

# DIGITAL ARCHAEOLOGY

July 11, 2014 Jim Boulton Archaeological Media, Curation, Day of Archaeology 2014, Museum Archaeology Amiga, Atari, Industrial designs, Mac OS 7, Macintosh, Microsoft, Nintendo, The Barbican, Windows 98

**My digital archaeology work seeks to document the formative years of digital culture and raise the profile of digital preservation. My main focus is Web 1.0 but I'm also interested in early video games, computer art, and CGI. This is my day:**

6.10am Woken up by my one-year-old. He's obviously very excited about the Day of Archaeology 2014.

7.05am Arrange a courier to pick up an original Ruby Red iMac I bought on Ebay. I just need the elusive Blue Dalmation (the spotty one) and I'll have a full set of the **original 13 colours**. Yes, I'm a geek.

8.10am Put in an order for **Hearth**, a toddler proof LED fireplace and future digital artefact (maybe) made by John Popadic and Harry Denholm.

9.30am Bought four brand new CRT monitors, still in their boxes.

10:20 Headed to The Barbican where I've curated the **Digital Archaeology** section of the **Digital Revolution** exhibition. Giving **Paul Alexandrou** a tour, a friend of mine exploring the impact of the social web on language.



*Digital Archaeology at The Barbican*

11:00 Into the exhibition. The first exhibit is Ralph Baer's Magnovox Odyssey, the first games console and the inspiration for Atari's Pong. It was also licensed by Nintendo in Japan, their first venture into video games. Two giants of the video games industry owe their success to this plastic box. Nice one, Ralph! He also invented **Simon**, the first rhythm action game, making it Guitar Hero's granddaddy.

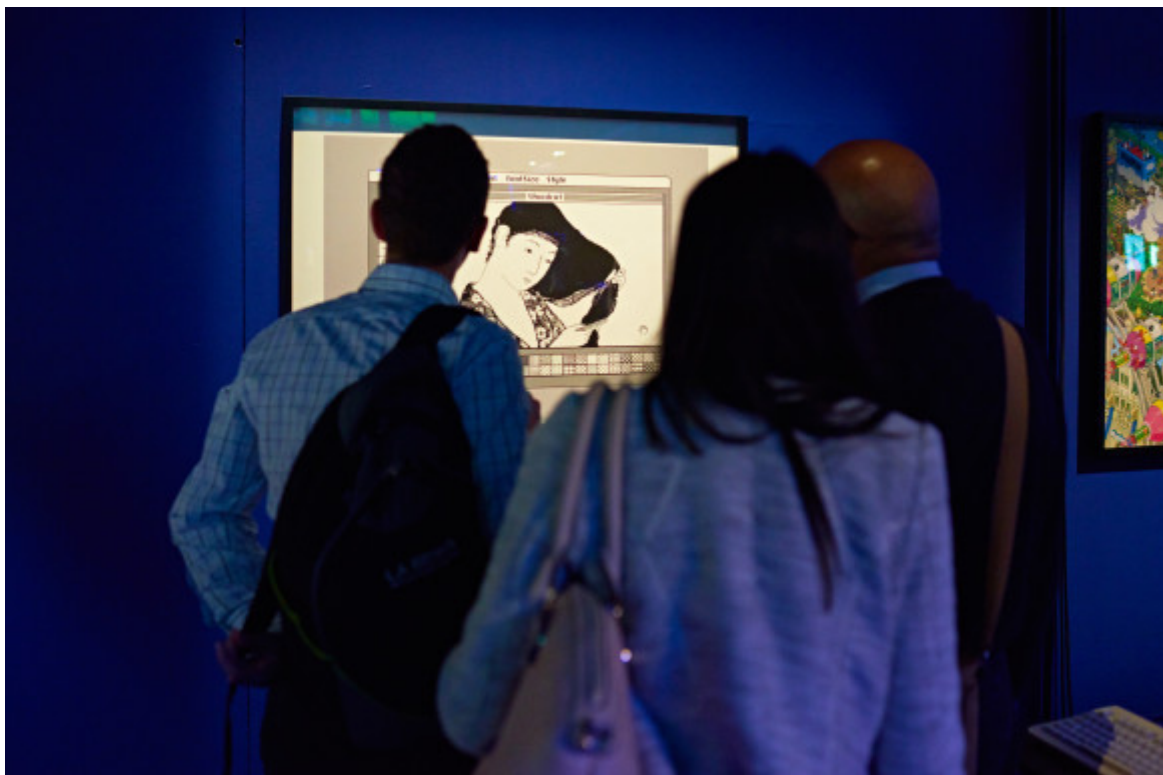
11:10 Next up is Ed Catmull and Fred Parke's student project from 1972, A Computer Animated Hand. Ed and Fred went on to found the company that became **Pixar**.

11.15 The Aspen Moviemap is playing on the video wall: in 1978 a bunch of MIT students pretty much made Google Street View.

11.20 Then on to Game & Watch, the first mass-market clamshell product and *Tetris* on Gameboy – the first/ultimate casual game?

11.25 Quick look at the machines that defined the sound of the '80s – The Fairlight CMI, LinnDrum, and Atari ST.

11.35 Paying our respects to the face that launched the Apple Mac, Susan Kare's interpretation of the Japanese woodblock print, **Lady Combing Hair**. Susan Kare then went to NeXT, where she designed the interface that TBL used to make the first website, then on to Microsoft to design the deck of cards used in Solitaire and then a suite of Facebook icons. Not bad, Susan!



*Digital Archaeology at The Barbican*

11.45 Another iconic image of a woman used to sell computers to young men – a portrait of Debbie Harry created by Andy Warhol on the Amiga 1000. One year earlier Steve Jobs had taught him to use a mouse at Sean Lennon’s 9th birthday party.

11.50 A glance at the Quantel Paintbox, the machine used to make Dire Straits’ “Money For Nothing” video (directed by Steve Barron who also directed the A-ha vid “Take On Me” and Michael Jackson’s “Billie Jean” before directing *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*).

11.55 Net Art! JODI, Olia Lialina and Alexei Shulgin, Masters of the Temporary Autonomous Zone, as Shulgin called the Web in the mid-’90s (my favourite pieces in the show).

12.15 Loads more in between, but another favourite is João Wilbert’s Exquisite Clock, a crowd-sourced, er clock made by João and my old lecturer Andy Cameron at Fabrica.

12.20 The final exhibit is Angry Birds, which signifies the end of digital culture (digital culture just became culture once everyone started carrying a pocket-sized PC with them wherever they went).

Digital Revolution continues with works by Umbrellium, Universal Everything, Chris Milk, Aaron Koblin, Björk, Daniel Rozin, Zachary Lieberman, and a load more of incredible creatives. These are the real stars of the show; my digital archaeology section tries to bring to life the culture they emerged from.

Now over to my studio In Hackney Wick, opposite the Olympic Park, where I have ten old machines to boot up and test.

14.15 Lime Green iMac G3 – doesn’t work – darn

14.35 Tangerine Orange iMac G3 – can’t find the hard drive – not a good start

14.55 Twentieth Anniversary Mac – I know this one works, running Netscape 3 – beautiful

15.20 Snow White iMac G3 – works but a bit beaten up, running OS X, need to downgrade to OS 8.5

15.45 Graphite iMac G3 – works, also running OS X, need to downgrade

16.05 Flower Power iMac G3 – please let this one work- yes! Also running OS X, darn these people who update their machines

16.25 Bondi Blue iMac G3 – works, also been upgraded

16.55 Packard Bell – not a Mac for a change – nice, Windows 98 and Explorer 5 – loving the Pipes screensaver



*Digital Archaeology at Fish Island Labs*

17.15 Two Macintosh Performa 5200s – both working running Mac OS 7 – more like it!

17.30 It's Friday! Having drinks with my new colleagues at [Fish Island Labs!](#)