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Digital action: An exploratory documentary of artistic process

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DIGITAL ACTION
AN EXPLORATORY DOCUMENTARY OF ARTISTIC PROCESS

A Thesis Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Designation
University Honors with Distinction

Dana Renee Potter
University of Northern Iowa
December 2015

This Study by: Dana Potter

Entitled: Digital Action: An Exploratory Documentary of Artistic Process

has been approved as meeting the thesis or project requirement for the Designation

University Honors with Distinction

Date

Dr. Bettina Fabos, Honors Thesis Advisor

Date

Dr. Jessica Moon, Director, University Honors Program

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Film Abstract

Digital Action: An Exploratory Documentation of Artistic Process is a short documentary film of the creation of artwork for my Bachelor of Fine Arts Exhibition, titled Digital Action. In the exhibition titled Digital Action, I created visualizations of my daily computer use to explore how digital experiences are simultaneously overwhelming and wildly inspiring. The video presents video of the steps of my process in a linear fashion with my voice-over explaining the process and theory behind the artwork. The documentary was filmed from September 2015 to December 2015.

Artist Statement

The exploration began by recording of all my daily computer use as a video (whether I was web browsing or using Illustrator, Photoshop, Facebook, Flickr, etc.), playing that video back, and then tracing the movements made by my computer mouse on-screen. The resulting mark became a starting point for various visualizations. I first explored these marks as physical wooden objects and colored the object according to the logo of the program used. As three-dimensional objects the marks were estranged from their original context and I was forced to deal with the presence of my digital action as they occupied my real-life time and space. Then I made layered prints with the wooden blocks. By pausing digital motion as a still image in the prints, I have time to contemplate each of my digital actions and their purpose. I then took the pieces left behind from cutting the wooden objects and created a series of black and white prints from the large and small pieces. The remnants of my artistic process, the evidence of my physical actions, became a development of works all their own.

Literary theorist Douglas Rushkoff elegantly stated how when we learned to read we also learned to write. In a digital age, we increasingly use these programs which we are very excited about using, but we don't know how to create a world with the computer that is truly our own. Corporations have control over our experience of the computer because they have the money to pay the people who are writing these

programs. When we are using programs, such as Google Chrome or Spotify, to explore and create information, we are working within an interface that was designed with monetary gain in mind. These corporations incorporate many cookies to track our behavior and advertisements to interpret our tasks. The possibility for all individuals to contribute to a truly collaborative digital experience or create an individual experience is limited by corporate use of computer programming as a means for monetary gain. By tracking my own mouse movements and formatting the mark into physical and printed objects, I opened the doors for my own individual explorations of my actions outside of the controlled computer environment.

Film Credits

Written by, starring, and edited by Dana Potter

Directed and produced by Bettina Fabos

Assisted Direction by Hannah Krogh

Link to Video

<https://youtu.be/XROZNvvfgOs>