

mentor's introduction

TERRY BARRETT

The Ohio State University

Mary Leigh Morbey has an interesting and valuable study in her consideration of the work of Harold Cohen, a significant artist who made important paintings and then chose to make his art with computers. Too little critical attention has been devoted to the area of aesthetics and computers, and art educators spend too little time investigating artists. Morbey combines critical and historical methodologies in her intelligent writing about the work of a living artist who deserves to be more widely known in the art and education communities.

In her dissertation she bravely and responsibly included an important appendix – Harold Cohen's response to her study of him and his work. She sent him a copy of her manuscript and asked him to consider writing a response that she could include in her study. He did. He helpfully pointed out some factual errors and by correcting these she had a more accurate historical account. However he also took issue with her major claims. These responses from the artist were troubling for the scholar. She painfully reconsidered her evidence and her construction of it and then stood her original ground.

Because of her bold and responsible initiative of seeking and obtaining Cohen's response to her critical analysis of his work, and then publishing it even when it challenged her conclusions, she furthered scholarly dialogue. The conversation continues and great dividends for her and the field are forthcoming. Cohen has asked Morbey to co-author a book about his work based on her exploratory and critical dissertation. Her risk paid off. Her honest and direct communication proved to be better for knowledge and scholarship than circumventing possible negative criticism through avoidance of conflict.