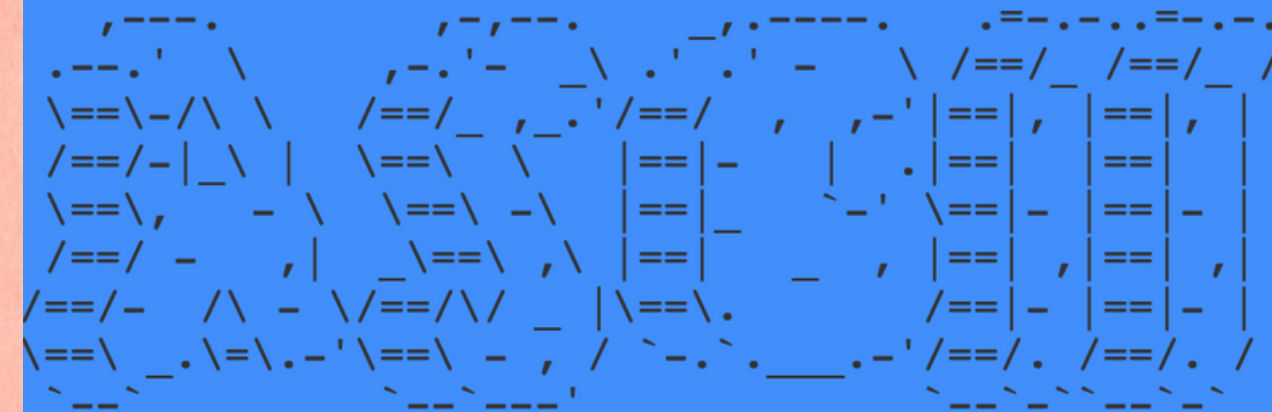# MAKING ART WITH COMPUTERS

A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF ASCII ART
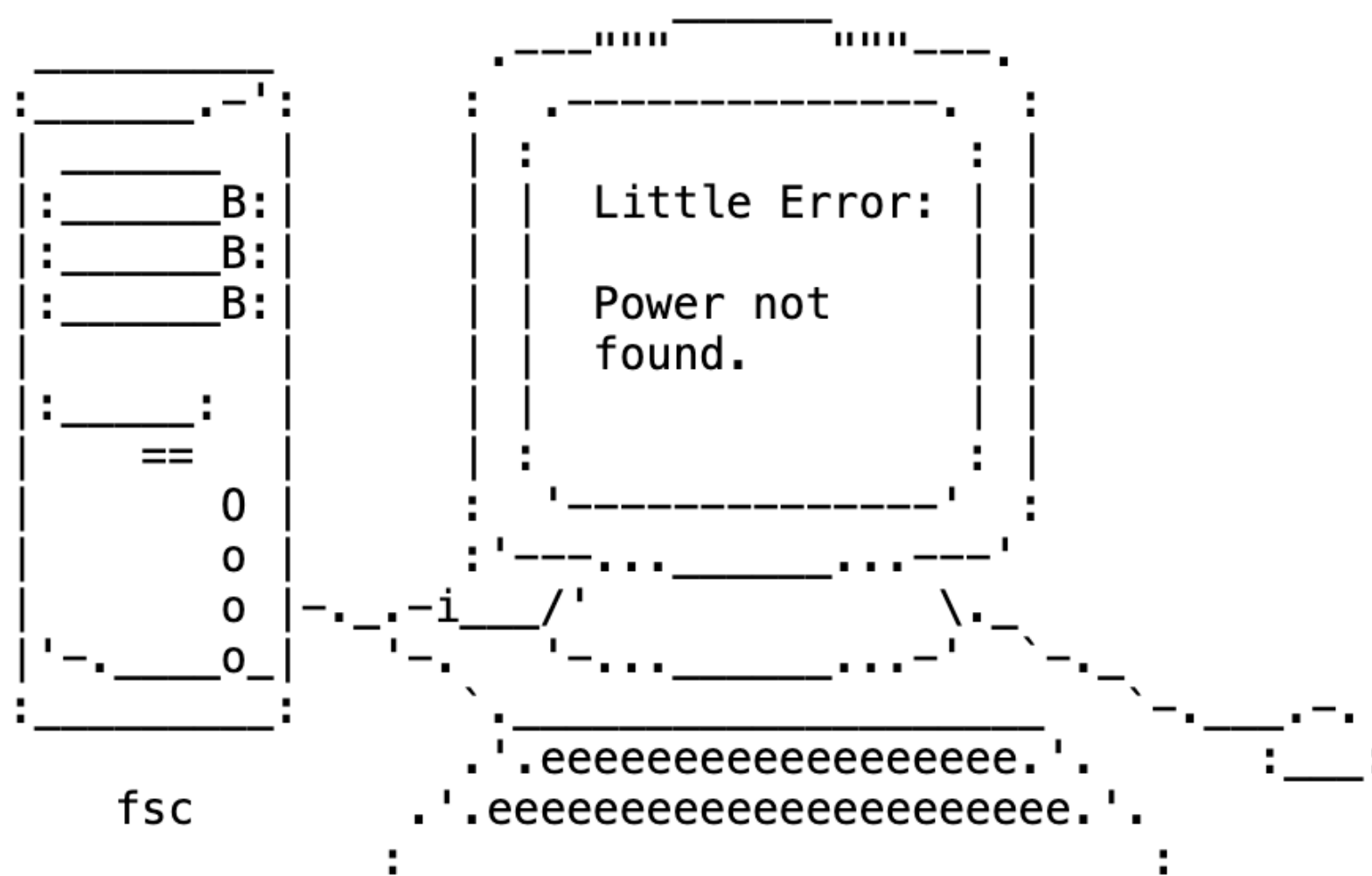
MARTINA MUNÌ

What is ASCII art?

ASCII art is the most universal computer art form in the world.

ASCII stands for American Standard Code for Information Interchange and it is a basic set of 128 numbered symbols which almost all computers can display.
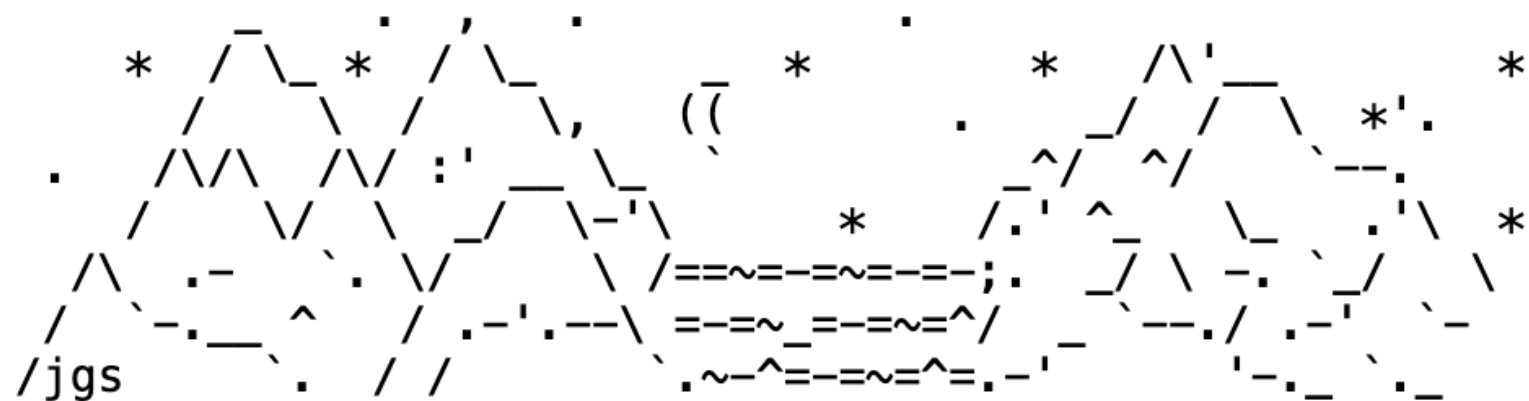
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Can art be made by machines?
- Hobby or job?
- Can we find ASCII art in museums/galleries?
- Purpose?
- How to learn?
- Why ASCII art?
- Is it dying?
- Can you distinguish between true and false?
- How to sell it?

THE PATH

LITERATURE ANALYSIS

The debate

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

13 Semi-structured interviews

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Online survey for ASCII art community

Main findings

ITALY VS ABROAD

More digital art abroad.

Reasons are unclear.

THE ECONOMY

ASCII art is a hobby.

TRUE AND FALSE

Almost everyone can distinguish between hand-drawn ASCII and software-generated ASCII.

MUSEUMS

Very hard to find ASCII art in museums. It's mostly online, besides some cases.

Main findings

HOW TO SELL ASCII ART

Digital art is more saleable. With ASCII art it's harder.

THE AUDIENCE

The majority of survey respondents is male and has a degree. ASCII art is not so easy to appreciate.

A SLOW DEATH

Many ASCII art websites are dead. Many acclaimed artists do not create ASCII pictures anymore. Main reason is ageing, along with the development of technology.

LEARNING BY DOING

No schools or academies that teach ASCII art. You learn it on your own and looking at tutorials.

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ART AND MACHINES

ASCII art is made by people.
The machine is the tool.
ASCII art can reveal what's
happening inside the machine.

PURPOSE

ASCII art was born because
computers could not process
images. Very famous to create
porn.

WHY

The reason why people still do ASCII art is not clear. Is it nostalgia?

ART OR CRAFT

Many respondents claim that the beauty of ASCII art is in the limited medium. However, some artists use it to convey a profound meaning.

COPYRIGHT

How to avoid unauthorised uses of ASCII artworks?

THE QUESTIONS WITH NO ANSWER

THE FUTURE OF ASCII ART

FIRST OPTION

It will become history, like typewriter art. We will not be able to create ASCII art because our computers have evolved too much.

SECOND OPTION

It will evolve and will find new applications. An ASCII app for smartphone could make it appealing to young people.
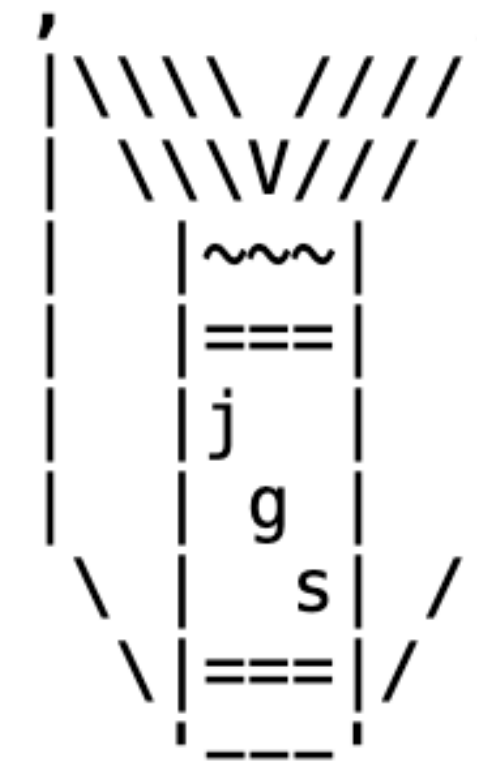
New knowledge to encourage possible applications

Gathering and interpretation of data

New possibility for the future

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THIS THESIS

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MARTINA MUNÌ

Technology is nothing. What's important is that you have a faith in people, that they're basically good and smart, and if you give them tools, they'll do wonderful things with them.

STEVE JOBS