, long creative transe, an incredible outburst of idealism, with JON CONE and ANDRE RIBUOLI printing almost night and day for ten days, taking hardly three or four hours of sleep, more than four hundred Views were created, from which I selected slightly more than a hundred -exactly one hundred and two (following HOKUSAI in this oddity:-). This was July 1998.

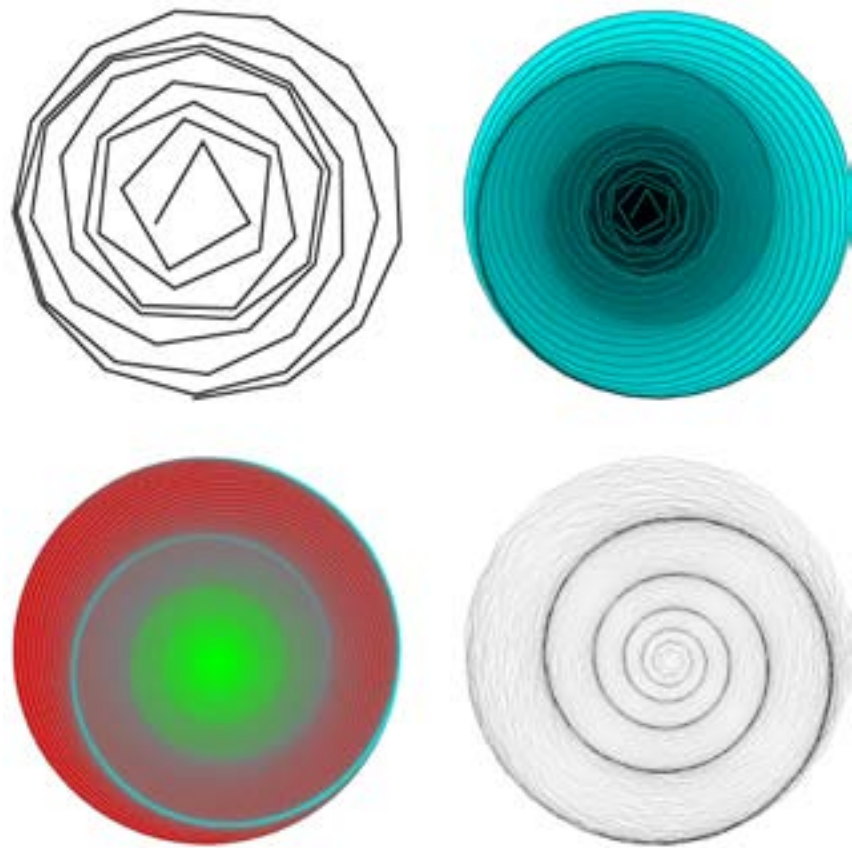
Having been thus conceived, the "One Hundred Views of a Metagon" will hopefully be published in four books of twenty-four, twenty-five, twenty-six, and twenty-seven prints over a period of time. As a first step toward that end, a first delivery of twenty-four is presented here while the remainder of the original selection will undoubtedly still evolve.

This first series of twenty-four has been expertly and patiently put together by artist and printer JENNIFER MAHLMAN. It will only be thanks to her taste, diligence and persistence that the actual prints have come to life and look as good as they do. A few larger related prints have been published in an edition of six by Binary Press (New-York) in the fall of 1999.

The "One Hundred Views of a Metagon" are featured on <http://jeanpierrehebert.com/metagon.html>
Essays on Art and Mathematics available from that page

As for me, I consider the "Views" an on-going project. Although this portfolio remains aesthetically very different from my main line of work, I shall continue these explorations of MAX BILL's Single Theme and other themes as well. The teachings of such experiments are now invaluable: they have become an indispensable path to my own progress.

Jean-Pierre Hébert (Santa Barbara, December 2000, revised October 2012)
<http://jeanpierrehebert.com/>

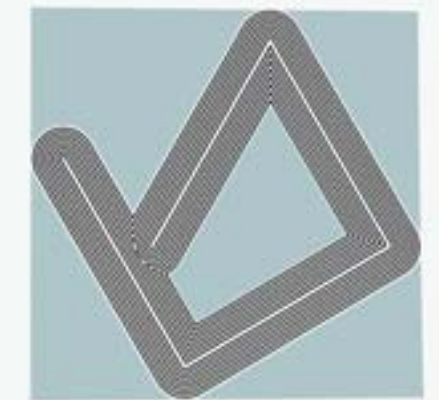


One Hundred Views of the Metagon

After Hokusai's "Hundred Views of Mount Fuji" and Max Bill's "Fifteen Variations on a Theme", I created "One Hundred Views of the Metagon". Each view was composed in software written in Mathematica and printed on Iris by Jon Cone, Andre Ribuoli, Jennifer Mahlman, at Cone Editions Press in Vermont in 1998..

450 raw projects 9x9", 102 selected for edition and proofed, 24 editioned in twelve on 13 x 19" Book paper, 21 proofs on 41 x 25" Arches Watercolor paper

Jean-Pierre Hébert
<http://jeanpierrehebert.com/>



"One Hundred Views of the Metagon",
mixed media 1998-2005.



"One Hundred Views of the Metagon", 1998-2005.

mixed media: sugar lift and soft ground etchings,
ephemeral media: sand, sound and water.

