6135 Data Visualization Psychology
In-Class Presentation proposal

Visualization as art

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Abstract
Acclaimed information designer Nicholas Felton interpreted the increasing diffused awareness about data by arguing that “data is the new wood”: in our day and age it can be treated as a material suitable to be used in many different ways towards many different purposes. One of the possibilities we have is to use this “material” to communicate facts about the world to an audience: by visualizing data, we can raise awareness on important issues, encourage sustainable behaviors, help spreading knowledge. In our class, we have already talked about disciplines that follow this approach, like data journalism. What I’d like to present is yet another possible way of strongly conveying meaning through visual information: the act of making art out of data. In my research within the Design Graduate Program I encountered many examples of hybrid project that are both data visualizations and works of art: data is increasingly used by artists as a raw material to generate images, photographies, sculptures, music, interactive installations. I believe the act of merging information and art is an extremely powerful method to engage viewers: on one hand, it can give a material quality to the content. On the other, it can provide a meaningful subject for a work of art. I plan to present what I think are the most interesting examples of these practices, trying to highlight their double value as art and visualizations, and maintaining a critical point of view over their effectiveness and accuracy in delivering facts to the audience.