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Will Pergl: Haggerty Writing Projects on Milwaukee Artists

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Will Pergi's installation for **Current Tendencies II** explores the disconnect between the digital realm and the physical realm. From his hand-carved wooden cell phone tower, constructed from digital imagery, to his digitally carved marble sculpture of a reattached finger, Pergi explores the role of technology in the construction of art, juxtaposing the hand-made with the computer-mediated. He explores a variety of cultural products that are transmitted through some form of media, interrogates the role of interpretation in the construction of art, and assesses the digital context for the things that we see and use.

While each piece offers insightful commentary on the role of technology in contemporary society, the collection as a whole provides a nuanced understanding of the conceptual components of a fragmented, mediated environment. For example, following a computer analysis of more than 300 million facts, April 11, 1954, has been heralded as the most boring day of the twentieth century. Pergi's work, emphasizing a day that was determined by a computer to be devoid of any major news events or the birth or death of anyone famous, illustrates the contradictions inherent in a day that is now notable for being boring.

Pergi's representation of April 11, 1954, also reminds me of two competing understandings of the concept of communication. In his book, *Communication as Culture*, James W. Carey suggests that most people consider communication to be the transmission of news and information, over a distance, in order to share ideas and knowledge and to control geographic space and people. The transmission view of communication is the prevailing understanding of communication; it privileges science and embraces new communication technologies uncritically, believing that the additional speed of transmission will improve the communication process.

There is, however, an alternative conceptualization of communication which is known as the ritual view. From this perspective, messages are shared among people to create, shape and maintain a common culture. The ritual view of communication brings people together to construct a belief system that shares ideas, values, perspectives and information and serves to create and reaffirm a specific view of society at a particular time and place. Pergi's emphasis on the physicality of real materials that have been affected by the digital resonates with the ritual view of communication. His installation not only emphasizes how we journey through fragmented experiences, but it also helps us to question our own perceptions of a socially constructed reality.

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