3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Many people have a distorted view of Artificial Intelligence (AI). As Astro PENOUSAL MACHADO 11 JUAN ROMERO Teller observes, for most people "Artificial Intelligence is the science of how 12 to get machines to do the things they do in the movies."1 AI researchers often 13 have to deal with misconceptions created by the doomsday scenarios portrayed 14 in movies such as the 1983 classic War Games or the Terminator series. These 15 movies provoke fear. Others present a romantic view of AI. For instance, the 16 1984 movie Electric Dreams is about a boy who bought a computer and acci-17 dentally spilled a beverage on it. As a consequence, the computer developed 18 AI. Listening to the girl next door practicing the cello, it learned how to play 19 and compose music, fell in love with the girl, tried to kill its owner, and ended 20 up committing suicide. 21 In reality, since its inception, AI research has given considerable empha-22 sis to logic, reasoning, problem solving, planning, natural language processing, 23 expert systems, chess, et cetera. In several tasks requiring intelligence, state-of-24 the-art AI systems are now able to attain human competitive results or even to 25 surpass human performance. Yet, in tasks requiring creative reasoning, such as 26 art, design, music, and poetry, computers are far from reaching the accomplish-27 ments of humans. As Dissanayake observes, art-making activities are ubiquitous, 28 have evolutionary value, and are a part of human behavior since prehistory.² 29 Creativity is often regarded as one of the most remarkable characteristics of the 30 human mind. Not surprising, then, that the search for computational "creativ-31 ity" should be a central aspect of AI. 32 During the initial years of AI research, the main source of inspiration was 33 human intelligence. Over the years, researchers have realized that many other 34 sources of inspiration can be used. Establishing analogies with physics phenom-35 ena gave rise to novel search methods such as Simulated Annealing,³ Hopfield 36 Networks,⁴ and Elastic Networks.⁵ Currently, there is a growing interest in 37 bio-inspired computing, an area of research that comprises techniques such as 38 Evolutionary Computation (EC), Swarm Intelligence, Ant Colony Optimiza-39 tion, and Artificial Life. 40 Through time, evolution has created a wide variety of species adapted 41 to their environment. Some of these species-for example, humans-exhibit 42 intelligent behavior. Since evolution is the source for natural intelligence, it 43

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On Evolutionary Computer-Generated Art

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naturally became a source for AI. According to Darwin, evolution is based on two fundamental principles: selection, and reproduction with variation.⁶ Selection ensures that fitter individuals are more likely to reproduce. The descendants of these individuals inherit characteristics from the progenitors-which implies that they tend to be fit-but they are not exact copies, which allows evolution. The reinterpretation of Darwin's ideas in light of Mendel's genetics, that is, neo-Darwinism, explains how characteristics are inherited and how and why changes occur. Natural selection occurs at the phenotypic level, while reproduction acts on the genotype.7 The characteristics of the individuals are not directly inherited. Instead, the genes that codify these characteristics and those that enabled their development are inherited. Variation results from copying errors-that is, mutationsand from the recombination of the genetic material of the progenitors.

The goal of EC research can be synthesized as follows: "How do we turn Darwin's ideas into algorithms?"⁸ Nowadays, EC comprises a wide and growing variety of stochastic algorithms. In spite of this variety, they have the same main characteristics, so they can all be seen as instances of a generic evolutionary algorithm (see algorithm 1).

Algorithm 1 Generic Evolutionary Algorithm				
$P \leftarrow$ generate-initial-population ()				
while termination criteria not met do evaluate (P)				
$P' \leftarrow$ select-individuals $(P(t))$				
$P'' \leftarrow apply-genetic-operators (P')$				
$P \leftarrow$ create-next-population (P, P'')				
end-while				
return simulation result				

To illustrate how such an algorithm would work, we'll look at the Four-Color Map problem, which consists in coloring a map using a maximum of four colors in a way that ensures that no country has a neighbor with the same color.⁹ Using EC to solve this problem implies a series of analogies. Each individual is a *candidate solution* to the problem. In other words, each individual is a colored map. The fitness of an individual is proportional to the quality of the solution. Thus, a colored map where no neighbors share the same color has maximum fitness, while map-colorings that violate this constraint will be penalized proportionally to the number of times they violate it.

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To apply EC, one must find an adequate representation. For instance, one can consider that the genotype of each individual is composed of a chromosome, represented by a string, composed of n genes, where n is the number of countries in the map. Genes can assume four values, representing the color associated to the corresponding country.

Once the representation is chosen, one must also 11 define adequate genetic operators. When two progenitors 12 13 reproduce there is a probability, for example, 70 percent, of recombination of their genetic code. When recombination 14 15 does not occur, the genetic code of the descendants is a copy of the progenitors' code. For the purpose of recom-16 17 bination one could use 1-point crossover: a number (x) 18 between 1 and n is randomly selected, and two descendants are generated by copying the first x genes from the first 19 parent and the remaining genes from the second (and vice 20 versa for the second individual). After this stage, the muta-21 22 tion operations take place. Each gene of the descendants 23 has a probability of suffering a mutation, for example, 1 percent. Mutation can be implemented as follows: the value 24 25 of that gene is replaced by a randomly chosen number between 0 and 3. 26

One must also define a selection scheme. Tournament-based selection is appropriate for this problem, that is, to choose a progenitor, one starts by randomly selecting a given number of individuals (e.g., five) among the population, and the fittest of these individuals will be the progenitor. An individual may be selected more than once for reproduction. 33

Finally, one must define an initialization method, a 34 replacement scheme, and a termination criterion. For the 35 sake of simplicity one can assume that an initial popula-36 tion of a particular size (e.g., one hundred) individuals is 37 created by randomly choosing values for their genes; non-38 elitist generational replacement, that is, each population of 39 40 individuals is entirely replaced by its descendants; and the simulation will stop when the map-coloring with maximum 41 fitness is found. 42

PENOUSAL MACHADO AND JUAN ROMERO 157

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1 Considering these choices, the algorithm would 2 proceed as follows. An initial population of one hundred 3 randomly generated individuals is created. Each of the population's individuals is evaluated and its fitness deter-4 5 mined. Fifty pairs of individuals are selected as progenitors 6 by using tournament selection; individuals may be selected 7 more than once. These generate one hundred descendants 8 by the application of the genetic operators described earlier. 9 The descendants replace the progenitors, thus becoming the 10 current population. The cycle is repeated, from the evalua-11 tion step, until a map where no neighboring countries share the same color is found. 12

13 Currently the most prominent EC approaches are 14 Genetic Algorithms (GAs), invented by Holland, and Genetic Programming, popularized by Koza¹⁰ The most significant 15 16 differences between these approaches concern representa-17 tion and genetic operators. In a GA, the genome codifies a set of parameters or characteristics necessary to build the 18 19 phenotype and is typically represented by a string. Thus, 20 the described map-coloring approach is a GA. In GP the 21 genotypes are programs-typically represented by a tree-like 22 structure-the execution of which results in the phenotype.

To a large extent, the appeal of EC is its independence from problem-specific knowledge. Thus, one does not need to know how to solve a problem; the only requirements for applying EC are finding an adequate encoding and a way to assign fitness. Likewise, the ability to use EC in an artistic domain depends on finding an adequate way to represent and evaluate artistic objects.

30 In his 1986 book The Blind Watchmaker, Richard 31 Dawkins delineates a program that allows the evolution of 32 the morphology of "virtual creatures" or *biomorphs*.¹¹ More 33 precisely, each biomorph is a drawing, the appearance of which depends on the values of a set of parameters encoded 34 in a string, the genotype. The biomorphs of the current 35 36 population are displayed on the screen, and the user indi-37 cates his/her favorite ones. In other words, the user guides 38 the GA, which circumvents the need to develop a com-39 putational fitness function. This influential work led to the 40 emergence of a new research area, evolutionary art.¹² Due 41 to the subjectivity inherent in artistic production, and the 42 subsequent difficulty of creating an algorithm capable of 43

assigning fitness to an artwork, most evolutionary art systems are also guided by the user.

Draves' Electric Sheep-the name pays tribute to Philip K. Dick's novel Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?-is one of the most notable evolutionary art projects.¹³ Like Dawkins' biomorphs, Electric Sheep features a user-guided parametric evolution model. In this case, the individuals are "fractal flames," a particular kind of fractal, invented by Draves, that belongs to the so-called Iterated Function System category of fractals.¹⁴ The genotypes consist of several hundreds of floating point numbers that encode parameters for the fractal formula, controlling the scattering of the billions of particles that compose each image. Electric Sheep is a distributed computing project currently involving more than 350,000 users. Acting as a screensaver, it takes advantage of the computer's idle time to render the individuals, that is, "sheep," that are being evolved collectively. Interested users can vote on their favorite sheep, thus shaping the course of evolution.

In parametric evolution models, the genetic code is a visual language defined by the designer of the system. Therefore, "creating a parametric model implicitly creates a set of possible designs or a solution space."¹⁵ As such, these systems tend to have an identifiable system *signature* that is closely related to the choices made by the human designer. The model should be compact, that is, genotypes should be relatively small; expressive, meaning that it should allow a wide variety of shapes; and robust, in the sense that interesting images should be easy to find.¹⁶ Parametric evolution has been applied to a wide variety of domains including the evolution of cartoon faces,¹⁷ fonts,¹⁸ line drawings,¹⁹ surfaces,²⁰ and consumer product design.²¹

The seminal work of Sims gave rise to another popular evolutionary art approach: expression-based evolution.²² In addition to Sims' work, notable examples of this technique include works by Latham, Rooke, and Hart.²³ (Hart's work is on the cover of *TER*.) We shall use NEvAr (Neuro Evolutionary Art) to illustrate this approach. Largely inspired by the work of Sims, it allows the evolution of populations of images, using GP as in Sim's work. Each genotype is a program—in this case, a symbolic expression represented as a tree. These programs are constructed from a lexicon

158 EVOLUTIONARY AESTHETICS

1/17/11 11:43 AM



Figure 1. Still images from *Generation 243* by Scott Draves and the Electric Sheep (2009), commissioned by Carnegie Mellon University for the Gates Center of Computer Science

penousal machado and juan romero 159

1 of functions and terminals. The function set is composed 2 mainly of simple functions such as arithmetic, trigonometric, and logic operations. The terminal set is composed of two 3 variables, x and y, and some random constants. The phe-4 5 notype (image) is generated by evaluating the genotype for 6 each (x, y) pair belonging to the image. Thus, the images 7 generated by NEvAr are graphical portrayals of symbolic 8 expressions (see figure 2).

9 In order to produce color images, NEvAr resorts to 10 a special kind of terminal that returns a different value 11 depending on the color channel being processed. Recombi-12 nation is performed using the standard GP crossover opera-13 tor, which exchanges sub-trees between individuals.²⁴ Five 14 mutation operators are used: sub-tree swap, sub-tree replace-15 ment, node insertion, node deletion, and node mutation.²⁵

16 Like most, if not all, evolutionary art systems, NEvAr 17 has a signature-in the sense that it is more prone to gen-18 erate certain types of images than others-that is closely 19 related with the function set, genetic operators, and gen-20 otype-phenotype mapping used. Nevertheless, as demon-21 strated by Machado and Cardoso, it is theoretically possible 22 to generate any image with NEvAr, and the same is true 23 for several other expression-based evolutionary art systems.²⁶ 24 This means that "Every great (and not so great) work of 25 visual art is in there, past, present and future, as are images 26 of political assassinations, nude celebrities (even ones that 27 have never posed nude), serial killers, animals, plants, land-28 scapes, buildings, every possible angle and perspective of our planet at every possible scale and all the other planets, stars, 29 30 galaxies in the universe, both real and imaginary. Pictures 31 of next week's winning lottery ticket, and of you holding 32 that winning ticket."27

In practice, the images tend to be abstract and have a
computer-generated appearance. Nevertheless, a patient and
disciplined user is able to guide evolution from an initial,
randomly generated population, to populations of images
that meet the users' preferences.

Recently, Graça and Machado have developed "Evolving Assemblages," a system that evolves large-format reproductions of input images by assembling 3-D objects, using
GP and interactive evolution.²⁸ In this case, each individual
is a program that receives an image as input and generates

an assemblage as output. To accomplish this, each genotype comprises five trees. Based on the input image and for each of its pixels, the first tree selects, from a list of available objects, which type of object will be placed on the canvas; the second tree determines the rotation applied to each object; the third one determines the size of each object; the fourth one determines the x coordinate where the object will be placed; and, finally, the fifth one determines the y coordinate. Once the assemblage is calculated, the color of objects is determined: each object assumes the color of the pixel of the input image where its center is placed.

GP approaches have also been used in domains such as the evolution of painterly renderings,²⁹ line-based drawings,³⁰ plant-like shapes and other 3-D objects,³¹ l-systems (see McCormack for a survey³²), filters,³³ animations,³⁴ and architectural plans.³⁵

Outside the field of the visual arts, evolutionary approaches based on GAs or GP have been applied to sound synthesis, improvisation, harmonization and composition (see Miranda and Biles for a survey³⁶); poetry generation³⁷; choreography;³⁸ and many other fields. (See figures 3, 4, and 5.)

Although interactive evolution techniques have been used to produce a wide variety of artistic artifacts, this presents several problems. The most pressing problem is the user fatigue caused by the need to evaluate a large number of individuals.⁴⁰ Other problems include the subjectivity of the task, the lack of consistency in the users' evaluations, and the bias toward novelty. All these factors have a negative effect on the evolutionary process. Moreover, interactive evolution techniques skirt an important AI objective: building a computational system capable of performing aesthetic judgments, even if limited ones.

In general terms, there are three main approaches for the automation of the fitness assignment step of evolutionary art systems: using handwritten fitness functions; using machine learning techniques and using co-evolutionary approaches.

Machado and Cardoso took inspiration from the works of Arnheim as well as from research that points toward a preference for simple representations of the world, and a tendency to perceive it in terms of regular, symmetric

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Figure 2. In the top row: function f(x, y) = (x + y) / 2 represented as a tree (the format of the genotype); as a 3-D chart and as an image produced by assigning to each pixel a luminance proportional to the height of the corresponding position of the 3-D chart. In the second row: two individuals and their corresponding genotypes. In the third row: the descendants produced by performing a crossover operator at points P_A and P_B and swapping the corresponding sub-trees (depicted in lighter gray).

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Figure 3. Images from the series *bodies of sin* created with NEvAr using interactive evolution. These images are, arguably, the first set of pictorial images created using expression-based evolution and were first displayed at EvoMUSART'2005, Lausanne, Switzerland.

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Figure 4. Assemblages evolved by Graça and Machado in the scope of the *Evolving Assemblages* project, which won the 2010 Genetic and Evolutionary Computation Conference Evolutionary Art Competition.

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Figure 5. Morphogenetic design experiment—*AA Strawber Bar*, 2003, Achim Menges, using Genr8.³⁹

and constant shapes.⁴¹ As a consequence, they have explored the working hypothesis that aesthetic value has a link with the sensorial and intellectual pleasure experienced in finding a compact percept (internal representation) of a complex visual stimulus. The identification of symmetry, repetition, rhythm, balance, et cetera, can be a way of reducing the complexity of the percept, which may explain these aesthetic principles and the ability of the brain to recognize them in an "effortless" way.

Following this set of ideas, in "Computing Aesthetics," we propose an aesthetic theory: those images that produce a complex visual stimulus and yet result in a compact percept—that is, a compact internal representation—tend to be valued.⁴² For instance, fractal images are usually complex, and highly detailed; yet they can be compactly described by a simple mathematical formula. The self-similarity of these images can make them easier for our brain to process, allowing one to build a compact percept, which would explain, according to this theory, why fractal images tend to be aesthetically interesting.

To test this theory, we used JPEG- and quad-treebased fractal image compression to estimate the complexity of the visual stimulus and the percept.43 In "All the Truth," we used a variation of the proposed formula to assign the fitness, thus making NEvAr autonomous.44 In recent years, several evolutionary art systems that use complexity estimates to assign fitness have been proposed. Neufeld, Ross, and Ralph present a genetic programming engine generating non-photorealistic filters by means of a fitness function based on Ralph's bell curve distribution of color gradient.⁴⁵ The model was implemented by doing an empirical evaluation of hundreds of artworks. Their paper contains examples of some of the non-photorealistic filters created. In one of his works, Greenfield uses geometric measurements induced by the color organization of the images.46 The algorithm reduces the images to a small number of regions of the same color. Fitness is assigned by performing a weighted sum of three geometric assessments of these regions: the sum of their areas, of their boundary lengths, and of the adjacencies among them. In a later work, Greenfield used a multiple-objective optimization approach to fitness assignment.47 The goal was to maintain several "species" within

the same population of images. He defines multiple static fitness functions. Each of these functions uses two out of three previously described assessments. Since the assessments are incompatible, this fosters the specialization of the individuals and the appearance of species.

The first attempt to fully automate an evolutionary art system appears in the work of Baluja, Pomerlau, and Todd.48 They begin by using interactive evolution to build a set of images evaluated by users. In a later stage, they use machine-learning techniques, namely, Artificial Neural Networks (ANNs). ANNs are inspired in the structure and functional aspects of the brain. They are composed by a set of interconnected (artificial) neurons, and have been used successfully in a wide variety of tasks, including time series prediction, robotic controllers, and face and character recognition. The appeal of ANNs is their ability to learn from a set of examples. Baluja and colleagues use the set of images evaluated by the user to train an ANN, which is meant to learn the preferences of the users. Although the authors classify the results as "somewhat disappointing," this work is an important step toward the automation of fitness assignment.

Saunders and Gero use a Self-Organizing Map ANN to assign fitness to the images produced by an expression-based evolutionary system.⁴⁹ Self-Organizing Map ANNs do not require a training step; they automatically organize the input data—in this case, images—into clusters according to their similarity. (It is important to notice that this computational similarity may be significantly different from similarity as perceived by humans.) The goal of their system is to study the emergence of novelty. As such, fitness depends on the dissimilarity of an image to the existing clusters of images. In general terms, the experimental results indicate that their evolutionary algorithm tends to produce increasingly complex images.

The work of Saunders and Gero also has a co-evolutionary inspired component. They use an agent-based framework, where each artificial agent has its own expression-based evolutionary system and Self-Organizing Map. When an agent finds an image that has the "right" degree of novelty, it shares the genotype with other agents. If a receiving agent also finds the image adequately novel, the genotype is included in the population of its evolutionary system and the receiving agent issues a credit to the agent that discovered the image. Thus, although there is not a direct arms race among agents, agents influence each other by communicating the genotypes of the artworks they produce to other agents.

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Rooke was the first one who made an attempt to use a co-evolutionary approach in the context of evolutionary art, but he never published the results of these experiments. Gary Greenfield states that "Rooke's idea was to try to coevolve a population of art critics, which he called 'image commentators,' to perform the aesthetic evaluations of the images his Sims' inspired system generated."⁵⁰

Greenfield implemented an interesting solution to 13 the automation of the fitness assignment. He co-evolves a 14 population of images, using an expression-based evolution-15 ary system, and a population of convolution image filters. 16 For determining fitness, the filters are applied to the images, 17 possibly changing them. The fitness of an image is propor-18 tional to the amount of change introduced by the filters. The 19 fitness of a filter is inversely proportional to the changes it 20 introduces in the population of images. Thus, in simple terms, 21 each filter acts as a "parasite" and its survival depends on 22 the ability to pass unnoticed. On the other hand, the fitness 23 of an image depends on its ability to identify the parasites, 24 by making them visible. This co-evolutionary setup tends to 25 converge toward states where white-noise images are pre-26 dominant. Nevertheless, a given type of imagery is, typically, 27 unable to dominate the population for too long because of 28 the evolutionary pressure caused by the parasites. This con-29 stant tension generates an interesting evolutionary dynamic. 30

The latest development of NEvAr is also inspired by 31 co-evolution. Like Baluja and colleagues, we employ ANNs. 32 However, there is an important difference: by employing 33 a set of metrics-for example, complexity estimates-we 34 measure several characteristics of the images; the ANNs base 35 their judgments on the characteristics of the images. Thus, 36 in simple terms, the ANNs never see the images; they only 37 have access to their characteristics. By these means, the train-38 ing of the ANNs is performed using information of a higher 39 level of abstraction than the images' pixels. 40

The goals of this setup are twofold: first, the creation of images without human intervention. The only

PENOUSAL MACHADO AND JUAN ROMERO 165

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information provided to the system is a set of images—in this case five thousand paintings made by renowned artists—that acts as an aesthetic reference. Second, the creation of a system that systematically explores new styles. For this purpose, we employ a method, inspired by co-evolution that promotes stylistic change from one evolutionary run to the next.

8 The ANNs are trained by showing them two classes 9 of images: a set of paintings by well-known authors and 10 a set of images generated randomly by NEvAr. Once this 11 is done, an evolutionary run is initiated and the trained ANNs are used to assign fitness to the images evolved by 12 13 NEvAr. The evolved images that the ANNs fail to identify 14 as being produced by NEvAr have maximum fitness. The 15 goal is twofold: first, to evolve images that relate to the 16 aesthetic reference provided by the first class, which can be 17 considered to be an inspiring set; second, to evolve images 18 that are novel in relation to the imagery typically produced 19 by the system. Thus, rather than trying to replicate a given 20

style, the goal is to break away from the traditional style of the system. Once novel imagery is found—that is, when NEvAr is able to find images that the classification system fails to classify as being created by NEvAr—these images are added to the second class, the classifier is retrained and a new evolutionary run begins. This process is iteratively repeated and the method fosters a permanent search for novelty and deviation from previously explored paths.

In our last experiment, the system performed twelve consecutive evolutionary runs.⁵¹ During these runs, the arms race between the ANNs and the evolutionary system was always balanced: the evolutionary engine was always able to find images that were misclassified by the ANNs. However, after these were added to the set of training images, the ANNs were always able to discriminate between the images created by evolution and the set of paintings (with a success rate above 98 percent), thus fostering a stylistic change in the next evolutionary run. Additionally, we conducted some tests using the ANNs from different iterations to classify



Figure 6. Examples of images created using NEvAr's approach to stylistic change. The images in the top row characterize the type of imagery being produced during the first evolutionary run of the process; the ones in the bottom row depict the style of the eleventh evolutionary run of the experiment.

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external imagery that did not belong to the training sets. The experimental results show a gradual improvement of performance as the number of runs increases. This result indicates that the competition between systems improved not only the performance of the ANNs but also their generalization abilities. The evaluation of the aesthetic merit of the evolved images is subjective. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to state that in each run evolution converged to a consistent style of imagery, and that the evolved styles are all significantly different from each other. Hence, the main goals of the approach were attained.

The assessment of the aesthetic merit of the evolved images is subjective; therefore we provide examples of images evolved during the first and twelfth evolutionary runs. The CD accompanying the handbook *The Art of Artificial Evolution* includes the thirty thousand images evolved in the course of this experiment.⁵² Additionally, it is safe to say that in each run evolution converged to a consistent style of imagery, and that the evolved styles are all significantly different from each other.

Evolutionary art research is reaching maturity, and part of this process is the growing awareness of the various social, artistic, and scientific challenges the area faces. From a social standpoint, building tools that foster the creativity of the user is probably the most prominent goal. From an artistic perspective, the greatest challenge is the acceptance of the evolutionary approach as a significant art practice. Promoting the participation and close involvement of artists in the design of these systems is crucial for meeting this challenge. From a scientific standpoint, the most important challenges include the automation of fitness assignment, the creation of systems that develop their own aesthetics, the integration and interaction of these systems in a cultural environment, and the pursuit of new forms of humanmachine interaction.

Evolutionary art results in dynamic models whose behavior is neither totally defined nor predictable by the model's creator. In fact, since the only requirement is having a way to assign fitness, EC allows the discovery of solutions to problems for which very little knowledge is available. This allows their application to creative tasks, such as art, that we are—and might always be—far from fully understanding.

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PENOUSAL MACHADO AND JUAN ROMERO 167

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EVOLUTIONARY AESTHETICS

168

1/17/11 11:44 AM

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Dialog."	17
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9. The four-color theorem was first conjectured the theo-

rem in 1852 by F. Guthrie and was proven in 1977 by Appel and

Haken ("Solution"), who constructed a computer-assisted proof.

43

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169 PENOUSAL MACHADO AND JUAN ROMERO

1/17/11 11:44 AM

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170	EVOLUTIONARY AESTHETICS	

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