

What It's Like To Write Code

I was talking to some non-programmer friends the other day about what it's like to write code. It's difficult to describe this to people who have never done it.

Computer code is similar to Labanotation, except that you're specifying a "dance" for a computer to do instead of a human dancer. Just like you would have to visualize a dance in order to write it down in Labanotation, you need to visualize what a computer is doing in order to write that down in a programming language.

The surrealist paintings of Yves Tanguy (I've included an example to the right) look a lot to me like what I see in my mind when I'm writing code, except that the paintings are static images and the things I see in my mind move and do things.

It's just a metaphor, but it's as close as I can come to explaining what writing code is like.

Which reminds me of the lyric:

What do you see when you turn out the light?
I can't tell you, but I know it's mine.

*With a Little Help from My Friends, The Beatles
Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, 1967*

-- Michael Trigoboff

