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FLOSS and Art: A critique of Simon Yuill's "All Problems of Notation ..." . . . . . 1



# **FLOSS and Art: A critique of Simon Yuill's "All Problems of Notation ..."**

By Armin Medosch

In his essay *All problems of Notation Will be Solved by the Masses* Simon Yuill claims that the emergent practice of livecoding 'most directly embodies the key principles of FLOSS production into the creation and experience of the work itself.' Unfortunately this claim is supported by an argumentation which is elitist, draws on the criterium of virtuosity and thereby stands in stark contrast to the culture of participation that FLOSS has engendered. While his central argument is not supported, the piece offers enough food for thought to be considered interesting reading.

In recent years a small part of the art world tries to find ways to enlist FLOSS into the service of fine arts. Usually they get it very wrong as there are unresolvable differences between the ways FLOSS communities think and work and how the art world thinks and functions. Sometimes seemingly more convincing arguments are made about connections between FLOSS and art.

One such example has been the award winning essay *All problems of Notation Will be Solved by the Masses* by Simon Yuill. Although it is generally a very knowledgeable piece which contains some very important insights about both FLOSS and art, Yuill gets it all wrong in one central point: he bases his argument on elitism and virtuosity. As I will show, although FLOSS culture contains elements of both, elitism and virtuosity, those criteria stand in stark contrast to the central tenets of FLOSS culture: to foster a culture of enabling, facilitation and participation on a massive scale.

The critique of Simon Yuill's text is mixed with reflections about the problem of the relationship between media art and Free, Libre and Open Source Software (FLOSS). As I had it outlined in my original text *The Next Layer* it suddenly became clear to me that FLOSS makes true all the promises of the avantgarde yet kills art by doing so.

Read more in *ONE LOVE: How FLOSS Can Make True All the Promises of the Avantgarde* (yet would kill 'art' by doing so)