

Listen, Scoundrels!

Calls to Action from Early CAS
A Computer Arts Society Curated by Sean Carroll

The relationship between art, technology, and social responsibility has always been a source of tension and creative potential.

Listen, Scoundrels! forms part of DeMontfort University student Sean Carroll's PhD research into the application of AI to explore archival materials in the curatorial process. This particular exploration centres on PAGE magazine, the newsletter of the Computer Art Society, a publication that has shaped dialogues around art and technology since its inception in 1969, and was initially edited by Gustav Metzger.

Carroll began this exploration without providing guidance for the AI, allowing it to construct its own interpretation of the source material through a series of generative summaries. On examining these insights, what emerged from the AI's analysis was a story of radical conversations, of pioneers, of debates and arguments, all centred on a deeply focussed and committed community.

This exhibition takes its title from Vladimir Mayakovsky's 1922 poem *Écoutez, Canailles!* (Listen, Scoundrels!), a fierce critique of institutional apathy and a call for artists to engage with urgent social issues. Gustav Metzger's editorial approach to these early editions of PAGE amplifies this dialogue, his arrangement of these works appears deliberately constructed: in PAGE 10, he presents Mayakovsky's poem without commentary or translation, compelling readers to question its meaning and engage with its critique on their own. Then in PAGE 11, his detailed essay about the military-industrial development of computers invites readers to draw their own connections.

The exhibition reflects this critical spirit, encouraging viewers to draw their own parallels between past artistic exploration and contemporary challenges. Listen, Scoundrels! serves not just as a title but as a call to action, urging artists to critically engage with technology and avoid entanglement in the systems of power and apathy that Mayakovsky and Metzger condemned.

As we draw parallels between the historical debates documented in PAGE and the challenges of our present, calls to action such as John Whitney's statements in PAGE 24 resonate with striking clarity. "Who is the genius who will use the computer for real great ART? Not a trained artist - not a programmer - but someone (anyone) with extraordinary imagination and a very human sensitivity". His words remind us that the true potential of these technologies lies not in technical mastery, computational power or even in algorithms, but in the capacity for imagination and empathy. In a time when AI increasingly shapes our tools, systems, and creative practices, Whitney's question remains urgent: how might we cultivate the sensitivity and vision necessary to navigate this moment?



PDF Catalogue



AI ChatBot

www.computer-arts-society.com/exhibitions/listen-scoundrels.html

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BCS Moorgate, London

A Computer Arts Society Exhibition

www.computer-arts-society.com