

## To Err Is Creative in Net Art By Gabe Friedman

Story location: <http://www.wired.com/news/culture/0,1284,58736,00.html>

*02:00 AM May. 12, 2003 PT*

To Dirk Paesmans and Joan Heemskerk, two artists whose medium is the Internet, HTML mistakes are a thing of beauty.

While other Web programmers seek to iron out the glitches in their code, Paesmans and Heemskerk intentionally replicate them. It's how they make their art.

The husband-and-wife team -- known collectively as "Jodi" -- is at the vanguard of a group of creative types called online artists, who use and sometimes misuse the technology of the Internet to create their works.

What some might see as a confused [jumble](#) of overlapping text and graphics, the result of faulty coding entered by a programming novice, the duo sees as art.

"We are not good coders, or good programmers -- we are not geeks," said Paesmans. "Many people may think that, but it is curiosity, the discovery of how the thing was made," that drives the artwork.

Online art has not gained widespread acceptance among mainstream critics or institutions in the art world, although that may be changing. San Francisco's Museum of Modern Art, for example, recently hosted an exhibit of work by online artists.

Designs by Paesmans and Heemskerk are currently exhibited at [Eyebeam](#), a chic art gallery in New York City.

Ken Goldberg, [an online artist](#) and professor of robotics at the University of California at Berkeley, describes their work as sophisticated, provoking Internet surfers "to consider how the browser is biasing your experience."

He added, "People have a good reason to think Net art is suspicious. A lot of it is technical doodlings, but it's also reaching a new level of maturity."

At the dawn of the millennium, as fears of a Y2K disaster reached their peak, artists used the Internet to explore how technology can go awry.

Several of the most prominent pieces emerging recently from online artists continue to probe these questions.

A work called *e-poltergeist*, by Jon Thomson and Alison Craighead, generates an endless cycle of search engine results and banner ads when the user launches it from his Web browser. The only way to stop the flow of data is to shut down the computer.

Similarly, Paesmans and Heemskerk made a screen that sends browser windows flying across the screen, a work that gives the viewer a sensation of a computer desktop spinning out control.

"It (online art) is often about taking technology and using it in a way that was never intended," said Mark Tribe, online artist, founder and executive director of Rhizome.org, an



Internet magazine about online art.

What separates online art, also called new media art, from other artistic forms is that it uses the Internet as its medium rather than merely as a tool to display works.

To illustrate the importance of online art as a field of its own, Tribe created a piece called *Revelation 2.0*. When the user clicks on a link, a stripped down version of CNN's website appears on the screen, showing photographic images and solid bars of colors but no text.

Now Tribe is in the process of painting large images of the stripped-down CNN site on canvas. His point, he said, is to show that it is "different to experience these paintings as an object" and not an image in cyberspace.

In perhaps their most famous [piece](#), Paesmans and Heemskerk altered the code of a website so the image of an atom bomb appears as a jumble of green letters, numbers and symbols set against a black background.

"When we were first making that screen, we didn't know what HTML was, so we made many mistakes, and it looked good. It looked much more interesting than the simple representation of the drawing," said Paesmans.

Jon Ippolito, curator of new media art at the [Guggenheim Museum](#) in New York City, writes in his essay, "Ten Myths of Internet Art," that what sets online art apart from other technological endeavors is "not the innovative use of technology, but a creative misuse of it."

Under this premise, artists like Paesmans and Heemskerk, after intentionally entering faulty code into their works, have been likened to the painter Robert Rauschenberg, who applied paint to the back tire of his truck and then ran over paper rather than using a brush.

"It's been a very compressed and fast revolution," said Ippolito, who said he believes the current challenge facing online artists is finding a way to preserve their work.

As technology marches onward, and new programming codes and operating systems emerge, Ippolito said, online artists must find ways to ensure their works are viewable by future generations.



#### Ads by Google

<a href="#">Career Training</a>	<a href="#">Famous Frames, Inc.</a>	<a href="#">Graphic Designer</a>	
<a href="#">Train for an in-demand career from Anthem College Online</a>	<a href="#">Storyboards Comps Animatics Digital Art Film Board Illustration</a>	<a href="#">Classes Earn your Graphic Designer degree 100% online! Free info packs.</a>	<a href="#">Talent Zoo Your site for creative jobs, industry articles, &amp; career advice</a>
<a href="http://www.anthemcollege.com">www.anthemcollege.com</a>	<a href="http://www.famousframes.com">www.famousframes.com</a>	<a href="http://www.westwood-college.net">www.westwood-college.net</a>	<a href="http://www.TalentZoo.com">www.TalentZoo.com</a>

**Wired News:** [Staff](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Advertising](#) | [RSS](#) | [Blogs](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Jobs](#)

We are translated daily into Japanese

© Copyright 2005, Lycos, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Your use of this website constitutes acceptance of the Lycos **Privacy Policy** and Terms & Conditions