Pool

Absis Minas Review: If Our World Protects

If Our World Protects begins with a taunt: an exhibition statement that could just as well double as a riddle about the non-location of the anonymous person writing. Here's a hint: R, G, and B are touted as real colors, while Y is not. Instead, Y is seen as the mystic container for a shared sense of fun and misadventure. Here's another: an invitation to go on one of those misadventures is met with immobility. The crowd is not lazy, so here's an answer: the immaterial, the digital, and all else occurring on a screen are real, while us poor rubes caught up in the throes of print and living aren't much more than shadows.

But then it's not all that simple. In the sense that the works shown inspire a meandering sort of sublime, vaguely theological, or ontological reflection, it could be argued that the **Lenox Twins** are toying with art historical flagstaffs, and pseudo-religious iconography as part of their quest to blur the distinctions between the artificial and real. What was that yellow paint-caked Buddha, and his equally yellow **mise-en-scène** set atop a floor mirror, but an investigation of separate dimensions – object, reflection, shadow, and (in this case, given the casting of reflection onto the ceiling) projection? What were the three Satellite Sketches but the abstracted and reverential signs of a post-apocalyptic Lewitt-Christianity, all textured with god's-eye photos of the Earth to look more akin to some strange, heat-seeking, bacterial interpretation of marble? And lastly, what were the three rendered prints framed in yellow, and treated with kitsch filters, but a mirrored, forward-looking reference to the stillness and passing of time in Dutch still life paintings of old?

While the works shown are caught up in the skin-deep appeal of the proverbial Art Object to the point of sharing more in common with fashion, it would be incorrect to say that they are merely eye candy, and to then call it a day; sex appeal alone does not a vapid thought make, and use of common tropes in and of itself is in no way a detriment to work that is consciously using said tropes. Given their internet-aware sensibilities, their references to art history, and their preference for an application of gloss so thick that it'd make a lipstick-smeared Jeff Koons toss on a pair Oakley's, the artists share more in common with the vein found in one of the more visible subsects of internet art, to which their contemporaries Lauren Elder, Brian Khek, Micah Schippa, and AIDS 3D also belong. In a sense, **If Our World Protects** is the polar opposite of Jon Rafman's **Brand New Paint Job** – just instead of texturing an environs in old art, the Lenox Twins are essentially gilding old art with the rendering capabilities of modern processors.

Utopian, yes, but it's not impossible to embrace an aesthetic that cherishes technology while at the same time remaining critical of it. If anything the work is poetically leaving those choices up to us.

Andreas Ervik
Between Stupidity and the Sublime

Despite being less than 300 pages long, the Post Internet Survival Guide feels like a mono-lith. It was released in the middle of March, and I still find myself returning to it on frequent basis. It has the layout of a product catalogue, or perhaps an archeology guide, with appar-ently unrelated, small photos spread across the pages. The material featured ranges from e-waste to the carefully elaborate artworks. Most of it relates to extensions of our percep-tion, by way of technology. The origin of the tools on display ranges from the ancient to the so advanced it looks alien. In different ways the guide seems to address the issue: How to survive in a world where corporations such as Google, Youtube, Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr are taking increasing control over our brains?

The guide is divided into eight sections: SEIZE UPON THE SITUATION, USE ALL YOUR SENSES, REMEMBER WHERE YOU ARE, VALUE LIVING, IMPROVISE, VANQUISH FEAR AND PANIC, ACT LIKE THE NATIVES, LEARN BASIC SKILLS. As appropriate as these may seem, they were chosen by a controlled randomizer: they are the first results found by googling survival guide.

Most of the guide hovers in this state of mythical connecivity. The guide is a selection of image and text fragments culled from the web by Katja Novitskova. But rather than sim-ply showing the personal preferences of the curator, there seems to be a profound link between what is displayed – one that places the material just outside the reach of rational comprehension.

Each page functions a cluster bomb of information, ready to explode in any direction the viewer lets it. Here the new symbols of spiritual guidance emerge: glowing screens, gate-ways to other dimensions, digital avatars, unseen forms of matter merging with the old world. The new rulers are placed next to the old: Mark Zuckerberg is pictured making a gesture similar to that of a Julius Caesar. The Google logo is liquified, put together with photos of warfare and flood. Firefox is identified as a spirit animal, pyramids are flipped over and the guide is filled with collections of digital signs, from loading icons to interfaces to useless buttons.

After the rush of discovery comes the question of the significance of all of this. None of it can do any harm to the rulers of the digital realms we inhabit. The point of the guide is ob-viously no such thing, and as a research of online symbols it mystifies rather than subverts. But as with any mystical language it risks only speaking to the initiated few.

Kari Altmann says in an interview in the guide: "Any time you're confronted with a heap of data, waste, content, ideas, etc. to sift through I think the natural inclination is to start by creating your own value system as a point of entry."[1] What if the connections we create here are nothing more than the result of our brains on overdrive, craving patterns when there really is none? Do our personal routes through large information collections hold value for others than ourselves?

A couple of examples: Micah Schippa's "Head.jpg" is a picture of a sculpture missing its head, where the artist has placed a tiny pic of a sculpture head on it. "Donut Earth" is an image of our planet, photoshopped into a donut. I see these pictures as clever alterations. They are sublime in revealing something impossible, showing us a donut shaped earth, and basically fixing a ruined sculpture. But still, they are made with cut and paste or utilizing Photoshop's basic 3D models. The pieces are knowingly stupid and crude, and some might see them as nothing more than that.

Several images featured in the guide makes me think of Martin Cole's "The Current State of Internet Art". It is a re-working of Salvador Dali's iconic painting "The Persistence of Memory", where Cole has replaced Dali's melting watches with the logo of Internet browser Safari. Seemingly this is yet another simple, postmodern, funny Internet art piece. It combines icons, both from the web and the art world, depriving them of their iconic status. If you look closely you can even see the notes accumulating under the picture on Tumblr.

But there's more to it than the notes flowing. Cole's self-proclaimed status as 'The Ultimate Illustrator'[2], differentiates him from other Internet artists. This adds a layer of uncertainty to the intentions behind "The Current State of Internet Art". Is he making fun of 'internet artists'? Is the theme of this work a lack of originality in online artistic practice? Is it a mocking of the stagnation into variations of taking something serious (either from art history, current events or the entertainment business) and adding goofball elements to it?

Dali's painting has been interpreted as a meditation on the relativity of space and time, as discovered by Einstein. The artist himself denied this, saying that it was inspired by watching cheese melting.[3] Whether Cole's piece is intended as a parody or an actual attempt to map out the current state of web based art is not really relevant, a joke can be taken seriously, and this work might give us important pointers.

With the Internet and the equal availability of artworks from the past and the present, our notion of time has collapsed. The symbol melting in Cole's piece is not the watch, but the compass. It is probably chosen for its visual resemblance rather than as a signifier. It dies, however, resonate with artist and writer Tom Sherman's claim that our culture now functions as a "a vast cloud of cultural disorientation"[4] In his essay about "Vernacular video" in the Video Vortex Reader[5], Sherman asserts that art has lost its way.

Sherman describes how our culture has changed: "The world of top-down, expert-authored one-to-many forms of communication have given way to the buzz of the hive".[6] Our need to interract leads to a fragmentation of our attention. In this environment the best messages are the ones who travel quickly: short ones, with clearly defined goals.

But what about art, asks Sherman. How can it survive in an environment where "ambiguity and abstraction fare poorly".[7] He raises some critical questions:

"When will poetic work emerge again in a network-anchored culture dominated by straightforward pragmatic exchanges? And if ambiguous and abstract messages once again emerge, will there be anyone left with the strength of attention to read them? And

finally if artists cling to a belief system that includes the potential for transforming culture through autonomous, strategic interventions, then how will they do so effectively in a culture of messaging that continues to diffuse the power of individual messages in favour of an increasingly scattered, distributed, collective authorship?"[8]

The Post Internet Survival Guide could be seen as a response to all of these problems. Novitskova has managed to construct her own vision out of collective enterprises. What emerges from the work is the impression that the messages Sherman describe as having clearly defined goals might hide as much ambiguity and abstraction as any work of art.

Introducing the book, Novitskaja writes that "[t]he notion of a survival guide arises as an answer to a basic human need to cope with increasing complexity."[9] This guide functions in quite the opposite way: it does not make it any simpler to navigate in a world "where the internet is an invisible given, like roads or trees"[10]. With the guide's extensive focus on the framework of our surfing, it feels rather more like it sets out to make us look at these invisible objects.

One of these desirable, but once in use unnoticed objects, is on display in a tiny picture in the guide: the Iphone G4. It looks so sleek, sublime, it reminds me of the monolith of 2001: A Space Odyssey. People are going as bananas over the Iphone as the gorillas are over the monolith in the movie. We crave these objects for their magnificence. We want them because we believe that they might turn the mundane into the extraordinary.

Work such as the above mentioned "Donut Earth" builds a different possibility of transformation. It takes something known (the planet earth) and turns it into something that is also known (a donut). This creates a way to look the everyday as something amazing, while still holding on to the banality of it.

No matter how advanced our tools have become we are still bewildered monkeys, struggling with a meaningless existence. The Post Internet Survival Guide shows how we are struggling to make sense of our (digital) world, how we can create understanding of it by recontextualizing and reshaping it. It is a collection that tries to transform what Tom Sherman sees as a barren and desolate landscape into a rich poetic environment.

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1. Noviskoja, Katja: 2011:129. Post Internet Survival Guide
2. His name on Flickr, and discussed in this interview: http://readplatform.com/martin-cole-the-ultimate-illustrator/
3. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Persistence_of_Memory
4. Sherman, Tom: 2008:165. "Vernacular Video", Video Vortex Reader
5. Download Video Vortex Reader: http://networkcultures.org/wpmu/portal/files/2008/10/vv_reader_small.pdf
6. Sherman, Tom: 2008:164. "Vernacular Video", Video Vortex Reader
7. Ibid:167
8. Ibid:168
9. Noviskoja, Katja: 2011:4. Post Internet Survival Guide
10. Noviskoja, Katja: 2011:4. Post Internet Survival Guide

Ann Hirsch
Women, Sexuality and the Internet

"The new economy relies on the assumption that individuality can be recovered from mass society through the process of individuation via customization… Crucially, this participation comes about largely through the surveillance process—hence the equation of pervasive monitoring with creativity and self-expression that is one of the hallmarks of the current generation."

-Mark Andrejevic: Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched, 2004.

The popular embrace of surveillance presents a dilemma particularly for women, who have a history of problematic visual representation. We are living in an era in which we are more likely than not to be publicly represented in some manner. Through self broadcasting over the internet, the notion that female representation could change to offer a less objectified picture becomes a more viable option. However, the disciplinary control of surveillance surfaces in these democratic new media platforms. The women who self-represent often portray the same conventions of television, films, and magazines. The women watching those self-produced broadcasts in turn imitate those imitations, illustrating a cycle of identification and internalization of stereotypes, rather than subversion.

Additionally, places for women to occupy on the internet are limited. In certain areas, we are told "tits or GTFO". While in others we must not express our sexuality for fear of seeming like a "camwhore". We want to after all, be taken seriously. For a woman to be taken seriously, she cannot be seen as wanting sex or asking for sexual attention.

There is not much space on the internet to express ourselves sexually without avoiding extreme objectification. The goal is to create instances which begin to transcend this problem.

Why is it that sexuality must still exist separate from intellect? One who exerts his or herself in an overly sexual manner is rarely taken seriously. Within normative culture, the sexual mindset and the intellect operate in two different realms. We can admit we are both sexual and intellectual beings, but never at the same time. We know this separation intrinsically, which is why we have come up with phrases such as "he was only thinking with his dick". But rather than seeing them as two disparate modes of thinking or operation, they should be thought of holistically. Our brain and our genitalia operate together to help form our sense of self.

The internet is a place where for the first time (more or less) individuals are able to create imagery of sexuality in their own image and disseminate these images widely. We are also able to be part of communities who share our sexual interests without causing shame. The one-to-many hierarchy of traditional media no longer has to be the arbiter of normative sexuality, but can be figured on an individual level. Unfortunately, though, at the moment, as a collective force, we are currently struggling to create our own images while we remain slaves to the tropes of older models.

The internet did not create the patriarchal system that objectifies and humiliates sexual women but it certainly has had the ability to magnify it to the millionth degree. Pornography—a genre built on female domination and exploitation—is bigger than ever. Women attempting to create their imagery anew are drowned out by pornography that asserts women are objects.

However, while the internet has simultaneously intensified our existing problems, it has, as mentioned, provided us with the medium to fight back. My hope is that more women will take up a form they feel comfortable in, whether it be blogging, vlogging, producing, updating, posting, etc and express themselves in a manner they feel is demonstrative of their whole person.

hugs

Duncan Malashock
Community and Practice Online

Since I first became interested in art on the Internet, specifically through groups centered around rhizome.org, I've heard phrases like "the Internet art community" used to promote awareness of the field. Although I agree that, in general, online artwork deserves a more comprehensive awareness and understanding, it made me wonder what the implications are of characterizing such a group of far-flung and multifarious artists as a community. Is there any truth to this claim? What makes a community? How are the members of a community involved with each other, and how should they be involved?

In their 1985 study of individuality and community in the United States, Habits of the Heart, Robert Bellah et al. draw a distinction between community in the traditional sense, and another newer form of social group, which they call the "lifestyle enclave."

According to Bellah et al., communities are defined by the interdependence of the individuals who form the group, their shared history, and their capacity for collective political action. The most straightforward example I can think of is a village, whose citizens are united by the bonds formed by their families' histories, by the shared traditions they continue together in their daily lives, and whose values have evolved and stabilized into a shared moral code. This code emerges, solidifies, and is reinforced by a community's shared experiences and ethical trials, like the eventual homeostasis reached by an ecosystem. Bellah et al.'s vision of community reminds me of Fellini's depiction of his hometown of Rimini in his film, Amarcord, which illustrates with great sympathy the strong social ties of a group who have faced their every personal and political obstacle together.

Bellah et al. contrast the "community" with the so-called "lifestyle enclave", a voluntarily assembled group drawn together by their acknowledgement of similar interests in leisure activities, consumption of products, and similar outward appearance. Members of a lifestyle enclave may happen to share similar morals or traditions, but they are not socially dependent on each other, nor are they bound by any unavoidable obligations to one another. Unlike members of communities, members of lifestyle enclaves are not tied by a shared history, and are generally not obligated to assert and maintain the values and identity of the group. The most evocative example that comes to mind is the suburban "gated community" (also a physical enclave due to its restricted access), the members of which are primarily drawn together by a shared desire for a secure and homogeneous environment, rather than any inherent or obligatory social interdependence.
Members of a community interact in the public spheres of work, politics, education, etc.;

members of a lifestyle enclave interact in the private spheres of leisure activity. Bellah et al. cite factors like an increasingly globalized economy which requires workers to relocate, the paradoxical American tradition of "leaving home" as a symbolic rebellion from one's heritage, and the innovation of lifestyle marketing as possible contributors to the decline of the traditional community and the accompanying rise of the lifestyle enclave in the U.S. Bellah et al. also point out that, at this stage in our society, "community" and "lifestyle enclave" can be seen more appropriately as the two ends of a continuous spectrum of interdependence, and that any given group may exemplify both labels to varying degrees.

The transition from community to lifestyle enclave, and its accompanying loss of social norms, is a point of conflict for many groups of many various political alignments. One example, of which the American media are particularly fond, is the caricature of the outspoken preservationist, the defender of "small-town values," typically depicted in satire as a member of some stodgy organization which might have us remain in Pilgrim costumes reenacting colonial towns for all time, if only they had their way. There's some irony to the preservationist's stance, since the lifestyle enclave can be seen as an expression of both the freedom to do as one likes and the freedom from social obligation, which may be two of the most American of any values. But what is understandable about the preservationist's point of view is the fear that, along with the lifestyle enclave's removal of the social interdependence of community, which defines and enforces social norms and obligations, we also remove its potential to develop the social character and relationships of its constituent members around a common way of life.

The Internet might be seen as a platform for supporting lifestyle enclaves of the most quintessential kind, since the mediation of the online computer interface satisfies Bellah et al.'s criteria for the lifestyle enclave with uncanny precision: it allows for one's outward appearance to be crafted and shared with others through images and other content, free from the restrictions imposed by physical presence, and limited only by time, skill and effort. Social interdependence is unnecessary online, because, for the most part, work is unnecessary; the basic necessities of online existence are provided for by the technologies already in place; and, for the same reason, one can choose to use the Internet exclusively as a medium for leisure activities, including the consumption of online and physical products. In this way, groups of Internet users are, to date, possibly the most free of the ties that bind, and are accordingly the most susceptible to the potentially alienating aspects of the lifestyle enclave.

So, with these definitions in mind, I have to confess some skepticism (albeit optimistic) when I read characterizations of the varied collection of individuals working online as a "rich community of Internet artists." I think groups of artists online which exemplify the positive social effects of communities do exist, despite their lack of obligatory social interdependence. I'm interested in how these traits can be fostered and magnified in the network of online artists through various modes of group activity.

Anthropologists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger present what I find to be a useful framework for understanding how to build meaningful groups online. Lave and Wenger offer a theory based on "communities of practice", an ancient concept but a new term, which they define as "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly." The concepts of communities of practice and situated learning have been used since the early 90s to help understand networked activity, essentially comprising a systems-analysis of the means by which specialized knowledge is transmitted through and embedded in social environments.

Below is Wenger's list of the modes of social activities by which communities develop their practice. I've modified the examples to relate to online artwork in a general way:

• Problem solving: "Can I get some feedback on this piece? It's okay but it could be better."

• Requests for information: "I have an idea for a piece using [tool] for making [thing], and I'm looking for ideas; does anyone know if this has been used this way before?"

• Seeking experience: "Has anyone dealt with installing [equipment] in a gallery before?"

• Reusing assets: "I have a template from a page I made that might work for you; I can send it to you and you can change it for your portfolio site"

• Coordination and synergy: "Can we get together to organize a group show at [exhibition space]?"

• Discussing developments: "What do you think of this new online curatorial project? Is it something you'd want to participate in?"

• Documentation projects: "I've seen a lot of people make artwork about [subject] using [tool]; are they aware of each other? How are they related?"

• Visits: "Can I come to your discussion group?"

• Mapping knowledge and identifying gaps: "We're putting together a list of all the online curatorial projects since 1995; are there any we're leaving out?"

It's clear that much of this is already happening in the Internet art network, but, in my opinion, more of these types of group interactions (especially if they were effectively organized within a central forum like rhizome.org) would lend online art groups the meaning which community provides, especially when it comes to documenting the history of our predecessors, the formations of projects and groups, and the development of artistic concerns unique to our field. Such practices would not only improve our artistic pursuits and strengthen our social ties; they would also improve our appearance and legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

Gene McHugh
Meagher's Space

1.

Patrick Meagher is a New York-based artist known for his Styrofoam sculptures made between 1999 and 2005 as well as the Silvershed art project space that he runs in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood. His work takes many other forms, though, including sculpture in multiple media, painting, photography, Internet browser-based work, diagrams, prints, video, and the artist's book. He is also an intellectual polymath with interests in mathematics, new age philosophy, Modern art and architecture, landscape architecture, computer science, and economics.

With all of these diverse projects and interests, there are many ways to read his work. Several of these are included in the forthcoming monograph/artist's book Digital Disorder Decades, which details the work he made between 1999 and 2009.

This text is another, focusing on the representation of space in his Styrofoam works.

2.

Space is typically considered in three dimensions. One looks out onto the landscape or at an object and considers it in terms of surface and volume: length, width, and height. But sometimes it can be represented in other ways as well. For example, mathematicians can demonstrate models of higher spatial dimensions through the use of hypercubes, but these hypercube models are often opaque and, for an artist, aesthetically lacking.[1] There are other examples of space beyond 3D, though.

Time—the fourth dimension—has been represented in Cubism, Process art, Minimal sculpture, and, of course, the performing arts and film. However, before (and after) Einstein's theory of relatively proved that the fourth dimension was time, many artists were obsessed with a certain non-Euclidian spatial fourth-dimension that one could intuitively perceive, if not visualize per se. [2] Duchamp's work, for instance, could be understood as a search for the representation of this dimension. As could the work of Louise Nevelson—a crucial formal and conceptual reference in Meagher's work—who wrote a book entitled Louise Nevelson: The Fourth Dimension. The surrealists, particularly Breton and Dalí, also discussed these ideas, and, in a slightly different way, the artist John McCracken did as well.

Another way to approach this question, though, is through Bruce Nauman's A Cast of the Space Under My Chair (1965-68) in which Nauman literally cast the empty space under his chair, resulting in a small, mausoleum-like structure that is at once itself (empty space) and not-itself (it nudges the viewer to perceive a chair). In other words, it uses the empty space to create a portal through which to view another space that is not physically there.

With that image in mind, we can return to Meagher.

3.

Patrick Meagher was born in 1973 in New York City. His mother is Swiss and, with the exception of a few programs on PBS, she discouraged him from watching television. As an alternative, he constructed model worlds out of the detritus of nearby construction sites. He then attended a specialized math high school where he became fascinated by the Internet and the lively street art scene in New York. His interest in Andy Warhol led him to study Fine Art at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, where Warhol is from, and his interest in Joseph Beuys led him to study a year abroad at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, where Beuys taught. He then received a Master's degree in Landscape Architecture from Harvard's Graduate School of Art and Design.

Meagher returned to New York in 2000 and began working with the discarded Styrofoam that was seemingly everywhere at the time. As art writer Mary Rinebold puts it in her piece on Meagher in the Digital Disorder Decades book:

"Moving into the Fashion District at the turn of the millennium, Meagher observed Styrofoam packaging everywhere, especially in the corridors of lower Broadway, an area known collectively as Silicon Alley. Mountains of this futuristic material littered street corners, surrounded garbage cans, and blocked building entrances. At this time many households were investing in their first home computers, and these machines came wrapped in Styrofoam. Messy to break up and stuff into trash bags, large blocks of Styrofoam were thrown onto the sidewalks of New York, and Meagher began collecting every inch of it that he could find."

Meagher uses this material in multiple ways. In early pieces such as Corbusian Trauma (2000), for example, he positions the Styrofoam into a miniature example of textbook Modern architecture, lights it, and then takes a picture. The resulting photographic print appears to depict an architectural space; however it is a space oddly emptied-out, as though existing in a dystopian science-fiction film. The clean, blocky, yet functional forms are in disuse here, in ruins; yet, perhaps because of this, there is an alien beauty that pulls one in, forming questions on the tip of one's tongue—What was here? What was this 'trauma'?

In other works, such as The Atria of Space Station Science Fiction (2003), Meagher combines multiple units of Styrofoam into small room-size installations inspired by the found material reliefs or "crates" of Louise Nevelson. The canals and intricate formal patterns dug out of the Styrofoam walls perhaps remind one of H.R. Giger's biological/industrial imagery from the film Alien (1979) or, through a different lens, the computer chip-inspired look of the film Tron (1982). There is a small part of the elevated floor cut out, allowing one to enter inside. Is this the control center of a futuristic factory or perhaps an ancient space of ritual and religion? As in Corbusian Trauma, the function of these forms is a mystery, creating a mixture of absence and intimacy that draws one in.

Once the artist creates this mood, the viewer is invited to reflect on the materials, coming to terms with their origin as discarded Styrofoam packaging. And, as this happens, a new type of space emerges. The shroud of mystery hovering around the surface dissolves and, in its place, one views shiny desktop computers nestled into grooves of Styrofoam. Like Nauman's A Cast of the Space Under My Chair, a physical object is both there in space and an engine for projecting the space that once fit around it; in this case, a computer.

This is ironic when one considers that a computer is much like the Styrofoam packaging that protects it. The complex forms and intricate shell of a computer are, in themselves, useless. They are meant to deliver something else. Staring into my monitor, I don't just view a monitor, but rather a monitor and a window into the virtual. Staring into the Styro-

foam in Meagher's installation, I don't just view Styrofoam, but rather Styrofoam and the computer and, by extension, the window into the virtual that the computer opens up. A space projecting a space projecting a space…

4.

As personal computing has become commonplace, people regularly enter into this virtual space and navigate around without giving it a second thought. Many people have set up virtual extensions of themselves on sites like Facebook. And, yet, it is difficult to really see what this looks like.

Indeed, it is difficult to see what most things look like when they are right in front of one's nose. Use value clouds the ability to see things as mere things—objects in the world.

When one breaks something down, though—say a hammer—and removes its use value, it becomes visible as a thing.

Perhaps it could be said that Meagher's space shows one what this computer space looks like by breaking down the computer, removing it from the scene while retaining its shell.

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1. This is not always the case. See the work of Manfred Mohr for an example of an artist deeply invested in exploring the representation of the hypercube.
2. The art historian Linda Dalrymple Henderson's The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art (1983) is the most exhaustive reference on this topic.

Ginger Scott
Duchamp's Ideal Children: Internet Art, the Avant-Garde and the Readymade

The collective term 'new media art' relates to what is currently 'new' and has referred to video, electronic, web-based, network, and interactive art at different times. There are also further distinctions for artworks that exist digitally – either through closed networks, on the World Wide Web, or as digital works that don't need the internet to be viewed. From the early 1990s, 'new media' was used in reference to internet/online art that could be lumped in with considerations of the avant garde due to the paradigm shift in concept, medium and reception that it initiated. It uses the same context for its production, display and content – the work was self-referential because it was made digitally, displayed digitally, and communicated digitally. The trajectory of the avant garde, with artists claiming 'non-art' objects as 'art' objects, began somewhere with Duchamp and his urinal. The readymade can be directly related to today's digital and online art as we can observe the re-purposing of a pre-existing system as a tool for artistic exploration. Maybe it's too simple to lump together a urinal and the internet in a discussion about new media and avant garde. Even if the ties are obvious, there is a risk of limiting the interpretation of current digital and online production. This work's mutable identity and confused role in the larger art world expresses the very nature of the media themselves and deserves space to expand and renegotiate itself on an ongoing basis.

My art historically trained brain was tripped up by an article in e-flux journal, "Art and Thingness, Part One: Breton's Ball and Duchamp's Carrot,"[1] which announced Duchamp as a conservative artist. This apparently is far from a new opinion as the criticism is cited through the voices of minimalists including Dan Graham, Robert Smithson and Daniel Buren. It is argued that Duchamp's placement of the urinal in the gallery space reinforced the authority of the institution, employing its existing voice without disruption. This means that the readymade wasn't a critique of the authority of the gallery but instead a gesture that called attention to it.[2] The readymade was first considered avant garde because it was the first to claim everything that is already in the world as (potential) art. The other side of

this opening-up is a closing-down. If everything can be privileged as art, then maybe nothing can be differentiated? This was in 1917 – mediums and theories have changed – but the authoritative voice of the gallery has not, in that anything placed within its walls is still to be considered as art. Also, 'art-as-everything' is a firmly established theme in art production and nothing appropriated from popular culture or using pre-fabricated materials can be considered as groundbreaking nowadays. Strangely, the anxiety over a lack of distinction between 'art' and 'non-art' seems to reignite with each new introduction of a popularized medium into the realm of art production (re: video, internet, performance, music). Identifying new media, video, network or online art as avant garde isn't accurate since we should no longer be surprised when artists take up a medium that was originally created for other, non-artistic purposes. There is nothing in the act of creating digital or internet art that's fascinating, but how it has influenced the art world and the authority of the gallery is significant. It's shiftiness and true non-objectness makes it worth some attention. In the case of internet-based art, the lines between every day use and artistic expression are further blurred and make these works more difficult to recognize and analyze. This is to their benefit.

Christiane Paul argues in her essay "New Media and Institutional Critique: Networks vs. Institutions"[3] that institutional critique is inherent to new media art because it exists in formats that are difficult to exhibit in a traditional gallery. Paul recognizes that plenty of new media/online/digital/network art does not address institutional critique as part of its content, but that it should be considered in relation to the same ideas. In an art historical context, it's impossible to ignore the movement's inherent opposition to art institutions by fostering parallel forums for artistic exchange. However, this essentializes the medium as automatically oppositional. There should be a distinction between art that actively engages with the ideas of institutional critique and art that is simply associated through its context. It's not enough to call something institutional critique just because it doesn't acknowledge the institution.

The 'newness' of these art media – new media/online/digital/network – provokes a novelty value, prompting writers and curators to pay attention and begin determining how to facilitate these works for public display. The artists who take up these media have also been concerned with the 'newness' of it all, but the internet is now fully ingrained as a natural extension of people's lives and doesn't have the same freshness. For both curators and artists the work's novelty value can sometimes overshadow a lack of content in the work and theory produced. In physical art forms it is obvious when the crafting and material condition of the work is prioritized over its meaning and conceptual components. Just because it's well-done, doesn't mean it's good art. Just because it avoids traditional institutions doesn't mean it's commenting against them.

After the novelty runs out, new media/internet/online/digital art can no longer remain un-recognizable or misunderstood; its inherent functions and abilities are not surprising, but how it can be manipulated is; how people access it isn't surprising, but how it can be received in different contexts, both covert and overt, is. Part of the major appeal of this work for writers and curators is its built-in accessibility, and what I identified earlier as its strength. Because of this convenience, its production and widespread acceptance has been achieved within one generation. From internet art's beginnings in the early 1990s, 20 years later there are specific grants, conferences, university programs and exhibitions that support digital art production.

There is a paradox here – an art movement that operates outside of institutions, both in its content and context (variably) but which has been folded into an institutional analysis and support system more easily and quickly than most other art forms.

So, is it new media and internet artists themselves or the curators and theorists who are asking for (and achieving) this widespread inclusion? There are many points of tension, and considerable overlap, as digital artists can also be curators and theorists, all working towards the same goals. Two examples of this tension are Barmecidal Projects[4] and Bozeau Ortega Contemporary Arts (BOCA)[5], which flirt with both the traditional models of gallery display and commerce through alternative models to these systems that exist in online/digital environments. It is hard to tell whether their alignment with these models is tongue-in-cheek or whether they are veritable attempts to raise the profile of digital artworks to the level as their physical counterpoints (painting, sculpture etc.). Without the same historical trajectory as paintings or sculptures, an alignment can be achieved through the language of gallery exhibition and the economic system. The same question I brought up earlier as to why Paul claims online/digital/network art as institutional critique because it exists outside of an institution relates to my next question: why do these projects choose to align themselves with art world models when their strength lies in their existence in the periphery? As the gallery system attempts to integrate these new media into its white walled fold, these projects are calling back to say 'yes, we want to actively adhere to your systems." Barmecidal is a virtual gallery displaying artwork exactly how it would be shown in an irl gallery space, minus the physicality, and BOCA is participating in the art market, representing a selection of artists and promoting and selling their artworks – all digital, non-objects. These projects reinforced this gallery's authority and seem to want to legitimize themselves through this association. If we believe Paul's idea that new media and online artworks are inherently critical of institutions, what does it mean when online projects mimic the institutions for their own gain?

Barmecidal Projects launched April 16, 2011 in the form of a party and video walk-through projection at Butcher Gallery (Toronto)[6]. Titled FREE 4 ALL, the group exhibition included works produced entirely in the virtual realm, arranged in a gallery that, besides the fact that it is digital, resembled a physical gallery in all ways: white walls, monitors playing video art, a mixture of sculptures and wall mounted works. Barmecidal could have existed as a website where you could click on examples of artists' work to browse through page by page, image by image – but it isn't that – it is an online gallery that resembles a physical gallery. BOCA, founded in early 2011, is a commercial online gallery which has digital art objects for sale that are "ready to be displayed in your virtual collections." This is in some way shocking, but in another way not at all – if they're producing art work, why wouldn't it make sense for digital artists to have the opportunity to have a dealer and make money off their work? It circumvents the traditional art market which is a system that banks on one-of-a-kind preciousness and the endurance of an object through multiple generations. This is not the case in the digital world.

Rejecting preciousness is a conceptual legacy. But the artists in the 1960s and 70s didn't quite succeed, as the remnants of their ideas exist as a plethora of objects that can be viewed in physical galleries all over the world in the form of cue cards, typewriter documents, photographs, and sculptural objects. An interest in dematerialization existed before and after conceptualism, along an avant grade historical trajectory if we're counting readymades, appropriation, video and new media art too. Ownership of a digital artwork is at the mercy of your computer, external harddrive or programming language if they crash or become obsolete, and the object in its original form is lost. Maybe you can copy it? Take screen shots? There is a serious leap to be made between digital object and physical object ownership. It involves even more of a leap than conceptual artists asking money for their brilliant ideas that only exists on a cue card with a coffee stain on it from 50 years ago. Online/digital/network artists are perhaps achieving what the conceptual artists couldn't due to a lack of technological. Artist Vuk Cosic described today's digital artists as "Duchamp's ideal children"[7] since digital and online art successfully embodies dematerialization, appropriation, ephemerality and an inability to be archived through existing methods.

Regardless, I'm more interested in Barmecidal and BOCA's involvement in gallery and commercial systems when digital production can so easily exist outside of them. The periphery is always more productive than an adherence and reinforcement of the existing and perpetuating art systems, whether or not there are goals of institutional critique involved. Not many mediums can accommodate the kind of ease and freedom of expression as digital works that exist in an ephemeral and mutable state. With no objects to preserve, the sentiment and philosophy that are inherent to online/digital/network art is what should be preserved and maintained, knowing that it will soon shift again. My first access point into an understanding of internet/online/digital art was through an art historical reading that aligned it with institutional critique, as if the challenge of figuring it out had already been solved. There should be alternative ways of talking about what we consider 'new media' that doesn't simply apply old ideas onto new ideas.

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Jennifer Chan
Why Are There No Great Women Net Artists?

Vague Histories of Female Contribution According to Video and Internet Art

Since the women's liberation movement, various gains and losses have occurred in regards to the representation of women in art.[1] In its infancy, women artists co-opted video as a mass medium for channeling affective and durational realities. Eventually, the migration of video to immaterial digital format and the decentralized distribution of the internet has had implications for its curation and appreciation. While sexism in the art world is an old, ongoing problem, the popularization of "web 2.0" technologies have allowed a previously readerly cyberpublic to become active contributors to online content.[2] By tracing a history of disparate moments in which female voices and contributions were recognized in the media arts, I will compare previous feminist efforts and existing works by women to uncover the causes for the ongoing underrepresentation of women in internet art.

To set the stage for this inquiry about representation of a group within a specific genre (woman internet artists), I define feminism as a method of asking questions about female perspectives in relation to traditional ideas of masculinity and femininity. It is not sexism, nor is it a subject position.[3] In 1972, Linda Nochlin's seminal essay "Why are there no great women artists?" claimed that cultural and educational institutions prevented women artists from advancing equally as male artists.[4] Almost two decades later in 1996, Steve Dietz likened the state of net art (interchangeably called "net.art" at the time) in the museum or gallery to the marginal state of feminist art perspectives before 1970s in "Why are there no great net artists?"[5]

Early Feminist Video

In the late 1960s, the second wave feminist movement coincided with a significant introduction of female voices into video art in North America (along with an increase in female literacy levels, spending power, and sexual liberation following the innovation of the birth control pill). Women artists introduced personal politics in the intimate and immediate medium of video after the advent of the PortaPak in 1965. By directly addressing the camera in a confessional or actively gazing manner, women imparted agency in telling the stories of their lives in the way they would like to be represented. Endurance performance, storytelling, reenactment and reappropriation were common amongst female videomakers. Such a direct mode of address shifts over the course of the next two decades as MTV

debuts in 1981 and YouTube in 2005. With the varying representations of women came a greater degree of revolt, parody and subversion.

Despite video's potential for empowerment and intimate storytelling, canonized feminist video have highlighted dialectics of gender with regards to the "nature" of a woman as sensual, personal, and emotive.[6] When such characteristics are placed in opposition to those of traditional masculinity (as stoic and rational), the regime of representing women in feminist video programs become stereotypical and patronizing. Conversely, Marina Abramovic's performances always express a disciplined composure. In Rhythm 10 (1973), she lays out 20 sharp objects and repeatedly stabs them between the spaces of her splayed fingers. Acting in a task-driven and ritualistic manner, Abramovic motivates viewers to forget one's imagination of her as a woman, and acts as a performer. She is first an artist, and then a woman.

Combining formal conventions with figural content, artists such as Joan Jonas explored the properties of the medium in relation to the existing technical innovations during their time of making. In Vertical Roll (1972), the structural convention of transition by vertical roll is employed repetitively as a formal device throughout a twenty-minute performance. An equally pitchy noise that syncs to the movement of the transition, the constant fragmentation of the video image prevents the viewer from seeing Jonas completely. Similiarly, Petra Cortright's webcam performances echo the tradition of presencing the self for the camera. The interlace-glitch effects in swickoof.mov (2011) recalls the conversion of formal gesture into a visual manifestation of manipulated signal in Warp (2000) and Violin Power (1978) by Steina Vasulka.

Likewise, Brenna Murphy's yingyyangyhuman (2011) utilizes rapid editing between recorded images of herself to address the variable properties of the digital medium.[7] Cutting back and forth between horizontally flipped images of herself, the mirroring recalls Valie Export's Space Seeing – Space Hearing (1973-74). Accompanied by audio signal, an image of a woman flips back and forth symmetrically. In these pieces, Cortright and Murphy address the potential for infinite transformation of the self image by using consumer software.[8] However simple, these works are notable their irreverence and play that departs from historical conventions of feminist video art.

Comparisons could be drawn between the communication of intimacy and interiority in historical video and also web 1.0 net.art by women. Olia Lialina's website, My Boyfriend Came Back From the War (1996), utilizes multiple frames with hypertextual links that require viewers to clickthrough to experience a disjunctive relationship with her hypothetical boyfriend after he returns from war.[9] On a similar formal vein of luring the viewer to click to unravel a fragmented narrative of image and text, Tina Laporta's DISTANCE pairs glitching webcam pictures with poetically labeled hyperlinks to explore intimacy over the internet.[10] Meanwhile, Krystal South's Overcoming Depression and Advancing to the Next Level combines affirmative statements with faded grey text that darken upon cursor movement over the text. Here the artist uses vernacular properties inherent to web-based text coding to convey ambivalent emotions.[11]

Cyberfeminist institutional critique

Cyberfeminists of the nineties sought to achieve equal technological footing to their male programming counterparts by ideologically infiltrating communication networks with sexually charged dissent. They posted their manifestos on mailing lists, message boards, and self-organized websites. "The Female Extension" (1997) arose as an intervention and response to the lack of female net artists, as well as the Hamburg Museum's attempt to institutionalize net.art. Cornelia Sollfrank wrote a program to simulate over 200 interna-

tional proposals to the Hamburg Art Museum in critique of a competitive call for submissions that treated "Internet as material and object".[12] Sollfrank 's contribution occupied two-thirds of the submitted proposals that year. With the intention of creating disturbance in the submission system, she questioned the significance of even identifying the gender of the artist on the internet.

Unlike the constantly revisited feminist writings by Nochlin and Haraway, many radical cyberfeminist movements and manifestos (Old Boys Network, VNS Matrix, Ciberfeminist. org) are overlooked by academic publishing and eclipsed by Haraway's theory. A flame war started when Ann de Haan posted "The Vagina is the Boss of the Internet" (1996) on to nettime mailing list; list moderators asked users who wanted to discuss cyberfeminism to do so in feminist communities such as Old Boys Network.[13]

Amongst many online alter-personas, an equally voracious female profile was Netochka Nezvanova, an online intervention artist and software writer who possesses multiple personae. As the author of audio-visual mixing software Nato.0+55, which would run on Max, a visual programming software. Described as "the most feared woman on the internet" by Katharine Mieszowski, Nezvanova threatened to withhold distribution of the popular audio-visual mixing software when she was banned from a Cycling '74 software community mailing list.[14] Users have not determined whether the user behind her profile is biologically female, but she is nonetheless a prominent female entity in the software community. In arranged public appearances at award ceremonies, a different woman would always represent Netochka each time she agreed to appear in public, thus evading the need to reveal her true identity.

Similarly, Mouchette.org poses as the personal website of a thirteen year old girl, designed to titillate the curiosities of pedophiles which were a rising moral panic in the 90s.[15] The website's author plays upon the narcissistic qualities of the interactive web 1.0 personal website. As the user navigates through the website by selecting radio buttons that ask them to make assumptions about the attention-seeking character of its author, closeups of feminine body parts (an ear, tied hair, a face with lips parted) appear, enlarged, across the background of each linked web page.

Performed Fluidities

In contrast to deliberatively provocative cyberfeminist statements, net art by women currently appears questionably complacent or complex. An unapologetically exhibitionist persona is Ariel Rebel. Filled with expletive status updates and gifs of dildos, glitter, and random online artifacts, her tumblr, ARIEL REBEL'S HAUNTED GRÄFENBERG SPOT is a mesh of porn, raunch culture and apathy that describes an indifferent mode to sexuality in light of the (re)sexualization of women after seventies feminism and MTV.[16] Although the persona has her own pornographic website (http://www.arielrebel.com), it is possible the user that runs these domains may not even be female-identified despite her virtual participation in an exhibition of net art at "Speed Show vol. 4: Super Niche" (2010).[17]

Perhaps former successes of feminism allow women to feel less restrained in representations of themselves and the choices they make. Irony has become a formal device in feminist video that provides humor for audiences to cope with potential disappointment in the self and possible inequitable realities.[18] Other performing women are more overt in their gestures but ambiguous about their intent. Exploring the role of the famewhore or "cewebrity", Ann Hirsch (scandalishious/Caroline Benton), boxxxy, and lonelygirl15 appropriate tropes of narcissism and solipsistic performance for the webcam to ambiguous effect.

Playing with stereotypes of the reality TV star, Hirsch created a website and YouTube profile around a camwhore persona (scandalishious) to seduce and titillate viewers with shameless dancing in her home. Much like boxxxy's accelerated banter, the "pleasure of performance" is apparent in video. Performing ridiculousness with the logic of reclaiming stereotypes with hyperbole and humor, young women create video that both contradict and indulge stereotypes of femaleness and sensuality as opposed to the deadpan descriptions of one's body and feelings in the seventies.

The difference between the personal sentiments of the seventies feminist performance video and the webcam videos of the now is the increased use of humorous self-deprecation to regimes of representation in popular culture. While some revel in flagrantly queering gender boundaries, others reperform or resexualize gendered performances from pop culture. Meanwhile, in BEYONCE'S HALO WHILE I SLIT MY WRISTS (2010), Vicky Gould (lektroswirl on YouTube) applies lipstick to her face, gallivants to "Halo" by Beyonce Knowles, and repeatedly motions to slit her wrists with a disposable razor.[19] Thus, Gould and Hirsch challenge contemporary tropes of the camgirl stereotype to unseat expectations of sexualized performance for the webcam.

Working with slick visual effects, electronic music and narrative, Sarah Weis and Arturo Cubacub uses common postproduction practices to render herself as a digital celebrity. In feature length film B-17, Weis' character talks in frank high-pitched banter about her political escapades as a top-secret sex slave. Appearing in hyperfeminine costume and gaudy sets, Weis speaks of situations that are entirely probable as performance and always-fictive as situations, which nonetheless promote a sex-positive identity that internet audiences could find tolerant as entertainment.

Women Act, Men Appear

Criticism that their work is simply narcissistic forecloses opportunities to discuss the artist's implication of themselves in a discourse of female representation in popular culture and user-generated material. In "Ways of Seeing", John Berger reduces unilateral male-female gaze theory to the aphorism, "Men act, women appear."[20] Paradoxically, his statement may also be inverted to complement my observation that women artists who are popular today are either performers or programmers. Like Petra Cortright, women performers are reveled, romanticized or exoticized,[21] but also actively present their bodies to gain visibility in an artmaking public. These self-as-subject performances are possible occasions for resistance and restructuring of agency surrounding relations of the male and female gaze.[22] Unfortunately, the very language they use to present themselves (i.e. high angle self-portraits and uptalking accents) still serve as entertainment for male audiences.

Transgression, remix, and empathy

Feminist concerns are also expressed in remix and rearticulation of found media. Dara Birnbaum's Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman (1978) serially repeats processes of transformation and action to comment on the exaggerated body image of the Wonder Woman cartoon character. On the other hand, remix of familiar and mundane texts can also elicit fear, pathos and discomfort. Taking an empathetic position to the televised female subject. Mike Goldby's looped, reversed and repeated closeup of Sarah Michelle Gellar's face (Buffy conveys relatable emotions of ambivalence, concern and uncertainty in "The Body" (2010).[23]

Female political remixers such as Elisa Kreisinger and Anita Sarkeesian (FeministFrequency.com) produce subtle and vernacular remixes of pop cultural content as queer narratives are omitted from the academic writing of remix history altogether. Calling her-

self a "pop culture pirate", Kreisinger's Queer Carrie series (2010) are five-minute remixed episodes of entire seasons of Sex in the City with heteronormative sentiments omitted. Inspired by Sloane's Star Wars: Too Many Dicks, Sarkeesian created Video Games: Too Many Dicks remix video to satire the lyrics of an ironically sexist rap song by Flight of the Concords.[24] By creating a montage of first person shooter video-gaming footage from thirty-nine video games, she critiques the dominance of male characters and lack of female representation in these ultra-violent games.

Gendered critique in collaborations

While all artists that I have mentioned have been women so far, men were not absent from contributing to feminist commentary either. Collaboratively, Marina Abramovic and Ulay played gender-neutral roles and created performances that tested the body from a clinical perspective instead of emphasizing the biological differences. Their performance, Imponderabilia, was later reperformed in Second Life by Eva and Franco Mattes (of 0100101110101101.org, or 01.org), as Reenactment of Marina Abramovi and Ulay's Imponderabilia (2007).[25] Using the simulated space as a place for reperformance and social intervention (by blocking doorways as an artistic gesture), 01.org intervene in virtual space and challenge definitions of performance when they perform as disembodied avatars.

JODI and Irational.org created in websites that interrupted ones immersion with information delivery on the internet. From the 90s to 2005, JODI (Joan Heemskerk and Derk Paelsman) produced a series of vernacular interventions in the structural performance of video games, websites and internet browsers. Similarly, the jogging (Brad Troemel and Lauren Christiansen) had a tumblr that questioned the boundaries between art object and documentation. In Facebook-based interventions such as ASSEMBLY (2010) or READY OR NOT IT'S 2010 (2010) they intensified their use of media distribution platforms for institutional critique.[26] Meanwhile, Iain Ball and Emily Jones employ existing commercial aesthetics and found imagery to explore sustainable solutions to energy issues in E N E R G Y • P A N G E A (energypangea.org).

Apolitical Abstraction

Female-authored net art is not always fixated on the personal and the emotional. The work of Kari Altmann, Michelle Ceja and Jillian Kay Ross, and Sarah Ludy demonstrate their interests in the formal and the spatial. Altmann's extensive production of 3D renderings, fictive interiors and found object installations defy categorization as any one artistic genre. Ross' background in painting informs her abstract sensibilities and in the hyperreal renders of alreadymade sculpture in white gallery space. Ceja and Ross utilize the screen and the webpage as a space for representations of) installation with potentials for translation into physical exhibition. Untitled (2010) is looped stock footage of a wormhole that creates space with illusionism of animation and recession on a wall.[27]

Unlike Jonas' work, the horizontal roll in Ludy's videos (Otha (2011) and Transom (2011) reveal new architectural landscapes in reference to our windowed, mediated subjectivity. The impulse to describe infinite potential for unfixed representations of images in "digital space" is intensified by anne de vries' forecast (2011). Movement through a structure of intersecting, gridded arrangements of cloud images are narrated by a robotic male voice that reads a text by Bertrand Russell.

The boring trafficking of conventions in net art irl

Online gallery systems are often as conservative as museums. The same way a regi-

mented "contemporary" sensibilities of VVORK wind up in Reference or Preteen gallery, an adherence to software or new technologies on Vague Terrain may finds its curatorial interests manifested in shows at bitforms. Curatorial preferences for specific aesthetic principles (minimalism, gradients, vernacularism, found/3D objects) attract individuals with similar work to form online art communities.[28] As Brad Troemel noted in observing the induction of artists with online practices in real space, users with a preexisting online following are selected for enter gallery exhibitions.[29] Even though self-organized art distribution domains such as The State, jstchillin, and Computers Club feature a significant amount of internet art by women, these ground-up curatorial models only welcome women's art when it looks like net art.[30]

While the potentials for self-curation of a gender-neutral or fluid persona are boundless in an online profile, arguments about technologically determined fluidity between genders do not resolve conventional myths attached to women and technology. Late curatorial initiatives that are represented as "feminist video" exhibitions appear to exhibit a reduced interest in accommodating a breadth of perspectives. "Modern Women: Single channel" at MoMA PS1 trumps modernism's biggest feminist names-mostly those born in the forties-but does not offer many nuances to the feminist discourse of the seventies. What is represented as such a genre is usually a historicized narrative of political expression. However, "Reflections on the Electric Mirror: New Feminist Video" (2011) at the Brooklyn Museum differs from this formula. While accommodating for nuances of female expression and emotion, its curator, Lauren Ross, strives to differentiate these artists' sentiments by describing them as "a new generation of feminist artists" that employ "varied approaches from humor to intense revelation". However, it is unclear whether all artists in the program would self-identify as feminists; the only thread that connects all videos is the presence of the female subject.[31]

Myths and Statistics

Quantitative research carried out in the 1990s has found data supporting both arguments for and against gender differences that would affect women's participation in the IT field.[32] Gender role socialization may explain womens' sense of diffidence towards success in computing. Pedagogical research has indicated that both boys and girls felt that computers were sex-typed for boys. While these research initiatives illuminate possible reasons why women may be discouraged to work in IT or new media, Rosalind Gill talks more specifically about discrepancy in will that younger workers will not confront.[33]

While my study is by no means a global survey, in large institutional exhibitions in the past year, museums have done little to level the gender distribution in media art exhibitions. A brief count of women artists who participated at recent internet-related exhibitions in major institutions show that programming from both self-organized and established venues have consistently included less female than male artists:

• Three out of fourteen artists were women at the first ever Speed Show (Berlin).

• Just under a third were invited to the first BYOB (NYC) at the Spencer Brownstone.

• Seven out of twenty-five artists were women in the first ever YouTube PLAY Biennale at the Guggenheim museum.

A notable exception to this imbalanced model was FREE at the New Museum, where almost half of the artists were women. While counting is a first step in noticing glaring differences in distribution of women artists in exhibition spaces, a thorough inquiry into the sociological and ethnographic contexts would be essential to begin increasing female art-

ists' inclusion and visibility in internet art.

Identifying a "cool factor" about the idealism and informality of new media careers in the 2000s, the work schedule of the new media artist creates latent sexism and racism that is embedded in the egalitarian culture of job flexibility.[34] In these environments, both male and female workers do not identify equity as a problem although women are awarded less projects, pay, or work in such workplaces. It appears that a dangerous mix of internalized postfeminism and meritocratic privilege underlines online culture as an always-only-equal environment on multiple grounds of race and gender due to the internet's potential for free speech.[35]

Online, paradoxical assumptions of user racelessness and genderlessness in anonymous Anglophonic spaces further complicate discussions about technological access and identity.[36] We cannot remedy the situation by asking all unheard individuals to simply exercise identitarian or ideological "empowerment" through a use of media distribution platforms. A completely democratized system of art appreciation goes beyond the economies of "Like" and peer adoration on social networks. Such a system would validate the contestation of dominant and marginal interests through recognition of such voices through sharing, praise, critique, derision, and trolling.

Not all curators or museum directors are indifferent. Jerry Saltz's open letter to the MoMA inspired an online protest from his Facebook followers, which led to a meeting with its director, Anne Temkin. In an article published after, she acknowledged the uneven distribution of women artists in the 4th and 5th floors (of 4% in 2009), but could not make any immediate changes to representing modernism despite long-term goals to include under-appreciated artists that worked in the same period.[37]

Feminist or womanist curators and art historians attempt to justify the imbalance in cultural representation with examples of outstanding women who are already working in a particular genre.[38] The historical survey show, (such as "Modern Women: Single Channel" (2011) at the MoMA PS1) or the all-female show are two popular ways to present any all-female exhibition; it is "the" feminist or all-woman exhibition. These not only seek to temporarily illuminate the larger programming discrepancies through the celebration of female perspectives, without implementing decisive programming changes.[39]

Conclusion

This text presents a start on placing a critical lens on women artists' representation in media art history and some problems with their position in exhibition contexts. While maintaining a web-based practice allows a greater audience to see the artwork, imbalances in numbers persist in exhibition spaces and the art world at large. My critique does not claim that there are no women internet artists or that there are none who are great enough to make a significant contribution to the fields of art and technology. There are, but they are not thoroughly recognized by their community and art institutions for their work alone. The onus is on emerging curators and artists–as content curators–to apply extra effort to research and include a diverse range of perspectives on internet art. This means consciously programming and including women whether or not they make work that fits within existing aesthetic sensibilities of what net art should look like.

If exhibition is a method of presenting feminist history and that history of contemporary practice in real space, scholars and arts administrators need to reconsider the aesthetic criteria that have led to a periodization of "feminist art" as a genre. Existing models of curating valorize effeminate or feminine forms of expression that may in fact validate old stereotypes as spectacle.. While I do not think it is problematic that the feminist art canon

may embrace this, it cannot be all that is programmed formulaically. On a macro level these positions deter the actual feminist goal of achieving equal representation in exhibition spaces. To increase female presence in exhibition spaces arts administrators need to look beyond the femaleness or "feminism" in artwork, to consider its form and content in relation to the concept during the evaluation of "Great" art.

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1. I mean representation in terms of gallery representation, as well as media and artistic representations by women of themselves.

2. This ongoing sexism that I am speaking of is most obviously represented by distribution and opportunities, but is not limited to the "pay issue" as feminists would call it. Later in this article I describe internalized forms of dismissal that may lead to a probable discrepancy in gender distribution.

3. Evelin Stermitz. "Artfem.tv: Feminist artistic infiltration of a male net culture" Video Vortex Reader II, Edited by Geert Lovik and Rachel Somers Miles. 2011. Institute of Networked Cultures: Amsterdam.

4. Linda Nochlin. "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" ARTnews January 1971: 22-39, 67-71. In 1971, Linda Nochlin argued that institutional constraints (educational and artistic) prevented women artists from achieving the levels of success compared to that of male artists in historical discourse.

5. Steve Dietz, Why Have There Been No Great Net Artists?, CADRE on November 30, 1999. http://www.walkerart.org/gallery9/webwalker/ww_042300_main.html

6. Silvia Bovenschen. "Is there a feminine aesthetic?" Translated by Beth Weckmueller, Feminist Aesthetics, Edited by Gisela Ecker. 1985

7. Brenna Murphy, yingyyangyhuman, 2011. http://www.flickr.com/photos/brennaaa/5472949494/

8. Nicolas O'Brien. "Hyperjunk: net art out of the past", Bad At Sports. April 12, 2011. http://badatsports.com/2011/hyperjunk-netart-out-of-the-past/

9. Olia Lialina, My Boyfriend Came Back From the War. 1996. http://www.teleportacia.org/war/

10. Tina Laporta. Distance, 1999, New Radio and Performing Arts, Inc., turbulence.org http://www.turbulence.org/Works/Distance/

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Rafael Rozendaal, "The Greatest Visual Artists", New Rafael, 2010. http://www.newrafael.com/the-greatest-visual-artists/

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35. Coco Fusco, "At Your Service: Latin Women In the Global Information Network".The Bodies That Were Not Ours and Other Writings, London and New York: Routledge/iNIVA, 2001. http://www.artwomen.org/maquiladora/article-p2.htm

36. Of identity and access to the internet, Coco Fusco discusses the predominant ways of viewing identity in relation to access on the internet. Arguing that real world assumptions of user whiteness and masculinity carrying over onto the internet in the forum domain as "non-race", She calls feminine metaphors applied to computing and the internet "…a convenient masquerade of diversity for a milieu still overwhelmingly dominated by an extremely powerful… predominantly American male sector of world population. The abundance of descriptions of net communication as structurally anti-authoritarian, decentralized, "rhizomic," open-ended… are effectively deterring attention from the centralized economic formations that sustain it…" Fusco, 2001.

37. "The Feminist Evolution", ArtNews, 2009. http://www.artnews.com/issues/article.asp?art_id=2800

38. "The feminist's first reaction is to swallow the bait…and attempt to answer the question as it is put: that is, to dig up examples of worthy or insufficiently appreciated women artists throughout history…" Nochlin, 90.

39. In an interview with curator Derek Maniella revealed there was little criticality in the selection of female-authored works for "Bitch Slap" (2010) at Thrush Holmes Empire–an exhibition that featured 28 Canadian women artists. He conceded to selecting artwork by women artists whose aesthetics he enjoyed. XBlog, XPACE, 2010. http://www.xpace.info/xblog/interview-with-derek-mainella-curator-of-bitch-slap-opening-nov-19-thrush-holmes-empire/

Louis Doulas
Within Post-Internet, Part One

Comprehension

While Post-Internet is a term still awkwardly vague to many, it was first conceived by artist Marisa Olson, most widely encountered in a 2008 interview conducted through the website We Make Money not Art. Her definition acknowledges that internet art can no longer be distinguished as strictly computer/internet based, but rather, can be identified as any type of art that is in some way influenced by the internet and digital media.

"I think it's important to address the impacts of the internet on culture at large, and this can be done well on networks but can and should also exist offline."[1]

In the interview she also aligns her definition with net artist Guthrie Lonegran's own phrase, Internet Aware art[2], or when the documentation of an art object is more widely dispersed and viewed than the actual object itself. More recently in 2009, writer Gene McHugh further articulated the definition, understanding it to be when the internet is, "less a novelty and more a banality"[3]. Furthermore in 2010, in artist Artie Vierkant's essay, The Image Object Post-Internet, Vierkant defines the term to exist as, "a result of the contemporary moment: inherently informed by ubiquitous authorship, the development of attention as currency, the collapse of physical space in a networked culture, and the infinite reproducibility and mutability of digital materials"[4]. Each definition and interpretation—though slightly varied in meaning—ultimately results in what is a proposal for a new definition of art in a changing internet society: one that exists under technological influence and compression. A 2011 tweet from artist Harm van den Dorpel perhaps best reveals these conditions:

"Doesn't the impact of the internet on arts reach far beyond art that deals with the internet?"[5]

Thus, Post-Internet, specifically within the context of art, simply could be understood as a term that represents the digitization and decentralization of all contemporary art via the internet as well as the abandonment of all New Media specificities. Post-Internet then, is not a category, but a condition: a contemporary art.

It is through understanding the Post-Internet condition that we can propose all contemporary art created after the internet to be deduced to an art that has been effected and

mediated in some way by the rhizomatic, decentralized network of the internet along with the properties of other media technologies and products. At its most basic this is art's existence through various forms of digital documentation (standardized from the 90's on-ward with the massive availability of prosumer camcorders, digital cameras, etc.) ranging from videos to gifs to jpegs and ultimately to its presentation on the artist website and its dissemination to other websites, blogs, etc. At its most aware this is art's transformation from its previous existence into an entirely new one, utilizing the instrincies of the network. What now exists is an art that is made before the internet—and thus before its worldwide assimilation into the network—and an art that is made during or after this. It is because technology and the internet have changed the way we understand, contextualize, curate, appreciate, create and critique art that we can say the future of all art is, and eventually bound to be the product of these societal, cultural and political technologic arrangements. All art will soon enough—if not already—fully incorporate, transition into, reveal, embody or exploit these properties. Contemporary art and its participants redefine themselves through these digitizations.

As crudely stated above there exists an art that relies on digitization and the internet to represent and disseminate itself into the world network, simply for documentative pur-poses, merely as a means to an end, and an art that creatively and critically engages these platforms either through physical realization, immaterial formats or both. The large range of works produced within this latter type of art making yield a multitude of intentions, aesthetics, and philosophies, all with varying levels of self-awareness and criticality. Be-cause, the practices within this type of art making are largely divergent they ask for some clarification through a defining term, and it is here, one might recall Lev Manovich and his ambitious blueprint consisting of five basic principles[6] for what constitutes and determines what we would previously consider to be "New Media" artworks (a well organized method for clarification and identification using numerical representation, modularity, variability, automation and transcoding as defining points). However, what is formerly recognizable as New Media art today is met with an abundance of different understandings and defini-tions and thus Manovich's principles lose some, if not all, of their traction in cooperating with the expanding term. In an online article published this year focused on such concerns, artist Brian Khek nicely summarizes the amalgamated term as it exists today,

"I think it's also important to remember that New Media art isn't limited to digital or online works either. New Media related concepts and dialogue can be expressed in any medium. With that logic I've always had some problems with identifying things as New Media art. For me, it tends to behave as a term for work that involves current technology and phe-nomena associated with it. Others use it specific to work that utilizes New Media as a material."[7]

Through Khek's understanding we can see the malleability of New Media as a term that determines itself through a larger canon. Just as Marisa Olson recognized that internet art belongs to both an offline and online existence, the destruction of New Media as a defining term is determined by its ubiquitous translation and integration into the work of all contemporary artists. As technology and the internet inherently inform and mediate the work of the contemporary artist, the abandonment of New Media is marked with the abandonment of its specificities, recognizing that Post-Internet encapsulates all of these conditions. But because Post-Internet opens up such a large pool of work, new, temporary classifications as a strategy for comprehension must be carried out. Such classifications may likely even echoe Manovich's own principles.

In a Post-Internet society we find that most of all our art experiences are mediated online, as an art existing through various forms of digital documentation. If all Post-Internet art-ists have one thing in common it is that all their artwork is digitized and may be regarded

as existing in immaterial formats as immaterial entities, regardless of intention. However, a conflict can be observed from these commonalities: certainly not all digitized, immaterial artworks have the same intentions. While all contemporary art may very well be immaterialized online and equalized in this vein, it is because each artist utilizes these platforms so differently, for different purposes and with different agendas that conflicting notions of display emerge. If we follow these conflicts, what we arrive at is an art that is digitized through conversion and an art that is digitized from inception. The former would include art objects that have been digitally documented, and the latter would include websites, digital images, videos, sound pieces, etc., essentially all media that doesn't require exhibition outside one's own private computing space; an art strictly created on the computer (or through digital technologies) meant for viewing on the computer (or projection, monitor, etc.). This type of art likely regards the gallery context display of itself as an ornamental one, unnecessary for the experience of such works. There is a difference then, in an art that chooses to exist outside of a browser window and an art that chooses to stay within it; that continues to stay digitized and immaterial. This difference also means recognizing the distinct polarities between online and offline art models and the translations that occur from one space to the other. It is here a potential severance between participants exists and as such, ultimately comes down to the philosophies and politics of the artist: between the traditional and the ideal.

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1. Regine Debatty, Interview with Marisa Olson, We Make Money not Art (2008),

http://we-make-money-not-art.com/archives/2008/03/how-does-one-become-marisa.php

2. Thomas Beard, Interview with Guthrie Lonergan, Rhizome, (2008),

http://rhizome.org/editorial/2008/mar/26/interview-with-guthrie-lonergan/

3. Gene McHugh, Post-Internet blog, (2009-11), http://122909a.com/

4. Artie Vierkant, The Image Object Post-Internet, Jst Chillin', (2010), http://jstchillin.org/artie/vierkant.html

5. Harm van den Dorpel, Tweet, (2011), http://twitter.com/#!/harmvddorpel

6. Lev Manovich, The Language of New Media, Cambridge: MIT Press, (2001), http://www.manovich.net/LNM/index.html

7. Yolanda Green, An Unknown Error Has Occurred: New Media and Glitch Art, Chicago Art Magazine, (2011),

http://chicagoartmagazine.com/2011/01/an-unknown-error-has-occurred-new-media-and-glitch-art/

Nicholas O'Brien
A Case Study on the Influence of Gestural Computing

As the proliferation of tablet computing and mobile browsing has developed over the past two years, I've begun to notice an aesthetic shift in the visual vernacular used to describe our surrounding non-technological environment. The emergence of gesture based computing and mutli-touch screen interactivity has become such a powerful common pantomime that even popular advertising has begun to adopt these movements to signify more than just a way of paging through your apps collection. A striking example of this can be found in the above commercial for the 2011 Land Rover Discovery 4 directed by Scott Lyon.

I'm convinced that this simple 30 second video is an effective piece of advertising because of the underlying and perhaps unwittingly comment on portable computing the piece potentially offers. I've had a long-standing belief that the "cutting-edge" of advertising is deeply indebted to the avant-garde's of their respective time. However, in this instance I feel compelled to talk about how this commercial is evidence of the shortened critical distance that contemporary digital culture has bridged between artists working on conceptual margins and those working to sell products to the masses. Immediately, I am drawn to consider how the visual trope of the "fourth wall" has been employed and altered to fit our current digital paradigm.[1] The tradition of recognizing viewership and a subsequent undermining of the surface of a performance or projection is utilized through the use of a fictional audience member's gesture; movements that clearly mimic those of portable computing touch screens.

In other words, the slippage of surface(s)/screen(s) in the ad shows how readily we are to blur the polarity we have created between what is consider real and what is considered virtual. The constructed space and time that the vehicle traverses over the course of this clip not only exposes the artificiality of the car commercial, but also reveals popular attitudes we've developed around the immersive qualities of screen space. A heightened awareness of how our imaginations are at work within the screen is easily equatable to the way we drive. We compile narratives and fictions in both of those respective navigational stations – the difference is that driving is linear and browsing is (typically) multi-directional. We do refer to the web as the information superhighway, after all.

All joking aside however, the ad presents a critical paradox when the alarming lack of self-reflexivity found within product driven commerce platforms comes under scrutiny. The contradiction can be pin-pointed when we realize how rapid browsing of ever-changing contexts is depicted as feeling more natural – or more comforting – for audiences than the actual driving of a car. One could speculate that we are now drawn to the act of driving only for the benefit of interfacing with a GPS to tell us where we are going and where we have been. This might be a stretch, but being able to equate the familiarity of the car to the familiarity of the screen – as well as draw a parallel between the sense of agency found within those settings – is too strong to ignore.[2]

Using the illusion of contextualized space as merely a convenient perspective to justify and contextualize an object of desire and/or luxury illustrates another tendency in contemporary digital frameworks: algorithmic filtration of content.[3] Under the guise of more stream-lined content delivery, search engines have slowly started to implement processes that provide users with search results that are specifically catered to a rough approximation of someone's personality based upon IP location, cache, cookie files and other browsing data. These procedures have gone relatively unnoticed by most consumer/browsers due to the assumptive objectivity of search engines and the infrastructure of the web. Unfortunately, the adaptation of this method of content delivery has made most everyday/casual users somewhat complacent and uncritical of the ways in which their personal browsing habits have been manipulated into market data. That blissful ignorance might be either influenced by, or contribute to, the relative short attention span that the web is often associated with (and blamed for).

The car is actually a beautiful metaphor for these concerns. Driving is already a way of imposing a technological mediation of landscape and nature. A casual observer of the countryside is only interested in the vistas and outlooks to gaze upon either from the vantage of the road or if stops are convenient. Very few venture off the predetermined path, or decide to pull over when and where ever they please in order to hike into the hills and brush to explore an area few have laid eyes on. This is not to say that we must always demand ourselves to be adventurous (and potentially put ourselves and families at risk), but an effort must be made to not prevent ourselves from loosing that sense of discovery that travel and browsing provide so readily.

To a certain extent the ad also highlights an impatience that consumers have developed as a result of the instantaneous gratification that the web engenders through the above mentioned filtration system. The fictitious browser that pages through the landscape seems as though they are never quite satisfied with the context their Land Rover occupies, or even what it should exactly be used best for. That permanent unsettled fidgeting seems emblematic of – or at least closely tied to – how gestural computing has influenced our behaviors online.

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1. for other popular/fun examples: http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/BreakingTheFourthWall
2. see Janet Murray
3. Eli Pariser talks about this in a TED talk he gave earlier this year: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B8ofWFx525s

Colophon

Pool **is a platform dedicated to expanding and improving the discourse between online and offline realities and their cultural, societal and political impact on one another.**

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This month the texts are dressed up in a cosy outfit of Helvetica Rounded (1978) and Apple Casual (2001).