



[About BCS](#)

[Qualifications, Training, Careers](#)

[Membership and Networking](#)

**[Opinion, News, Analysis](#)**

[Blogs, Podcasts and Video](#)

**[Browse by subject area](#)**

[Business](#)

**[Society](#)**

[Security, Data and Privacy](#)

[IT Management](#)

[Hardware, Software and Games](#)

[Internet and Communication](#)

[Training and Education](#)

[Health Informatics](#)

[Social Media](#)

[Reviews](#)

[News](#)

[Press Office](#)

[Expert Opinions](#)

[Interviews](#)

[Products, Services and Events](#)

[Contact and Help](#)

## Computer Art Image of the Month - February 2011

February 2011

**There are many art works that are only made possible by modern information and communication technologies and this column aims to explore at least some of them. But occasionally one comes across a work that, in its depth (to paraphrase a famous beer advertising slogan) reaches the parts others somehow fail to reach.**

*FUJI spaces and other places* is such a work. I have never been to Japan. But in Nurit's piece I could believe myself there, day by day for the past year. Described by the artist, Nurit Bar-Shai, as 'a durational piece for four seasons' *FUJI* ran for the 365 days of 2010.

This project is about how we perceive changes in time and space when experienced through a digital medium. It also examines the authenticity of our experiences of distant nature, sacred sites and sacred icons in the networked, connected twenty-four seven age in which we live. It suggests access to a place in which we are not necessarily present. An ideal place, utopian in concept. *FUJI*'s deceptively simple concept could not have been realised without the internet and the attendant questions web use raises of mediated looking and experiencing - two concepts vital also to the discipline of art.

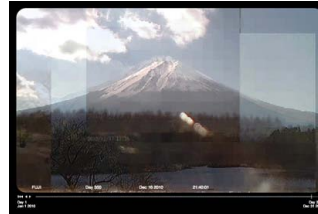
I first met the Israeli-born, US resident artist Nurit Bar-Shai last year at the Computer Arts Society-sponsored Computational Aesthetics conference held at the BCS offices in Southampton Street, where we exhibited this work. Throughout 2010 the artist collected images from ten existing webcam broadcasts of Mount Fuji, interweaving these images together into real-time compositions which were then broadcast live online from January 1 to December 31 2010.

The compositions result from the properties of the web cameras (resolution, size, availability), the light and weather conditions (day and night, Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn) and the interface with the custom software. Viewers were able to witness the process as it evolved over the course of the year. Mirroring the actual view of the mountain, this web view changed every day, every five minutes. If you tuned in at 3pm GMT you saw midnight in Japan and darkness. The sun rises, clouds pass and the light shifts. It is all incredibly beautiful and somehow magical too.

Mount Fuji was an ideal subject for Nurit who admires its 'certainty of nature, stable and permanent presence.' The mountain has profound cultural and religious significance to local residents and, via web-cam technology, to remote viewers as well. It becomes a sublime object that can be adored from afar. An 'object' for the artist that could be observed over time, as an antidote to the overwhelming variety and immediacy of live-broadcasts available today via the internet and the constant incitement to communicate with distant real subjects.

She uses the term 'image composition' to describe the technique used and the process as akin to music-making. Each web-cam was treated like a musical instrument and assigned a roll. The artist explains, 'thus the cameras are choreographed like instruments in an orchestra... one camera would be assigned the solo, another as a first violin and so on, while other cameras would be the orchestra and give the tone.'

Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* provided the inspiration for weaving the complex system that



**Click the image to enlarge**

From 'FUJI spaces and other places', by Nurit Bar-Shai, Jan 01 - Dec 31, 2010

Still Image - Day 350, Dec. 16 2010, 21:40:01, [GMT -5] with 15 days left to the completion of the work.

Found web cameras, live streaming, software

Reproduced with permission

Copyright the artist

### Related Industry News

[Apple Mac App Store launched](#)

[World's first Android MP3 launched](#)

[Firefox is Europe's number one browser](#)

[Uptake of super-fast to surge in 2011](#)

[Illegal music downloads on the rise](#)

### Related Blog Posts

[Backing up](#)

[Technology, Transparency and the Rule of Law](#)

[Download more](#)

[What is Information?](#)

[Business ideas on social marketing](#)

### Related Articles

[Computer Art Image of the Month - February 2011](#)

[Social IT support](#)

[Computer Art Image of the Month - January 2011](#)

[Have IT ethics become if-then-else statements?](#)

[Remembering Sir Maurice Wilkes](#)

[Archive of all articles relating to Society](#)

formed the composition: The four concertos announced the seasons, while each movement (altogether twelve) are the months. Each month was assigned a different 'score' that would affect each web-cam capture and thus, the overall composition. Custom system design and software was created in collaboration with programmer Marc Schwartz. A process which fascinated Nurit - 'how perceptions, ideas and visions can be translated to mathematics and vice versa. Putting ideas into numbers is like magic.'

This caused the artist to reflect on notions of control verses spontaneity in the creative process. A dialogue was created between the code (within, in their control) and the available conditions, the web-cams, the weather, light, so on - outside of their control and constantly changing.

Nurit explains, 'the software processes the available information and conducts the score, taking into consideration predictable elements together with a set of rules structured in advance.' The weather for example could affect the image in terms of brightness-contrast, thresholds and monochromatic gradations of colours. She found the software 'needed constant care, almost like a living thing.' With time-based media works such as this the process can be considered as valuable as the end result (the artefact). Through the use of technological tools, the process and the artefact in *FUJI* are one.

Of course we know that the internet connects us all, irrespective of national borders or time zones but more than that it connects us to the potential of our own imaginations. A dichotomy presents itself. Having never viewed Mount Fuji with my own eyes; having never experienced it in the actual flesh so to speak, it remains remote to me. Yet at the same time I can experience many 'real' views of it all at once through webcam technology. In Nurit's *FUJI* the gap between the real place and its representation no longer exists as it is perceived in real time. The artist explains, '*FUJI* is a voyage across deep time, experienced minute by minute, day by day - a longing for a place that could never be, yet, evidently, always is.'

The project was commissioned in 2009 by New Radio and Performing Arts Inc for its Turbulence website, where *FUJI* currently resides. It is also in the collection of the Rose Goldsen Archive of New Media Art at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. No longer delivering live views, the final year-long composition is presented as time-lapse footage providing a record of a year's 'performance'. A durational online computational art work such as *FUJI* enables the archive work to become part of the work itself, and it does that in real-time as it progresses, accessible to viewers regardless of time and space.

Catherine Mason is the author of *A Computer in the Art Room: the origins of British computer arts 1950-80*, published in 2008. <http://www.catherinemason.co.uk/>

For more information on the computer arts including our events programme please see the specialist group website: <http://www.computer-arts-society.org/>.

More about this month's image: <http://turbulence.org/Works/FUJI/>

Direct link to player: <http://turbulence.org/Works/FUJI/player/play.html>

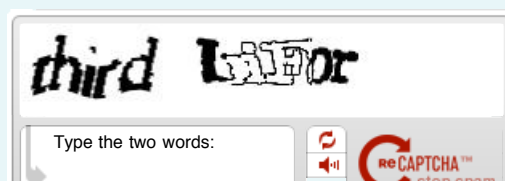
**There are no comments on this item** [Leave Comment](#)

### Post a comment

Your Name

Your email address (not published)

Your comments





Post Comment



© Copyright BCS 2011 | [Legal and Privacy Notices](#) BCS is a registered charity: No 292786