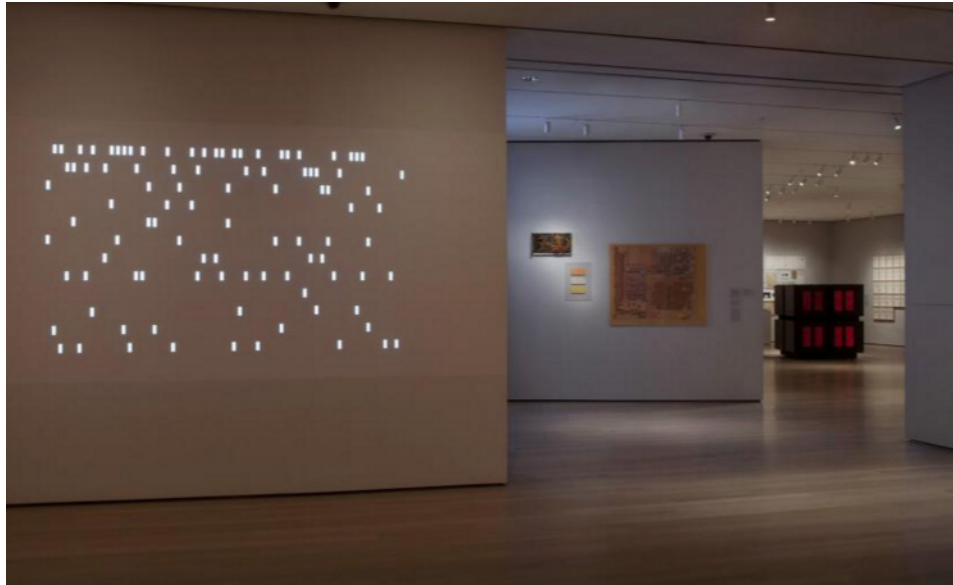


Henry, Jim. "A MoMA exhibit traces the parallels between art, design and computing," *Wallpaper**, January 9

Wallpaper*

A MoMA exhibit traces the parallels between art, design and computing



'Thinking Machines: Art and Design in the Computer Age, 1959-1989' assembles an eclectic array of artworks and equipment from the collection of the Museum of Modern Art that collectively documents the naissence of the digital age. Such a dramatic technological shift led some to assume that traditional art forms were obsolete, however, if art has one tradition it is that of evolution, which is amply demonstrated in this New York exhibition.

Beryl Korot's *Text and Commentary* (1976-77) consists of drawings, loom weavings and five video monitors that document their manufacture. Interested in the historic marginalisation of women's creativity into textile production Korot recognised parallels in digital technology, describing the loom as 'the first computer on the face of the earth.'

Another political perspective is provided by Lee Friedlander, whose series of photographs record the ambivalent expressions of the predominantly female workers engaged in tiresome work on computer terminals in the Midwest, in the mid-1980s.



Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, 1986, by Lee Friedlander. © The artist. Courtesy of Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco

Other women in the emerging computer industry appeared to have had more fun. Plotted graph paper drawings by Susan Kare describe, in pixels, a skull and bones, creeping bugs and a leaping frog: early, unrealised designs for computer screen icons. Meanwhile, some artists in the exhibition used actual computers as tools such as Stan Vanderbeek who, working with programmer Ken Knowlton, produced five minutes of pixelated psychedelia with the film Poemfield No. 1 (1967).

The exhibition is punctuated by impressive hardware including a rather ungainly CM-2 Supercomputer produced by Thinking Machines Corporation in 1987 that appears as a cross between a minimalist sculpture by John McCracken and a Knight Industries Two Thousand (the fictional KITT from the concurrent Knight Rider TV series). More elegant machines include Mario Bellini's Olivetti 'Programma 101' desktop computer from 1965 and early Apple models (the Macintosh XL and 128K Home Computers), the latter reminding us of the technology giant's pioneering designs.



Installation view of 'Thinking Machines: Art and Design in the Computer Age, 1959-1989' at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photography: Peter Butler. © MoMA



Installation view of 'Thinking Machines: Art and Design in the Computer Age, 1959-1989' at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photography: Peter Butler. © MoMA



'Programma 101' electronic desktop computer, 1965, by Mario Bellini, manufactured by Olivetti & C SpA, Ivrea, Italy. © Mario Bellini



Installation view of 'Thinking Machines: Art and Design in the Computer Age, 1959-1989' at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photography: Peter Butler. © MoMA



Installation view of 'Thinking Machines: Art and Design in the Computer Age, 1959-1989' at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photography: Peter Butler. © MoMA



Still from Poemfield No. 1, 1967, by Stan VanDerBeek, realised with Ken Knowlton. Photography: by Lance Brewer. Courtesy of the estate of Stan VanDerBeek and Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York