

Net.cromancy:
Methods for the revival of virtual exhibitions

by

Zach Pearl

A virtual thesis exhibition, curatorial essay & exhibition report
submitted to OCAD University in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts
in
CRITICISM & CURATORIAL PRACTICE

© ⓘ ⓘ Zach Pearl, 2012

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike 2.5 Canada license.
To see the license go to <<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode>> or write to
Creative Commons, 171 Second Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, California 94105, USA

Copyright Notice

This document is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.5 Canada License.

<<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode>>

You are free:

To Share—to copy, distribute and transmit the work

To Remix—to adapt the work

To make commercial use of the work

Under the following conditions:

Attribution—You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author or licensor (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work).

Share Alike—If you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under the same or similar license.

With the understanding that:

Waiver—Any of the above conditions can be waived if you get permission from the copyright holder.

Public Domain—Where the work or any of its elements is in the public domain under applicable law, that status is in no way affected by the license.

Other Rights—In no way are any of the following rights affected by the license:

- Your fair dealing or fair use rights, or other applicable copyright exceptions and limitations;
- The author's moral rights;
- Rights other persons may have either in the work itself or in how the work is used, such as publicity or privacy rights.

Notice—For any reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the license terms of this work.

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I authorize OCAD University to lend this thesis to other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

I further authorize OCAD University to reproduce this thesis by photocopying or by other means, in total or in part, at the request of other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

Signature _____

Abstract

Net.cromancy: Methods for the Revival of Virtual Exhibitions

Master of Fine Arts

2012

Zach Pearl

Criticism & Curatorial Practice

OCAD University

This thesis focuses on critical issues in the curation and exhibition of networked art, and proposes a curatorial methodology (net.cromancy) for experimental, participatory models in virtual exhibitions. Since 2005, a noticeable increase in hybrid (or alchemic) models of virtual and physical display have added to the increasing institutionalization and commodification of net art. These models contribute to connotations of net art exhibitions as embodied experiences, in which the physical gallery serves as the primary site of interaction and value production. Therefore, alchemic exhibition models neglect the possibility for critical social engagement to be accomplished in uniquely virtual terms. Using an interdisciplinary conceptual framework that incorporates aspects of site-specificity, media theory, political agonism and software curation, the author outlines and analyzes methods for creating an 'open', innovative and democratic virtual exhibition model through the integration of users, and the liberating potential of virtual critique.

I would like to thank my thesis advisory committee for their knowledge, insight, and encouragement.

My utmost appreciation to:

Paula Gardner, PhD (Primary)
Caroline Langill, PhD (Secondary)
David Cecchetto, PhD

To Frenchy—
for teaching me to turn and face the strange.

Table of Contents

Section One: Curatorial Essay

<i>i.</i>	<i>virtual graveyards</i>	02
<i>ii.</i>	<i>rise of the alchemists</i>	07
<i>iii.</i>	<i>digging</i>	13
<i>iv.</i>	<i>spellwork</i>	21
<i>v.</i>	<i>divination</i>	27
	<i>works cited for section one</i>	32

Section Two: Exhibition Report

<i>vi.</i>	<i>introduction</i>	35
<i>vii.</i>	<i>exhibition summary/franken-site</i>	35
<i>viii.</i>	<i>methods/incantations</i>	38
<i>ix.</i>	<i>analysis/exorcisms</i>	54
<i>x.</i>	<i>conclusion/futurity</i>	85
	<i>works cited for section two</i>	100

Appendices

<i>A:</i>	<i>CrossTalk Screenshots</i>	101
<i>B:</i>	<i>CrossTalk Transcripts</i>	110
	<i>B.1 the question of usage in performing the net</i>	111
	<i>B.2 the postmodern experience of appropriation...[sic]</i>	117
	<i>B.3 text vs. image (which is louder)</i>	121
	<i>B.4 Net art or art on the net?</i>	130
	<i>B.5 Digital Materiality</i>	141
	<i>B.6 All the leftovers</i>	150
	<i>B.7 The decorative</i>	155
<i>C:</i>	<i>Press Release</i>	158
<i>D:</i>	<i>E-vites & Updates</i>	161
	<i>D.1 General e-vite</i>	162
	<i>D.2 'Fancy' e-vite</i>	163
	<i>D.3 Reminder e-vite</i>	164
	<i>D.4 Update: Early Registration</i>	165
	<i>D.5 Update: It Never Ends</i>	166
<i>E:</i>	<i>Sample Statements of Understanding</i>	167
	<i>E.1 Exhibiting Artist—Statement of Understanding</i>	168
	<i>E.2 Participating Critic—Statement of Understanding</i>	172

<i>F: CrossTalk</i> Curator's Essay	176
G: Select E-mail Transcripts	181
G.1 <i>Subject: Add Topic?</i>	182
G.2 <i>Subject: Re: Trial-Run</i>	184

Section one:
Curatorial Essay

i. virtual graveyards

The vista is looking bleak for the virtual exhibition¹. Gone are the days of its novelty—when the combination of those words would garner a raised eyebrow or earn a featured review in an art publication. In our cybernetic society (Nichols par. 3) experiences of the virtual are quotidian, and a generational and ideological shift among net artists has all but dissolved the institutional critique and penchant toward the avant-garde that once typified the genre (Peralta par. 4)². Accordingly, exhibitions of net art that are solely virtual are losing their appeal to users as innovative aesthetic experiences and to net artists as valuable sociopolitical projects³. Instead, they are being abandoned in favour of more traditional and embodied display strategies that utilize a physical venue as the locus of interaction. As a result, the [art]scape of the Internet is increasingly a graveyard of virtual exhibitions—host to broken URLs and obsolete plugins that await potential users where collaborative online projects once 'stood' as nodes of aesthetic engagement and cultural expression⁴ ⁵. Without a revival of the virtual exhibition through

¹ [disambiguation] In the context of curatorial practice, an exhibition is not only a public display of artworks, but also a carefully constructed presentation that incorporates interpretive devices such as the show's title, labels and panel texts, curatorial essays, interviews or auxillary programming that

² This is speaking from a North American perspective and does not adequately address developing nations or regions where access to the Internet is difficult or impossible due to cost or infrastructure.

³ I am using the term "net art" to describe any artwork that is made on and disseminated through a network. The most common form of this today is art accessed through the World Wide Web—just one 'sector' of the larger network we call the Internet. Other forms of net art occur through smartphones, GPS tracking devices, web cams and e-mail.

⁴ The use of the suffix of "scape" is an allusion to Arjun Appadurai's theory of the mediascape and four other dimensions of global cultural flow as discussed in his essay, "Disjuncture & Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," (1996). Appadurai illustrates scapes as discursive dimensions that are

curatorial innovation and experimentation, the critical social potential in non-physical, networked aesthetic experiences is doomed to an early grave.

This is not to say, however, that the [land]scape is bereft of net art. As a genre, its rate of production is at its most prolific. But 21st century net artists are of a different mindset than their predecessors when it comes to the means of disseminating their work. It can no longer be assumed that the interests of net artists lie in positioning themselves on the periphery of contemporary art and culture. The anti-canonical philosophy of net.art⁶ in the 1990s that sought to circumvent the established acculturation systems of galleries and museums through virtual exhibition practices has essentially vanished. As early as 1997, with the inclusion of a net art section in that year's Documenta, net art pioneers such as Vuk Cosic, Alexei Shulgin, Heath Bunting and the duo known as JODI all vocalized disenchantment with the progressively museological treatment of the artform by its curators.

Egregious misconceptions were executed in the 1997 Documenta in regards to how the space of the Net was often negated as a conceptually integral premise to the artworks. Instances included storing files of each artwork on local hard-drives rather than linking to their existing URLs, and the

analogous to landscapes in their organic formations, and in which groups and individual agents 'move'. To extend his idea, I am bracketing the prefixes to suggest that they are relative and encompassed by the larger scape that is the totality of 'movement' through virtual space.

⁵ In the sense of a critical or committed interaction with art and its respective audience.

⁶ *net[dot]art* indicates a historical period in net art practice that has yet to be concretely defined. Most practitioners and theorists agree on the relative dates of this period occurring between 1995 & 2000. During this time, individuals like Vuk Cosic, Alexei Shulgin, JODI and Olia Lialina became pioneers of Internet art through experimental websites and browser scripts. These works are largely characterized by a lack of traditional formal aesthetic qualities as well as subverted conventions of Internet use through tactics of graphical and navigational malfunction and intervention.

documentation of Cosic's selected piece onto a CD-ROM that was made available for purchase. In a post-exhibition interview with Tilman Baumgartel published to *Nettime.org*, JODI said that they felt their work had been denied its "net-specific status," and that the way in which the works were installed felt dismissive in its office-like qualities (par. 13).

Increasing curatorial efforts to materialize the art, by superimposing qualities of origin and authenticity onto fundamentally distributed works, sparked a debate in the early 2000s amongst net artists and theorists. This discourse focused on the inevitability of the artform's museumification and questioned the merit of continuing to pursue extra-institutional ideals. These sentiments were edified seven years later when the sudden absence of a web art⁷ section at the Whitney Biennial caused New York Times art critic Ben Sisario to write:

"Internet art may have little direct connection to the dot-com financial bubble, but its reputation has suffered as the Internet itself has lost cachet. Many who work in the Internet art world report a sense of digital exhaustion... There may be lots of Internet art out there, so it cannot be dead. But if it has lost its sense of novelty and excitement, is it really alive?" (par. 5)

Sisario's question is a valid one, as it highlights the importance of social interest and an invested public in the longevity of artistic movements. However, the logic of his interpretation is both consumerist and modernist in its equation of newness to progress and of entertainment to artistic

⁷ This is the terminology used by the Whitney for the artworks they presented in the biennial. However, it is unclear if they used the term correctly in the classification of the works. Technically, web art indicates a piece of networked art that is accessed through the World Wide Web (WWW). However, other forms of networked art use alternative server protocols such as FTP, TCP/IP, UDP and SMS.

expression. It was a logic that indicated a curatorial formalism had indeed taken hold—one that historicized net art at its best as a heroic period of dissent in the progression of ~~new~~ media art, and at its worst as a trendy blip on the timeline of the art market (Quaranta 11).

Consequently, throughout the last decade the integrity of net art curation has been subject to much scrutiny. Across online forums central to ~~new~~ media communities such as *Nettime*, *The Thing* and *Turbulence*, voices in the field have asserted that the institutional influence seen in contemporary net art practice and its exponential presence on the secondary art market have drained it of its dynamism (Lichty par.7)⁸. Cosic and Shulgin have even gone as far to say that net art is not just over, it's dead. Others, like *Rhizome.org* founder Mark Tribe and net artist and curator Olia Lialina have been more nuanced in their critiques, citing the emergence of a paradox. They note that while net art is still very much alive in terms of productivity, the cultivation of a politicized postmodernism—what Hal Foster has called an "anti-aesthetic", once considered essential to its conception, has certainly died (16). In this way, net art has become undead (Tribe in Sisario par. 11)—a manneristic shell of its radical potential (Cosic in Husic par. 9)⁹.

⁸ I've chosen to strikethrough the "new" of "new media art" to indicate the passage of society into a post-convergent media epoch, and more so that this term is historically specific to a period of artistic experimentation in emergent technologies spanning from the mid 1960s to the early 2000s. Thus, the term "new media art" should not be perpetuated as accurate nomenclature for the contemporary exploration of technology in artistic production. This topic was the focus of the 2005 exhibition *The Art Formerly Known as New Media*, curated by Sarah Cook and Steve Dietz for the Banff ~~New~~ Media Institute.

⁹ [disambiguation] I believe that Husic uses "manneristic" to convey the exaggeration and theatricality of the Mannerist painting period in 16th century Europe. It describes a hollow gesture, or the feigning of appearances.

This precarious status of net art—its figurative undeath—is in turn complicated by other factors that are broader in their scope, and ones that reflect a generational shift within contemporary artists in general. In particular, there is a growing complicity among ~~new~~ media artists in the specularization of their work as well as a complacency of pastiche over thoughtful appropriation (Drucker 44,161). Thus, net art is gradually being pinned down and hollowed-out—chiseled into a determinate genre in a canonical typology and a proverbial victim of technology fetishism. Without the proposal of new curatorial methods that seek to revive and better align the curation and exhibition of net art with its virtual, networked environment it will continue to exist grotesquely—neither here nor there, inconsequential in its undeath. The distributed nature of the network in which net art is produced and virtually enacted presupposes a social and a public dimension that are foundational to the 'work' of art itself. Accordingly, these attributes demand to be equally reflected in the format of its exhibition. To use JODI's expression, the "net-ness" of networked art is compromised when experienced through the physical and conceptual enclosures of the institution. If this axiom goes unrecognized exhibitions of net art risk becoming exhibitions in vain and antithetical to the works.

ii. rise of the alchemists

Given the institutional character of contemporary net art, it would seem that the figure of the curator has been the proverbial undertaker of the artform's experimentalism. However, there are a number of unorthodox display strategies that have emerged in recent years seemingly positioned to dispel this notion. Since 2005, there has been a notable increase in the use of 'hybrid' exhibition models. These models combine virtual and physical exhibition strategies simultaneously, seeking to extend the artworks beyond the intimacy of a PC-to-single-user relationship into the publicized realm of the social. While these efforts are perhaps virtuous in their progressive aspirations, they are often still problematic to the work. From the traveling-net-exhibition-for-hire model used in Michael Takeo's *Net:Reality* (2006) to the most recent iteration of the Web Biennial, *Regeneration .011* (2011) that merged a physical and virtual opening reception, the desire of net art curators to bridge gallery space and virtual space has become apparent. A critical question to be raised however, is what is motivating these curators to create such a bridging effect?

In lieu of the growing number of net artists making work that is more aesthetically driven and approachable to the average gallery-goer, the rise of hybrid exhibition models can simply (and uncritically) be interpreted as a strategic acknowledgement of a more formal aesthetic. Accordingly, an increase in the use of such exhibition models signals a direct response by

curators to the primacy of visibility in contemporary net art production. Through simultaneous physical and virtual exhibition, so-called immaterial artworks are anchored and commoditized through their presentation in a material, and materialistic, site of value production that the gallery represents. Still, this reading neglects to take into account influential meta-discourses of democracy and relationality that have been thematically popular in contemporary art and curation since the mid 1990s. These discourses within artistic and curatorial practices are resurging in the heightened proletariat-focused political climate of the global economic downturn, and are helping to raise the profile of ~~new~~ media art as a form of cultural production already incorporating technologies and philosophies of decentralization and distribution. Such discourses highlight that true democracy occurs only through the absence of a foundation or a unified structure, and create a greater conceptual affinity between experiences of distributed types of ~~new~~ media art such as net art and democratic action (Deutsche 272). This has given more cultural currency to net art, and has equally opened up questions regarding its influence and possible role in the construction of a networked public sphere (Geiger par. 30). Looking at the relative success of large-scale tactical media initiatives such as those executed during the Arab Spring, in which virtual, immaterial public formations manifested as very much tangible, physical rallies and demonstrations, the net art community has been left to wonder: are similar congregations possible under the proposition of aesthetic engagement?

In turn, a methodology of curatorial alchemy in net art has come about, wherein conventional, physical terms of the exhibition are expanded through a philosophy of creating a simultaneous physical/virtual experience. The goal of this is to create a phenomenological fusion—a transcendent moment, perhaps—in which the distributed and translocal qualities of virtual art are juxtaposed with the experience of physical congregation and social interaction. In doing so, these exhibitions challenge preconceptions of virtual aesthetic experiences as immaterial and isolated. No longer rendered as an artifact-to-human interaction relegated to a physical exchange between person and personal computer, alchemic net art exhibitions revise this formula of interaction, interpolating it with multiple levels of social interaction and institutional navigation. Social and political processes inherent to networked forms of communication and production become visible in the activities of assembly and conversation that exhibitions encompass.

Strategies of curatorial alchemy are therefore symptomatic of a lacking *visibility* in experiences of virtual art, where evidence of a public space for social interaction within the nature of the work is often imperceptible to the single user experiencing it through a personal device. While the premise of a virtual exhibition allows for a translocal visitorship, it is rare that the design somehow graphs or measures the presence of other visitors to the site and even rarer that the exhibition interface allows (and subsequently encourages) visitors to directly interact with one another. In contrast, this visibility is easily satisfied in physical exhibitions of so-called

plastic arts through the simple sight of other viewers, as well as the interactions between them and the physical boundaries of the space as a homogenizing force. Thus, alchemists in net art curation are looking to emulate this triangulation in the experience of virtual art by (for all intensive purposes) getting multiple bodies around a single computer screen. Strategies within alchemic models like the tandem virtual/physical opening of *Regeneration.011* or the advent of *Speedshow*, a mobile net art exhibition kit developed in 2010 by Aram Bartholl, have both done well under this paradigm, attracting swathes of physical visitors to view net art in each other's presence. But is this sufficient or appropriate to the artform? The physical congregation of users around net art creates the image of a crowd and a literal space for interaction. It is unclear, however, whether this act of congregation actually generates and facilitates interactivity. In what ways do alchemic exhibition models enable and encourage acts of communication and collaboration, either through the interface of the artworks or their virtual environment? How are the strategies of alchemic models addressing the virtuality of net art and activating its exhibition as a site for critical social *and* aesthetic engagement?

While alchemic exhibition models may help to raise awareness of net art in their physicality, they also promote an ideology of social interaction around the work that is physically determined, and therefore antithetical to the unique properties of the artform. As digital and distributed artworks, their presentation in a physical venue wrongly binds them conceptually and

culturally to a finite experience of time and space. This diminishes the social capacity of the virtual exhibition to act as a *site* for dialogue and exchange, and to become visible through communal use and activity. Instead, as the historical precedent of socialized art experience, the physical exhibition tends to remain the key signifier and interface of interaction for the majority of the viewing public. Perhaps on a subconscious level, but nonetheless within the minds of those viewers, the virtual exhibition is reduced to a form of documentation—functioning only as auxiliary content to the gallery experience in the form of an online archive or a digital catalogue.

Alchemic exhibition models tend to construct a simulation of net art, as exhibition-goers navigate and experience a distributed and decentralized artform through an institutional lexicon. At the same time, the physicality of the gallery works to edify the social dimension of virtuality. The space of the gallery becomes an illustration of a networked experience for gallery-goers. Through the act of physical assembly and interaction within the gallery, the 'image' of a place societally reserved for aesthetic experience is constructed. Gallery-goers begin to conflate the idea of a 'distributed' aesthetic experience that networked art represents with the geographic and ideological centralization of their institutional environment. This conflation produces an antiquated perception of networked art that is materialized and located; one that fails to challenge and destabilize those concepts within the social consciousness. This denies the artworks from their most radical proposition:

the distilling of predetermined spaces and times in which participants can engage in aesthetic experiences.

Rather than working to create visibility through alchemic models, net art curators need to devise models that return to a studious and critical engagement with virtuality as an axiom for the exhibition's design and interface. A revival of the virtual exhibition is only possible if curators consider the unique properties of virtual space as a sociological territory—as a "tabulation" in which people and art are deterritorialized (Deleuze in Negri par. 9). It is in the *act of exhibition* that the subjective nature of aesthetic experiences is politicized through the intersubjective construction of operational and discursively determined spaces (Kwon 29). The non-physical terms of virtual exhibitions lend themselves to this discursivity to a greater degree than geographically specific exhibitions, because the 'movements' and expressions of their constituents are mediated through the highly textual, and thus largely linguistic, terms of the digital interface. Each step of the exhibition-experience in net.cromantic exhibitions is therefore a visualized and technologized procedure of reading and writing that again necessitates more than a passive consumption of the artworks. Instead, exhibition-users are required to constantly translate their subjective experience of the works through the terms of the textual and graphic elements present in the exhibition's interface. This concomitance of navigation and translation, which is present in the social codes of physical behaviours in physical exhibitions but foregrounded through the text-based

protocols of the interface in virtual exhibitions, more closely aligns the aesthetic experiences of users in a virtual exhibition with the linguistic and discursive nature of publishing artistic content on the Net. In the interest of better understanding the significance and complexities of discourse and discursive space as essential properties of networked art production and communication, net art curators must move beyond visions of alchemy towards visions of futurity and dispersion in their exhibition frameworks and strategies. They must move towards a curatorial methodology evocative of necromancy.

iii. digging

The study of necromancy—often exoticized through images of medieval witchcraft and gypsy voodoo—actually contains many principles that relate to virtuality and disembodied notions of space and communication. It may seem macabre, but applying the metaphor of raising the dead when speaking of net art curation is salient for creating a curatorial methodology that addresses the not-quite-disembodied but surely non-physical experience of navigating and communicating in virtual space. Despite necromantic traditions being quite diverse, they span many ancient civilizations and are surprisingly unified in their philosophical pursuit of a greater, divine knowledge through studious engagement with the immaterial and the imperceptible. Dating back to ancient Greece, necromancers have believed

that through a regiment of trance-like experiences it is possible to divorce the soul from the body in order to grasp the limitations of time and space, and essentially to exist liminally between states of life and death. The ultimate goal of this exercise was to establish non-physical pathways of communication—a porous connection and dialogue with 'the other side' that would allow for spiritual growth and eventual divination (Halliday 244).

In a similar fashion, the net art curator should recognize virtuality as an ethereal plane with capacities for generating aesthetic experiences otherwise impossible in physical terms. Accordingly, virtual exhibitions should be understood as primarily experimental endeavors in the definition of a virtual 'aesthetic' and as essential contributions to a branch of knowledge in curation still largely undeveloped. The fluid medium of virtuality presents opportunities for unprecedented and unique forms of communication and interaction to transpire with networked art as a driving force. The capacity for the convergence of not only various forms of media (graphic, photographic, textual, auidial, cinematic) but also of communicative procedures and processes inherent to navigating the Internet, enables an overlap and integration of art and action to occur; a relationship that Jacques Rancière has described as a sentence image. In the sentence image, "the clash of heterogeneous elements provides a common measure," by which communities and connections are exhibited, "through a fraternity of metaphors." (55) This clashing effect of which Rancière speaks is also evocative of Benjamin's conception of dialectical montage—an unfamiliar juxtaposition of familiar

elements that possesses the "liberating potential to pry art away from ritual and toward the arena of political engagement." (Nichols par. 15) Both of these concepts advance the understanding of image from passive consumption towards activity and a procedure. But the sentence image differs from Benjamin's dialectical montage in that its aesthetic qualities are not exclusive to the visible (Rançière 7). Its montaging consists of a considered unification of seemingly heterogeneous visual *and* procedural elements in which a noun and a verb assemble to create an operational image. It is the pairing of subject and action enacting image. Traditional conceptions of the image as an object and a stable entity become inextricable within its function and navigation.

If applied to virtual exhibitions, the concept of the sentence image implies that the transcendentalism of aesthetics traditionally relegated to the private, meaning that viewing or 'appreciating' art is experienced internally, is externalized by combining it with the publicized and contingent protocols of navigating and communicating on the Net. This intentional overlapping of art viewing, navigation and communication through virtual means forms the basis of *net.cromancy*, wherein the exhibition is conceived of and designed as an augmentation of networked art through networked communication and virtual interaction. As an experimental curatorial methodology, *net.cromancy* strives to generate new knowledge about the aesthetic dimension of virtuality, explored and implemented through integrations of networked communication, interaction and participation into the exhibition-experience.

However, it should not be mistaken that net.cromantic methods are solely technologically driven. Effective net.cromancy requires more than just including opportunities for communication and interaction by incorporating various plugins and widgets into the exhibition's interface. Net.cromancy also presupposes an agonistic framing of those interactions within the curatorial thesis of the exhibition, and a general interrogation of the theory of exhibitions that extends beyond modes of presentation into platforms for exchange, critique and collaboration. The inclusion of a video conferencing option in a virtual exhibition, for example, certainly creates the ability for networked communication and engagement between visitors to occur, but for what reason? How does the manner of interaction inform the experience of the exhibition as whole? A net.cromantic methodology demands that both the design and the interpretive content present something that is at stake to locate the exhibition discursively. Whether conveyed by the artworks or through the process of navigating them, a net.cromantic exhibition should offer a proposition that incites critical dialogue and participation on the part of its visitors. By doing so, net.cromantic models function *site-specifically*, presenting the artworks as a 'microcosm', or a series of positions within a social and relational matrix (Bourriaud 26).

Although traditional definitions of site-specificity have regarded virtual space as its antithesis, both concepts involve the construction of networks and relational forms that spatialize discourse and otherwise invisible social forces. Just as for centuries practitioners of necromancy—

from the ancient Egyptians and Etruscans to modern day occultists—have sought to attain liminality through their work, so too have site-specific artists sought to position their work between recognizable locations in order to elucidate and excavate the hidden structure of their relationships.

A relational conception of the site can be traced back to the 1970s, present in the works of a number of European and American artists practicing institutional critique such as Hans Haacke, Andrea Fraser and Michael Asher. The performativity of their actions destabilized the conventions of their subject matter, and the works ceased, "to be a noun/object, but a verb/process, provoking the viewers' critical (not just physical) acuity." (Kwon 24) This evocation of the sentence image allowed a discursive dimension of the site to emerge and prevail as the most conceptually vital 'space' of the artwork. Dematerialization and deterritorialization of the site continued in the durational and relational art of the 1990s. Artists like Ritsuko Taho, Gillian Wearing and Christian Phillip Müller created works that were propositions to the viewer, inviting them to take action and become constituents in the formation of a temporary public—an ephemeral but invested group of participants tethered by an event and a discourse.

James Meyer has identified this phenomenon of a participative constituency within site-specific works of the past twenty years as instances of *the functional site*. Once again, this conception of site goes hand-in-hand with the liminal aspirations of necromancy, wherein 'space' is predicated on

the sustained 'between-ness' of communication and exchange. The functional site is thus an essential framework for creating net.cromantic exhibitions in which the site of the exhibition is not experienced as a singularity but as, "an operation occurring between sites, a mapping of institutional and discursive filiations and the bodies that move between them." (Meyer 25)

Commenting on Meyer's concept of the functional site, Miwon Kwon has also noted that this mapping is a process parallel to the series of "movements" that occur within electronic spaces such as the Internet, where navigation of content is entirely transitive (29). Meyer's illustration of a continuous series of movements also references Umberto Eco's scenario of the open work, in which the work is not open in the sense of incompleteness, but rather is open as a perpetual process of (re)interpretation that constitutes the meaning of the work itself (2,8). Therefore, the process-driven experience of virtual exhibitions innately lends itself to the formation of functional sites, provided that their conceptual frameworks integrate a temporary public as the catalyst for the realization of that exhibition. An exhibition operating as a functional site must provide some kind of interface for members of the temporary public to directly influence or even determine the exhibition-experience. This is an important point of difference in relation to the alchemic models of net art exhibition discussed earlier, where there is evidence of a temporary public in the form of a physical congregation of individuals interacting, but it is unclear how that public is in fact intended to actualize or direct the outcome of the exhibition. Even in the case of the *Speedshow* series,

where exhibitions of net art 'pop up' in disparate Internet cafés, it could be said that there are instances of the functional site occurring. But, what is the dynamic effect that is produced upon and within the site if there is no direct means to participate in the act of presenting or contextualizing the artworks? The assembly of a physical audience for net art attains visibility, but generates little impact upon the reading of the artworks if elements of the exhibition are not conditional and subject to change. In contrast, the premise of transitive and collective actions in functional sites encourages indeterminacy through participation. The uncertainty of the outcome of the exhibition as an event expresses the highest power of democracy (Deutsche 273) to manifest "openness" and instances of "revolutionary pedagogics," produced in the aggregate meanings that are collaboratively developed by its usership (Eco 7)¹⁰.

New media art curator Joasia Krysiak takes up this line of thought in her explanation of software curating as a possible paradigm to reflect the shift from mechanical reproduction to distributed and cybernetic systems in cultural production (8). As new media art increasingly incorporates software philosophy through conceptual integrations of participatory systems and open-source development as well as software programs in its technical executions, Krysiak proposes that curatorial methods should facilitate these processes in the exhibition of such works.

¹⁰ [disambiguation] The sum of individual acts of usage performed through a particular interface.

The rise of web platforms in the early 2000s re-envisioned the conditions and conceptions of cultural production as an ongoing communal activity, equally expanding the definition of net art to include these communal activities. Platforms such as the software art repository *Runme.org* or the 8-bit music peer-to-peer community *Micromusic.net* are prime examples of this era that continue to operate and grow today as functional sites. For nearly ten years, each has been maintained by an invested temporary public—moderated and updated through the collective management and open-source development of their respective usership. In both *Runme.org* and *Micromusic.net* the lateral system of file sharing that constitutes the basic function of the platform has been mimicked by its temporary public in its lateral functionality as a discursive site. This mimesis of the software platform by the site's temporary public demonstrates how practical and theoretical aspects of software align with open and decentralized paradigms of cultural authorship (Goriunova & Shulgin 261).

As an experience also constructed through digital and networked technologies, why not apply such a paradigm to virtual exhibitions? And furthermore, why not to those that strive for functionality? The net.cromantic exhibition, as a type of functional site that is already experienced through the vernacular of programs, systems, files and codes, must also be considered for the ways in which it emulates software. As constituted by a temporary public, the functional site of a net.cromantic exhibition is a process and a series of conditional statements—or algorithms, per say. Thus, like an open-source

piece of software, the net.cromantic exhibition is never a stable body of actions or participants—its collective identity is continuously shifting in a nomadic narrative (Meyer 32).

As an exhibition that strives also to be a transitively navigated participatory system, the base of the net.cromantic exhibition's usership decentralizes and reorganizes as it repopulates. In turn, the particular interests of the temporary public shift as individual constituents 'come and go' from the exhibition. A net.cromantic exhibition can then be seen as a perpetually evolving and democratic entity. It is an exhibition model that figuratively grows its own internal mechanism for contextual renewal—a collective project folded into the entire experience of the artworks, resulting from and producing it simultaneously.

iv. spellwork

So far, the methodology of net.cromancy incorporates many theories—of the sentence image, of agonistic discourse, of the functional site—but what are the practical elements that will demonstrate and synthesize these ideas? What exactly would such an exhibition model look like?

First, it should be assumed that the net.cromantic exhibition will live on and be navigated through the Net. Under which server protocol the exhibition is accessed will vary. Most often virtual exhibitions take the form of websites. However, it is possible that a net.cromantic exhibition could exist

as an app on a smartphone or as a whole program that is downloaded and run on a personal device. In any iteration, content of the exhibition would be experienced through a digitized, graphic interface. The layout of the content would produce a sentence image of networked art and networked communication, and the design of the interface would emulate software by allowing for user input as well as visible effects of that input altering or augmenting the exhibition-experience. This creates the conditions for a perpetually evolving discursive space, indexed through the exhibition. But, how can elements of the interface help to structure this process? How can the design encourage that user input to be channeled into critical engagement, or ensure that the engagement is agonistic?

This question again elicits Krysia's proposition for software curating; specifically how a distribution of production in exhibitions can examine and test the democracy of open-source environments. Through a methodology of distributed authority and cultural labour, software curation looks to reveal how power relations are expressed between curator, artist and audience in the context of network systems (8). Accordingly, interactivity within net.cromantic exhibitions, because it is predicated on a discursive space, should aim to reveal the power relations of such interactions within the exhibition by visualizing an equal 'playing field' within a discourse. Users of the exhibition should have equal access to features of the interface and equal privileges as contributors in a discourse. This leveling creates the potential for a democratic forum, and prevents the formation of hierarchies and cliques

within that discourse through automated features of the interface. Instead, the plateauing of discursive space in net.cromantic exhibitions demands that any instances of collaboration or critique be arrived at collectively by a temporary public, and that the members of that public work productively through conflict to establish a community.

However, this ideal can only be accomplished if the discourse is envisioned as one that is not just critical, but a true critique—an immanent and highly subjective dialogue (Massumi 338). This is key to the formulation of the options and protocols available to users in the graphical and navigational interface of the site, because the contestability of the discursive space in the exhibition is a prerequisite for it to become functional and mutable. If there is no instability to the discourse—no sense of immediacy for defense and persuasion necessitated by the subject matter—then there is no force to sustain the interest and engagement of a temporary public within that site.

The most logical art-related activity that can be incorporated into the net.cromantic exhibition that satisfies these requirements is that of an art critique—the integration of virtual critique into virtual exhibition. As the direct subject matter of the critique, the artworks are poised to become visual, conceptual and navigational nodes of a discourse that is inevitably agonistic. The act of critiquing art is decisively an agonistic endeavor due to the subjective and irresolvable nature of experiencing, interpreting and communicating thoughts about art. The intense rhetorical exercise that

critique involves in the task of expressing an aesthetic experience requires constituents to assume the possibility of conflicting viewpoints—the elucidation of which is the very point of engaging in critique. The many vantage points upon the artwork and a subsequently deeper and more communal understanding of it, gained through the collage of those perspectives, is the very point of discussing its possible readings and meanings. The subjective nature of critiquing art also drives what cannot be considered ethical concerns in the discourse (e.g., the labeling of particular perceptions of the artwork as right or wrong) into a more socially and culturally governed arena of thought that pivots on an exchange of ideas rather than a censoring. This move from a mode of dialectics into the spectrum of social and cultural variables that produce conditions and preconceptions of viewing art, propels those involved in the critique to engage the alternative perspectives of others in order to better understand and defend their own position in the discourse. In this light, the function of critique is akin to a type of sensor or exploratory operation in which intersubjective blockages, breaking points and fundamental obstacles between participants are identified. Conclusive moments are never sought after—consensus is the myth that agonistic discourse seeks to dispel. Instead, the constraints of intersubjective blockages serve to elucidate and delineate points of difference between experiences, which, “pass together through the generative filter of the enabling frame.” (Massumi 340) This shared discursive space of unresolvable differences constitutes a true cultural or

artistic exchange and best expresses the agonistic dimension of net.cromancy.

To facilitate this, the technical design and layout of the virtual critique should take the form of a pre-existing scheme for textual exchange that archives user input in a navigable sequence. Thus, the most effective format is one that is already 'indigenous' to the Net, both in terms of graphic design and navigation. A critique facilitated through a blog, message board or chatroom-type application would be ideal in this respect, because they propose the smallest learning curve in terms of the level of media literacy required to use them. The protocols of accessing and using these formats are already familiar to most users such as logins and the use of screennames, posting to comment threads, uploading files and discerning information using timestamps, subject lines and search functions. This presents a smoother transition from the daily networked communication protocols of most users into a contemplative, critical activity. This transition encourages users (on a subconscious level) to renew or reconsider their own relationship to art and partaking in creative endeavours. The familiar virtual environment that the blog, chatroom or message board presents has the potential to empower its users when employed for critique by converging protocols of critically artistic and casual social activity through networked communication. This convergence should also be reflected in the layout, visually reinforced through the sentence image. Users of the site should be able to view the artworks and the critique simultaneously as interrelated and active content in separate frames of a website, or as independent but adjacent windows. Confronted

with the montage of interactive and participatory processes such as this, the User is introduced to a number of different signifiers, voices and individual interpretations that then become intertextually linked to the experience of viewing said artworks.

Consequently, the sentence image of the exhibition is no longer a single proposition, but a medium through which continual sentence images are constructed. In its most idyllic manifestation, the net.cromantic exhibition is a perpetual 'art machine', revealing the process of engaging in aesthetic discourse as the veritable 'work' of art. Conforming to user interest and participation, the net.cromantic exhibition could theoretically take on a life of its own—a dramatically public life in its utter distribution. It would become an exhibition of the act of exhibition, constantly reframing its original content through the newly generated content of social interaction, and reformatting its entire mandate contingent upon its temporary public. A particularly compelling possibility in this, of course, is the heightened politicization of the virtual. Depending on the interest of its users, the fully functional work of art could have overt political motivations, becoming an evolving mechanism of tactical media that would address the lag time of collective-action to respond to institutional action—the pitfall of an accelerated 'temporality of democracy' that plagues contemporary society (Hassan par.2). Alternately, the exhibition could amend its function to act as a virtual headquarters for activism, a laboratory for open-source projects, a theatre for performativity in virtual life and so on. Where the expanse of

conceivable use for the exhibition as a social and performative, yet productive, act meets the manipulability of digital technologies and networked communication; this is the pinnacle of net.cromancy.

v. divination

The possibility for continuous renewal and eventual evolution in the functional site again evokes necromancy in the quest not only for divine knowledge, but also utter dissolution of the self. Although a mostly allegorical relationship, the guiding principles of futurity, perpetuity and fluidity common in the vernacular of necromancy are also present in the vernacular of new media artists. Net.cromantic exhibitions symbolize a conceptual synthesis of these vocabularies and ideas by the perpetual transformation and reorganization of interests and constituents in the functional site. A successful necromancer seeks liminality in order to become a conduit for communication with the dead, and as a result assumes the position of becoming a medium—a non-physical site in him/herself that is open and perpetually reinvented through the channeling of other voices and actions. Analogously, a successful net.cromancer, in the process of designing and facilitating a net.cromantic exhibition also becomes part of that functional site, working as the primary node from which all sentence images and discursive spaces emanate.

It is in this larger, metaphysical terrain of Art and Exhibition, that

the pursuit of net.cromancy questions the role in society associated with the figure of the curator, who in the case of net.cromantic exhibitions must be the catalyst for the orchestration of critical social engagement through virtual means. While individual works of net art are catalysts for individual acts of critical engagement with the work themselves, the orchestration of socialized, communal acts of critical engagement simply cannot be accomplished without curatorial perspective. This is not to say that the specific title of "curator" is necessary to carry out net.cromancy, but rather that the methods undertaken in creating net.cromantic experiences are decidedly curatorial in their nature. And, as such, there are implied civic obligations—to audience, to providing accessible experiences (through technology, through language, etc.) and to creating relevancy by addressing salient social and cultural issues.

In net.cromancy the virtual exhibition has the opportunity to live again, but providing the tools does not equally produce committed curators to pick them up and make something of them. The rationalization of theories and conjectures does not guarantee that change will actually take place. Contemporary net art curation must be committed to experimentalism, and at the same time work harder than ever to consider the ethical implications of cultural authorship. The paradisiacal connotations of open-source are not derived from the complete liberation of authority, but rather the democratically shared responsibilities of maintaining flexible and functional cores that make open-source communities possible (Manovich par. 20).

Therefore, the curation of experimental models does not end once the project

goes live; it is an ongoing endeavor. The proceedings of those exhibitions need to be analyzed, further theorized, written about and disseminated as social and cultural research contributing to a broader understanding of virtuality in society. Until this attitude is adopted by net art curators, the gallery will continue to serve as the default site of subjective value production, and users will continue to perceive virtual exhibitions as dislocated experiences.

In a recent CBC interview with Nora Young, Mark Jeffrey, owner and key developer of the chatroom environment *The Palace*, gave a prediction for resurgence in the public desire for real-time networked communication. While there already exists a diverse range of networked modes for public interaction, nearly all—including the most popular of social media sites such as *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Google+*—happen in a delayed, flattened time-space. For Jeffrey, the emergence of alternative models that address phenomenological conundrums of networked communication like the 'temporality of democracy' is bound to occur within the next decade. And, while this prediction is certainly encouraging of net.cromancy as an attractive methodology, exactly who is paving the way, and for whom these alternatives are directed is a serious question—one that should occupy the minds of every invested net artist and net art curator. A successful revival of virtual exhibitions, while beneficial to the profile of networked art, equally presents new opportunities for institutionalization and commodification. New curatorial methods, no matter their level of innovation, create commodity in their novelty. In addition, the focus of net.cromantic methods to integrate

participatory elements into the exhibition-experience is an appealing 'angle' of human-interest to would-be marketers and curators. As such, new opportunities for the dubious commoditization of the art and the exhibition-experience are created, including the troubling possibility of functional sites or of collective-action itself to become fetishized. The failure to critically consider why and how users are integrated into future virtual exhibition-experiences ignores these caveats, and undermines the possibility in cybernetic society for the emergence of what literary critic Peter Bürger has called 'new praxis' in reference to his theory of the avant-garde—a dissolving of the boundaries between life and artistic activity (101). Although net.cromancy focuses on the revival of virtual exhibitions specifically, it is not a great conceptual leap to ask: What general experience of networked life cannot incorporate experiences of networked art? This is where the net.cromancer must go, bravely and faithfully. Surely, there are practical and conceptual hazards ahead. No amount of experimentation in art curation will ever produce an answer, per say—such is the nature of art, to provoke further thought and valuable questions. However, the introduction of experimental models for virtual exhibitions is the only way to ascertain whether it is a path worth pursuing, or truly a dead end. Subsequently, a critical perspective of curatorial formalism in virtual exhibitions, gained from the 'near-death experience' of the practice, can only be realized in the conscious effort of its revival. The theoretical and practical strategies outlined here are only one interpretation of how to go about accomplishing this, and thus do not promise

a figurative panacea within critical issues of virtual exhibition practice. Yet, one thing is for certain: the dead will remain assuredly so until we as practitioners get our hands dirty, until we dig deeper.

Works cited for Section One

- Bourriaud, Nicolas. "Relational Form," & "Art of the 1990s." *Relational Aesthetics*. Dijon-Quetingy, France : Les Presses du Réel, 1998. 11-40. Print.
- Bürger, Peter. (1974) *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Suhrkamp Verlag, trans. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984. Print.
- Deutsche, Rosalyn. "Agoraphobia." *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996. 269-327. Print.
- Eco, Umberto. "The Poetics of the Open Work." *The Open Work*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989. 1-24. Print.
- Foster, Hal. "Introduction." *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. Hal Foster, ed. New York: The New Press, 1998. Print.
- Geiger, Stuart R. "Does Habermas Understand the Internet?" *Gnovisjournal.org*. Gnovis, Issue 10.1, Georgetown University. 2009. Web. 05 June 2011.
- Goriunova, Olga & Alexei Shulgin. "From Art on Networks to Art on Platforms." *Curating Immateriality: The Work of the Curator in the Age of Network Systems*. Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2006. 237-264. Print.
- Halliday, W.R. *Greek Divination A Study of its Methods and Principles*. London: Macmillan, 1913. Print.
- Hassan, Robert. "Crisis Time: Networks, Acceleration & Politics within Late Capitalism." Arthur & Marilouise Kroker, ed. *Ctheory.net*. 13 October 2009. Web. 17 June 2011.
- Hustic, Deborah. "Interview with Vuk Cosic, pt. II: Small and big thingz on net + art." *Body-pixel.com*. 30 November 2008. Web. 12 November 2011.
- Krysiya, Joasia. "Introduction." *Curating Immateriality: The Work of the Curator in the Age of Network Systems*. Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2006. 7-25. Print.
- Kwon, Miwon. *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art & Locational Identity*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002. Print.

- Manovich, Lev. "Models of Authorship in New Media." [Rivets & Denizens] Collaborative Curatorial Models in Theory and Practice. Ron Goldin, Ed. *Switch.sjsu.edu*. 01 February 2002. Switch Media Journal. Web. 01 February 2011.
- Massumi, Brian. "On Critique." *Inflexions*, Vol. 4: Transversal Fields of Experience, December 2010. 337-340. Print.
- Meyer, James. "The Functional Site; or, The Transformation of Site-Specificity." *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art*. Erika Suderberg, ed. University of Minnesota Press, 2000. 23-37. Print.
- Negri, Antonio. "Control and Becoming: Gilles Deleuze in Conversation with Antonio Negri". *Futur Anterieur*. Martin Joughin, trans. 1990. *Generation-online.org*. Web. 03 June 2011.
- Nichols, Bill. "The Work of Culture in the Age of Cybernetic Systems." *The New Media Reader*. Noah Wardrip-Fruin & Nik Montfort, ed. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003. Print.
- Peralta, Damian. "Interview with Olia Lialina: Net art is not dead." *Damianperalta.net*. 2009. Web. 02 November 2011.
- Quaranta, Domenico. *In Your Computer*. Anna Rosemary Carruthers, ed. & trans. Brescia: LINK Editions, 2011. Print.
- Rançière, Jacques. *The Future of the Image*. London: Verso, 2007. Print.
- Sisario, Ben. "Internet Art Survives, But the Boom Is Over." *NYtimes.com*. 2004. The New York Times. Web. 05 September, 2011.
- Tisselli, Eugenio. "Digital Networks and Social Innovation: Strategies of the Imagination". *Motorhueso.net*. 2012. Web. 14 February 2012.

*Section Two:
Exhibition Report*

vi. introduction

In order to explore the implications of net.cromancy as a curatorial methodology and to surmise its effects if implemented on a larger scale, this exhibition report will also serve as a case study. This study will provide a detailed summary of the concepts, processes and practical challenges of the exhibition's execution as well as an analysis of the proceedings of that exhibition, considering relative successes and failures of the net.cromantic methodology outlined in the previous section. The final subsection will extrapolate alternative strategies from the analysis for future iterations of the same exhibition model.

vii. exhibition summary/ franken-site

CrossTalk: Speech Acts & Interference in Networked Art is an experimental virtual exhibition produced through a net.cromantic methodology. In a single browser window it combines a virtual 'gallery' presenting three net artworks alongside a virtual critique, accessed and operated through a message board interface (Appendix A). The 'gallery', the critique and all supplementary content, including artist statements, background information on the project, a glossary and a curatorial essay are accessed within the same website (Appendix F). The exhibition was launched at *www.crosstalkexhibition.com* on February 1st, 2012, and was supported by an organized 'real-time' critique

period beginning at 12:00 a.m. on the 1st and lasting until 11:59 p.m. on February 3rd.

The curatorial thesis¹¹ of the exhibition explores the concept of interference in language as a metaphor for techniques of appropriation and remix in a growing number of contemporary net art practices. Three works of net art are presented: *I'm Google* by Dina Kelberman, 2010-ongoing (Appendix A fig. 9), *Banners & Skyscrapers* by Evan Roth, 2011 (Fig. 6) and *Tricolor v.2007 [Redux]* by Cynthia Lawson Jaramillo, 2012 (Fig. 12). Each artwork produces visual and virtual interference by reassembling the content of multiple other users on the Internet. Through the remixing of that content, each artwork enacts a process of decoding and re-encoding, working to continually destabilize and defer its signifiers (Hall 130)¹². Much like Jacques Derrida's concept of *différance* in language, their remixture constitutes both a presence and an absence of meaning. It enacts a form of interference that begins a slippage of meaning along a "chain of signification" (184).

This thesis of interference is also echoed in the graphic design of the exhibition, which positions the juxtaposition of networked art and communication as a positive form of interference. The layout of the *CrossTalk* website is accordingly composed of two frames of slightly differing width; the

¹¹ [disambiguation] This is to be distinguished from my actual graduate thesis written herein. Curatorial thesis is a popular term to mean the theme or big idea that the curator employs to contextualize the artworks.

¹² I am using the term 're-encoding' here, rather than Hall's original term of 'decoding,' to better express the remix culture of net art and distributed production methods. The re-encoding of the content in the *CrossTalk* artworks indicates that their initial publication to the convergent media space of the Net already encodes them with new possible meanings and interpretations, and that this effect is prior to the respective artists' (re)presentation and destabilization of that content.

left-hand frame functioning as a portal to the artworks and the right-hand containing the message board devoted to a publicly accessible virtual critique. These frames are abutted in order to visually imbricate the operations of viewing networked art and interacting through networked communication about art. By incorporating the public 'space' of critique the act of viewing and participating in the exhibition not only becomes an unfolding process of interference, but also the statements made in the critique become woven with and integral to experiencing the artworks, creating a sentence image (Rançière, 2007).

A solely virtual marketing campaign was utilized for *CrossTalk* that included disseminating a digital press release locally and nationally, personal e-vites, a Facebook page and a Twitter feed. The language and tone of the marketing materials was formal but non-academic, and the graphic design was simple yet dynamic (Appendices C & D)¹³. Each iteration of the e-vites was punctuated by a metallic-looking header that featured the exhibition logo and vivid orange footers containing social media and contact links. The text of the marketing materials also communicated the participatory and accessible nature of the exhibition through empowering phrases like, "Participate and shape the experience", and "Be a part of the process". Closer to the launch date of the exhibition, a sleeker version of the general e-vite

¹³ E-vites were distributed to both the artists and the invited critics on January 1st, 2012 with the intention, and the assumption, that they would subsequently disseminated to everyone's respective network of contacts. However, it is still unclear how much of this actually occurred, and therefore it can only be assumed that social networks beyond those of the curator were marketed to.

(Appendix D.2) was sent by the curator to targeted, esteemed curators and theorists in the ~~new~~-media art community, such as Mark Amerika, Christiane Paul, Mark Tribe and Margot Lovejoy.

viii. methods/ incantations

Selection and 'handling' of the artworks

The idea of an experimental model that would explore the effects of combining virtual art and virtual critique preceded the decision to contextualize the content of the exhibition as works about appropriation and interference. In turn, the criteria for appropriate works was based largely on how easily each piece would lend itself to a metaphor that expressed ideas of overlapping networked experiences as well as provoke a critical conversation. Out of this criterion came the broader idea of communication—the breakdown of it and the degrees of interference in between. After further reading on collaborative writing by Amerika and alternative models of authorship by Manovich, artworks that were raking content from other sites took on particular significance as semiological landmines—serving to highlight the extreme slippage of meaning in convergent media. Consideration was also given to varying degrees and aesthetic approaches to re-presenting this content.

A list of possible artists and artworks was compiled in late August. The top three choices of that list were first to be contacted via e-mail in mid-

September. Fortunately, all three artists agreed to the exhibition within one week of contact. A statement of understanding was sent to each artist in November, summarizing the curatorial thesis and the terms of exhibition, and was required to be signed and returned by mid-December (Appendix E.1). The statement of understanding outlined that the artworks would remain on the artists' respective servers and only be linked to on the *CrossTalk* website with supplementary content such as still images of the work and an artist statement. It also served as confirmation that each artist would receive a sum of \$200.00 CAN as an exhibition fee.

List of Works:

I'm Google, Dina Kelberman (2010-ongoing)

I'm Google appropriates the templative aesthetic of a Tumblr blog as a platform for enacting a kind of search engine 'poetry'. Kelberman culls the Internet through Google Image Search, and one photograph or embedded video at a time, she creates batches of images based on a concept or theme. Then, in a clean and strict three-column grid, she organizes them sequentially paying attention to formal relationships in colour, shape and composition. Pushed up against their analogous-looking neighbours, the images deterritorialize one another until their nuances dissolve and they flow as one image of a distributed consciousness.

Banners & Skyscrapers, Evan Roth (2011)

In *Banners & Skyscrapers*, the figurative detritus of Internet commerce—banner advertisements—are animated and woven together. The piece overwhelms the browser window with an undulating lattice of consumerist imagery—each advertisement hailing in succession. The glissading of visuals that *Banners & Skyscrapers* creates is enhanced by the fact that the exact positions of the advertisements in relation to one another is automated—a process executed by a script that Roth wrote. This makes the moments in *Banners & Skyscrapers* when images do connect uncanny ones and illustrates the prevalence of coincidence in the language of networked communication.

Tricolor v.2007 [Redux], Cynthia Lawson Jaramillo (2007, 2012)

In a minimalist but equally powerful gesture, Jaramillo's *Tricolor v.2007 [Redux]* also montages targeted virtual media. But, rather than advertisements the content is streaming snippets of online news feeds focusing on events in Columbia. Originally from Colombia, Jaramillo's work often addresses issues of how national and cultural identity are portrayed and shaped by media. To visualize this formative yet mostly unconscious process, *Tricolor v.2007 [Redux]* builds an image of the Colombian flag through lines of text taken directly from those online news sources. Letter by letter, and finally in sequential blocks of yellow blue and red, Columbia's most recognizable symbol is deconstructed to reveal

its fragility and flux as yet another artifact of cultural exchange —one that reorganizes itself constantly and rapidly.

Design and construction of the website

Design for the exhibition's website began in the ideation phase of the project, approximately two months before the artists were selected. All graphic design and formatting for the website was completed by the curator in addition to all necessary coding, save for the database management and scripting of the message board¹⁴. This decision has questionable implications in regards to the ideals of software curating outlined in the previous section as a tenet of net.cromancy. Although the curator certainly constitutes a node within the functional site, it is necessary to ask how much of the exhibition remains conditional and open to change by its *temporary public* when the curator is not only contextualizing the works conceptually but visually (Meyer 24)¹⁵. It is unclear to what degree this action influenced the proceedings of the virtual critique, but it is clear that the figure of the curator became a form of rhetorical currency in certain discussion threads. Individual instances of this will be explored further in subsection nine.

The design choice of two abutting inline frames to contain the virtual 'gallery and virtual critique was conceived early on in the project, and was

¹⁴ This was a special case, in which the curator had pre-existing years of experience as a freelance web designer, and therefore did not anticipate needing the help of professional web developers to execute the project. However, in most scenarios, it would be advised that for a project of this nature, a graphic designer and web developer or someone who can provide both services be hired on contract to create the actual website.

¹⁵ This is an original concept described in section one.

initially inspired by Bill Nichol's view of dialectical montage which pronounces the political within the aesthetic (par. 15). This theory is expanded further through the interpretation of the sentence image described by Jacques Rancière which is conceptually appropriate for the transitive and conditional nature of navigating the website. This motivated the curator to include more content than just thumbnails and links to the selected artworks in the virtual 'gallery'. Hence, the supplementary content to the works makes the act of viewing and navigating the left-hand frame of the website more involved in order to create a conscious tension in the user of simultaneous operations in a networked aesthetic experience.

To reduce both the project's production budget and the risk of malfunction associated with custom-built interfaces, a popular and flexible messaging board software application, Simple Machines, was used to set up the forum for the critique at a separate URL and then embedded into the *CrossTalk* website¹⁶. As such, the design of the message board began with the Simple Machines default theme which was then tailored by the curator to make the board visually harmonious with the rest of the website. Most alterations were aesthetic in nature, such as adjustments to the layout of buttons and text, and the styling of individual elements like background colour, typography, link behaviour, etc.

¹⁶ [disambiguation] This is a term in software vernacular to denote when a program contains many options for customization. Hence, it is 'flexible' enough to meet the needs of a variety of users.

Creating conditions for agonistic discourse

Several strategies were implemented in an attempt to create an agonistic discursive space, and thereby lay the groundwork for a functional site. The first and foremost of these was to make the message board public, thereby allowing any visitor to the site with a valid e-mail address to register and participate. Additionally, to turn that publicness into a non-hierarchical 'space' for interaction, the board was programmed so that each new registered member received editor-level permissions, which enabled access to nearly every setting and feature of the message board¹⁷. The breadth of these features was made known to visitors as a list published to the "about the critique" page of the website. Each member of the critique received the following permissions:

- View forum statistics
- View the memberlist and groups
- View online status of other members
- Search posts and topics
- View others' profiles
- Read and send personal messages to other members
- Choose a custom title
- Upload your own avatar
- Manage and delete boards
- Start new topics
- Announce new topics to the board
- Add voting polls to topics
- Split topics into separate conversations
- Merge similar topics
- Edit your own posts
- Remove your own posts
- Edit the posts of others
- Delete the posts of others

¹⁷ [disambiguation] Denoting specific privileges to access and control aspects of a software application.

These permissions were only superseded by the administrator-level of access, reserved for the curator¹⁸. Apart from the curator, the lack of hierarchy between users was intended to prevent domination of the discourse by individuals or epistemic communities, and to foster a critical and social engagement. By giving every member the same amount of power, arguments and expressions must be judged by the merit of their rhetoric and their resonance with the temporary public of the critique. Hence, the virtual critique of *CrossTalk* presented a level playing field for a truly public space and democratic dialogue to occur (Deutsche 274).

Another key strategy for creating an agonistic discourse was selecting and inviting a group of six professionals in the arts to be guest critics for the three-day critique period. The rationale behind this was to have individuals with practical experience of the protocols of critique, and who could initiate such protocols. This also provided a failsafe mechanism designed to perpetuate the critique in the case of a general lack of interest or participation by casual visitors to the site.

Criteria for selecting and soliciting critics was—in its widest parameters—based on pre-existing theoretical or practical knowledge of new media art and a post-secondary arts education that would have involved

¹⁸ This decision was not intended to symbolize that the curator remain the most powerful figure within the context of the exhibition. Rather, it was a practical decision to reserve the most control over the message board for the designer of the site, i.e. the ability to make large-scale changes to better facilitate communication across the board.

studio-based critique sessions and/or the study of art criticism. The curator also thought it essential that there be a mixed representation of art-related practices (artists, artist-curators, curators, critics, etc.) to prevent discipline-specific discourses dominating the critique, and also to put these perspectives into an immanent and non-stratified environment with one another. A long list of critics was drafted in the research-phase of the project, with some of the theorists referenced herein being on that list. Contacting potential critics began in early September and concluded in early November—proving to be a more arduous process than securing the artists for the exhibition.

The finalized group of critics consisted of: Doug Jarvis, Frenchy Lunning, Helena Reckitt, Leigh-Ann Pahapill, Michelle Jacques and Ted Hiebert. Just like the selected artists, critics were sent a statement of understanding in mid-November that outlined the terms of the exhibitions and what was expected of them in regards to being active in the critique (Appendix E.2). Critics were informed that they would need to make a total of six contributions to the board over the course of the three-day critique period, but no direction was given about the content of those contributions. Critics were encouraged to "respond" and "comment" on the works in whatever way they saw fit, and also encouraged to use other forms of expression by uploading files or placing links to other media in their posts. A short statement was also included about the curator's desire for the critique to

appeal and be accessible to a diverse audience (171) ¹⁹.

Short biographies and summations of each critic and a brief rationale for their selection are included below. This information is significant, as each was a key factor in the structuring of the critique discourse. Both the positive and detrimental effects of inviting these individuals to take part in the project will be discussed further in subsection nine.

Invited critics:

Doug Jarvis is an artist and curator living in Victoria, BC. His practice primarily focuses on the social and cultural intersection of art and technology. He is a founding member of the avatar performance art group Second Front and the Noxious Sector Art Collective. Doug holds an MFA in studio art from the University of Guelph, Ontario. Doug was contacted based on a recommendation by David Cecchetto—tertiary advisor to this project. The curator had no prior knowledge of his practice. Doug was recommended for his interest in theories of virtuality and his general enthusiasm for critical discourse.

Frenchy Lunning is a Professor of Liberal Arts at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. Her practice is focused on design history, popular culture and cultural theory. She is the co-founder and Editor-in-Chief of

¹⁹ This statement was not emphasized enough and compromised the project's ability to rally a more diverse and possibly more agonistic critique, which is discussed in subsection nine (*viii. analysis /exorcisms*)

Mechademia, a book series published by the University of Minnesota, dedicated to Asian popular culture. Her writing on anime and manga examines the iconology of transcendence, exemplified in cybernetic systems. Frenchy was a professor and mentor of the curator during his undergraduate education. Her perspective was desirable for the critique because of her knowledge of post-structuralism.

Helena Reckitt is the current Critic In-Residence for the Clark Collection at the University of Victoria in Wellington, New Zealand. Before her residency, Helena worked as Senior Curator of Programs at the Power Plant in Toronto, as Senior Director of Exhibitions and Education at the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center and as Head of Talks at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London. She was invited by the curator based on his desire to have at least one participant who practiced primarily as an art critic. The curator was also aware of Helena's reputation for controversial viewpoints, and that she has recently received criticism about her curatorial prerogative²⁰. The motivation for inviting her can be expressed through the aphorism of adding fuel to the fire, in which agonistic discourse is that fire.

Leigh-Ann Pahapill is a sculpture and installation artist based in Toronto. Her works examines how language and thought influence our

²⁰ See Michelle A. Demers' "Why Helena Reckitt Pissed Me Off," 2010.
<http://mademers.com/bad_egg/2010/11/why-helena-reckitt-pissed-me-off>

experiences of objects and space. She holds a BFA from York University and an MFA from University of Chicago. Her presence in the critique was suggested by Paula Gardner—primary advisor of this project—based on the nature of her art as well as wariness towards representing oneself and one's work online. This wariness was projected to be helpful in contributing to a more agonistic discussion of experiencing the artworks.

Michelle Jacques is Assistant Curator, Contemporary Art and Acting Curator, Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. She is a member of the board and editorial committee of *FUSE*, a Toronto-based magazine that explores politically engaged art practices and issues, and she is also a board member at Mercer Union, A Centre for Contemporary Art. Michelle holds a BA in Art History from Queen's University and an MA in Art History from York University. The curator knew of her and her practice through a class and curatorial project executed at the Art Gallery of Ontario, for which Michelle was an instructor and mentor. Her interest in institutional critique and her ability to write for a variety of audiences made her appealing as a facilitator for the discourse.

Ted Hiebert is a Canadian visual artist and theorist. His artworks have been exhibited widely in Canada and abroad, in public galleries and artist-run centers. Ted's theoretical writings have appeared in, among others, *CTHEORY*, *Performance Research*, *Technoetic Arts* and *The Psychoanalytic Review*. He is the author of *In Praise of Nonsense*:

Aesthetics, Uncertainty and Postmodern Identity, forthcoming (Spring 2012) from McGill-Queen's University Press. Like Doug Jarvis, David Cecchetto recommended Ted as a critic for his knowledge of the subject matter and his enthusiasm, which proved to be both an asset and a hindrance to the critique. This will be discussed more in subsection nine.

Propositions/ curatorial intervention

To provide an additional proposition that might sustain the interest of the temporary public of the functional site, the curator made the decision to make a seminal contribution to the critique by establishing three distinct initial categories to post within on the message board. These categories were *The merger of economic and cultural production*, *Speech Acts & the Net* and *Appropriation (21st century aesthetics)*. These topics are loosely derived from Bill Nichols', "The Work of Culture in the Age of Cybernetic Systems", which continues the Benjaminian critique that since the industrial revolution society has failed to recognize and respond to the changing nature of art in new cultural paradigms. A dual-purpose then in deploying these three categories for discussion was to both provide a nascent structure of possible trajectories for the critique, and at the same time to guide its discourses towards an unmediated investigation of the dynamic between information society and artistic production.

If designed to be permanent fixtures of the critique, the intervention of establishing said categories would certainly have been a heavy-handed

gesture—one that would likely have compromised the agonistic dimension of net.cromancy. As immutable structures to the conversation, these categories would have wrongly contained a supposedly democratic dialogue within an authoritative and predetermined discursive space. However, given the absence of a moderating figure or a hierarchy to the permissions on the message board, the critique also lacked a discursive point of departure. Therefore, while obliged within the parameters of agonistic discourse to not participate in the proceedings of the critique, the curator found himself obliged to offer a proposition that would incite initial debate. In this way, the goal of a non-hierarchical environment for interaction became problematic in terms of being able to assure there would be a common ground for interaction at all. Thus, the curator's intervention became both a catalyst and a form of insurance that the critique would be focalized, at least in its infancy, by responding to the concepts presented in each category.

Luckily, the non-hierarchical design of the message board also presented a solution for the curator to avoid compromising the agonism of the critique. Because permissions to delete and add new categories were intentionally made available to every registered member, all participants had the power to restructure the critique at any time; editing and creating categories as necessary that better reflected the desires of the temporary public.

This aspect of the message board's design was also a test to determine if, given the opportunity, the temporary public would in fact usurp the

gesture of the curator. It was an attempt to advance Joasia Krycia's sociopolitical inquiry within software curation, which asks how power relations are structured and expressed in distributed scenarios of production (10). While not necessarily framed by the curator as a 'scenario of production', the generative process of the virtual critique in *CrossTalk*, and more generally in net.cromantic exhibitions, does contribute to the construction of a functional site produced via the sentence image. In this way, net.cromantic exhibitions can be thought of as ongoing and shared productions, collaboratively made by successive interactions of their temporary publics. In addition, net.cromantic temporary publics are publics of equal privilege and access in terms of viewing and moderating activity in the critique. This produces a laterality that qualifies the temporary public of *CrossTalk* as what Bruno Latour has termed an "oligopticon" (Geiger par. 12). Just as social media sites like *Facebook* or the blog aggregator *Technorati* render entire social networks within the purview of a single screen, the message board system used for the virtual critique of *CrossTalk* collapsed multiple layers of communication and interaction into a single interface. This collapsing effect allowed any user to observe "limited abstractions of [the] entire population at once." (Ibid.) These abstractions of *CrossTalk's* network produce the inverse of the remote viewing scenario in Jeremy Bentham's panopticon. Rather than being subjected to the privileged gaze of an undisclosed guard, users in the oligopticon are subjected to continuously being 'seen' by one another—visible in the overview of the interface. In lieu of such publicness, users are

ultimately motivated to self-regulate their behaviours in order to avoid social consequences such as public ridicule and alienation.

Through graphics that showed the online status of users to records of individual posting histories to the continuous logging of user activity through timestamping, the message board system in *CrossTalk* presented an 'aerial view' of the temporary public in real-time. This distributed overview of the proceedings became a collective act of surveillance for the temporary public. Returning then to Krysia's query, the possible relations of power expressed in a distributed system of production and authorship are exercised as a distributed system of management, administered through publicized criticisms and the sanctions of independent users (Galloway 21). In net.cromantic exhibitions like *CrossTalk*, non-hierarchical access to information and features of the interface render an image of a population to be witnessed, documented, tracked and evaluated. It renders an image of the social that is a level but vulnerable territory, where actions are always already 'out in the open'.

Making the critique/message board 'open-source'

To test ideas of futurity and perpetuity implied by the functional site, and poetically envisioned as divination in net.cromancy, the curator made the decision that the end of the scheduled three-day critique period the administrator login information would be published. This means that as of now, and for as long as the curator maintains the hosting server, the aspect

of the exhibition that makes it a functional site is open to anyone to commandeer and redirect by altering aspects of the interface such as creating new boards, changing the layout or the features of the board, changing permissions of the usership, editing and revising posts of the usership or deleting the board completely and starting anew. Although it is uncertain whether an individual user would go so far as to take 'ownership' over the board, this action does allow for truly dynamic transformation of the exhibition's functionality provided there is an invested public.

Documentation

The methods for documenting the proceedings of the virtual critique were varied. They included the following: firsthand observation of the critique over the course of the three-day critique period with accompanying written notes; hourly screenshots of posts that were directly critiquing the artworks or responding to another user; daily transcription of discussion topics on the message board. The popular web analytics software Webalizer was also used to periodically calculate visitor traffic statistics, which proved to very useful in obtaining a 'big-picture' of the ratio of spectators versus active participants in the critique.

After the critique period concluded, transcripts of the discussion threads were compiled into chronological documents for textual analysis. A color-coding system was developed by the curator in order to identify statements of different intention and discursive functions. More specifically,

a color was designated for each one of the following statement-types: a comment that directly critiques one of the artworks; a comment that is about broader concepts of networked art or networked communication; the use of a rhetorical device (such as word choice, an idiom, a changes in tone, etc.), a direct agreement of statements between users (*cohesion*), a direct disagreement of statements between users (*negation*) and finally a statement that poses an impasse to a topic being developed further (*obstacle*) (Massumi, 337)²¹. In addition to color-coding, each statement was annotated in a footnote to explain its significance. The annotated transcripts are included as Appendix B in this document and are referenced throughout the analysis.

ix. analysis/exorcisms

The terms of the following analysis are situated in a study of critique and subjectivity developed by Gilles Deleuze. They are derived from his philosophical work to define the process of minorities becoming in relation to institutional ideologies, such as the State (Negri par. 9) Core concepts of Deleuze's theories on critique are expanded by Brian Massumi into a lexicon of intersubjective passages, blockages and obstacles. These terms describe

²¹ [disambiguation] A personal use of this word to denote the imagined intonation of someone's voice as interpreted through the style of one's written communication. Factors that can influence this interpretation are numerous and include but are not limited to: vocabulary; punctuation; conjunctions; word-length; sentence-length; use of anecdote; puns; metaphor and humour.

what results from multiple rhetorical tactics of exchange and communication utilized in scenarios where a positivity of the social is abandoned.

(Deutsche 274) These situations are exactly that which Deleuze has posited as moments of true critique—where an event and its concepts are defined by a multiplicity, where identities are destroyed and mutations are made possible by the relativism of its discourse (31). For the purpose of establishing a vernacular particular to virtual critique, Massumi's terms will be adjusted here. An intersubjective passage will be referred to as a cohesion, signifying a moment of agreement between two subjective viewpoints. It does not necessarily mean that one viewpoint is dialectically opposed to the other before the cohesion occurs, but rather that one speaker persuades the other using the words and a manner of speaking that satisfy a particular language game. (Mauws & Phillips 324) The concept of language games refers to the phenomenon of how words and concepts can only be determined in reference to other words and concepts used in a given discourse. This is a theory originally posited by Wittgenstein to describe the activities of enacting language, and then developed further by Lyotard in his conception of metanarratives, a theory that also addresses the tenuous nature of such activity (34). Thus, the construction of a discourse is dependent on the relative rhetorical ability of its participants to successfully observe and deploy words and concepts that are mutually understood to be relevant. These deployments are 'moves' within a given language game that advance the discourse. However, to advance a discourse does not necessarily mean

that the move by which that is accomplished is correct in regards to proving one's viewpoint. Any move, by virtue of the acknowledgement of that move between speakers whether considered correct or incorrect, continues the language game regardless. This indicates that speakers in the discourse need not agree in order to be involved in the mutual play of a language game, but rather that they consent to a manner of speaking—they observe the 'rules' of that game. Blockages, referred to herein as negations, are also moves in a language game, but they are perceived as 'wrong moves'—indicating that the words and concepts deployed are still within the rules of the game, but that they are rhetorically weak or phrased in an unconvincing manner. This is an important distinction to be made—that negations, while unsuccessful in attaining consensus, are still valid moves within the bounds of a particular language game. The distance between language games is always a matter of ambiguity (10, 15). Therefore, even for a negation to occur, the subjective viewpoint of one speaker must be made clear to another before s/he can make the move to denounce it. Alternately, the term obstacle in a discourse better encapsulates this gap of ambiguity that delimits language games. The obstacle is a moment of disjuncture between speakers, when the initial statement is denied or ignored completely. This signifies that initial statement failed to establish a common vocabulary, syntax or tone in which a language game can be played.

The last term central to this analysis comes from what became noticeable to the curator as strategized discursive maneuvers around

obstacles in the critique. These instances revealed themselves as, "explicit conditions of observation," (18) in the discussion threads—user behaviours of 'playing hot potato' with a bank of keywords that are determined and executed relationally. These words would repeatedly appear in successive posts and then disappear. In this way, these keywords functioned not only as concepts but also as homogenizing rhetorical devices to communalize and extend lines of communication between users. Like currency being traded to establish a common measurement of value, these keywords symbolize Lyotard's idea of the temporary contract, or 'social bond' that enables language games to occur (21). Much like the defining proposition of the functional site that spatializes discourse, the rules—rhetorical currencies—of a language game must be agreed to by the players who are present, with the knowledge that those rules are subject to change and the game itself subject to "eventual cancellation." (66) The primary goal of the following analysis then is the mapping of these rhetorical currencies, and subsequently identifying which are successful at constructing communities of language games, illustrated in moments of cohesion.

Before examining specific textual exchanges in the virtual critique, it is beneficial to look at initial responses to the exhibition model and the major non-textual behaviours by critique participants.

Activity/attendance

In terms of general visitor/usage statistics, attendance to the exhibition throughout the critique period was respectable. At the close of the critique period, there were forty-one registered members on the message board, seven discussion threads and sixty-three posts. This number is not as high as the curator had initially hoped for, but a deficit of participation is countered by spectatorship, evidenced in relatively high visitor traffic. All total, between 12:00 a.m. on February 1st and 11:59 p.m. on February 3rd, the website was visited 841 times with 9,265 separate pages viewed. This equals an average of 280 visits to the site each day, and implies an average of eleven clickthroughs²² per visit to the site. However, that figure is skewed by the obvious factor that those participating in the critique visited more often and viewed more posts in order to keep current in the discourse. This contributes to a misleading higher figure of clickthrough rate per average user.

The average amount of time spent on the site was nine minutes and fifty seconds, with thirty-three visits over the three days lasting an hour or longer²³. The highest rate of activity was on the on the first day of the critique with 348 visits, 132 of those being unique users. Over the next two days of the critique period the amount of unique visitors to the site declined,

²² The act of clicking on a link internal to the structure of a website. The number of clickthroughs signifies the amount of information viewed on a website in a single visit.

²³ It was revealed after the critique period in a conversation between the curator and one of the critique participants that she had left the website open as a tab in her web browser continuously for all three days, so that she would not forget to check-in. This induces doubt to the accuracy of this figure in regards to how many other users may have done the same and not necessarily engaged with the content for that amount of time.

but a fairly high retention of return-visitors was achieved. While the percentage of page views fell forty-two percent from February 1st to the 2nd, the number of site visits only declined twenty-eight percent to 253 visits. By February 3rd, site activity measured in page views had fallen to thirty percent of what it was on the 1st. However, the number of site visits was still at sixty-eight percent of its original value. This indicates that there was in fact a temporary public that had become invested in the propagation of the discourse. And, although it is unclear how many of those site-visits were made by the invited critics, which could diminish the validity of the exhibition garnering a non-captive usership, posts-per-user in the transcripts show that there was a near one-to-one ratio of posts made by invited critics and by willful users.

Significant events

therealzachpearl

Undoubtedly one of the most influential 'moves' in the virtual critique occurred thirty-four minutes after the website launched, with the very first post to the message board (Appendix A fig. 3). The post was made by a newly registered user: *therealzachpearl*, who (perhaps in the spirit of the exhibition's content) appropriated the curator's identity. Besides using the curator's name in his/her username, s/he also used the curator's Facebook profile picture as the account's avatar and used basic biographical information about the curator for the forum profile (Appendix A fig. 5, 6)

The post content was preceded by the topic, "the question of usage in performing the net". However, the post did not actually pose a question (or more accurately, did not include a question mark), but infers one about how the artworks may favour the visual, and subsequently if interactivity on the Internet is dominated by visuality (Appendix B.1 113). The post uses complex, academic vocabulary, but is short in actual word count—which makes it more likely to be congruent with other language game communities. Yet, it did set the tone for the entire critique, and as such, there was a dominant academic tone to the majority of the discourse.

The second post on the message board was also created by therealzachpearl, initiating a different topic, confusingly titled, "the postmodern experience of appropriation as a non-appropriative original discipl[ine]" [sic] (Appendix B.2). This post was more critical, responding to one of the curator's initial topic categories—"Appropriation (21st Century Aesthetics)"—proposing that the curator's use of the concept of appropriation to talk about the techniques of the artworks may be outdated in addressing the modes of circulation and production on the Internet. However, this discussion thread was one of only two in the course of the critique to lack cohesions, despite having four or more speakers.

User therealzachpearl continued to be a key player in the critique, and it was only apparent to the curator through conversations with several participants after the conclusion of the critique period, that most users

assumed it was the curator himself partaking in the discourse²⁴. While the posts that this user made were intelligent and responsible for keeping many rhetorical currencies in play, the perception that it was the curator doing so precluded the potential for the perception of critique free of hierarchy. It is likely that the curator's supposed presence caused participants to feel that their posts needed to be of certain seriousness or limited in their level of criticality.

On the other hand, the appropriation of identity by therealzachpearl can also be interpreted as an artistic contribution to the concept and ongoing making of the exhibition. In this light, the presence of therealzachpearl indicates that the content of the exhibition had resonance and incited a response in the vernacular of the artworks—a truly aesthetic form and method of engaging with the works no matter its moral implications.

Changes to the structure of the message board

Within the first day of the critique it became apparent through direct e-mail feedback to the curator that a number of users were finding the navigational structure of the message board difficult and the amount of text and menus deterring. A prime difficulty expressed in this feedback was editing the boards in order to change the names of the categories the curator had put in

²⁴ At least five these conversations were with participants that are either close friends or family of the curator. Despite numerous spelling errors and colloquial language that were both atypical of the curator's personality, these participants did not question, but assumed that therealzachpearl was in fact Zach Pearl. This illustrates the unnerving and vestigial primacy of names for determining identity in virtual interaction.

place. In response, the curator designed and implemented shortcut links at the bottom of the right-hand frame—one of them labeled, "Edit categories and boards".

After this, at approximately noon, the curator's category of, "The merger of economic and cultural production," was made into a sub-category and merged into "Appropriation (21st Century Aesthetics)" by an unknown user²⁵. Two hours later, user TheTuringPoint erased the descriptions for each category (Appendix A fig. 8)²⁶. At 19:25, the curator received another e-mail—this time sent by one of the invited critics, expressing confusion with the process for creating new categories for the board (Appendix G: 180). The curator responded with an e-mail of step-by-step instructions. However, that critic's category still did not appear for another two hours²⁷. Assuming that the process was still convoluted, the curator made the decision to intervene and collapse all categories of the discussion board into a single category labeled "Discussion". The rationale of this decision was that the single category would visually simplify the interface. This action was also intended to eliminate the perception by users that they needed to post content that strictly addressed the titles of the categories in place. The necessity of this

²⁵ Unfortunately, there is no means through the Simple Machines application to track which users completed what actions. The only way to discern this information was consistent observation throughout the critique by the curator.

²⁶ This was deduced by the fact that this was the only actively logged-in user at the time this occurred.

²⁷ The category "Form and Content" that was eventually created at 21:25 on February 1st, belonged to a particular invited critic. This is known from an e-mail sent directly to the curator asking for feedback on the category before adding it to the board. This e-mail has been included herein (see Appendix G) along with a similar message from an invited critic as evidence of a desire for hierarchy within the critique, even to those familiar with the conventions of art critique and knowledgeable of the concept of democratic dialogue underlying the exhibition.

action highlighted to the curator a hole in his logic. By establishing categories for the critique, the discourse was already partitioned and therefore hierarchical—or, if not hierarchical, then certainly not latitudinal. Conceptual and navigational boundaries were placed between the users by the use of discursive categories. Instead, in order to foster an agonistic environment for the discourse, all topics and posts should be 'thrown together' into an unstructured environment where users must devise their own means of navigating the variety of perspectives in the discourse. Although the intervention by the curator to take control of the board and collapse the discussion categories was undesirable in terms of conducting a 'pure' experiment of software curation, it communicated to users that all posts were parts of a unified discourse and increased the porousness of individual discussion threads.

The need for anonymity

Another important aspect of the critique was a prominent desire for anonymity amongst users. Fifty-one percent of registered users chose to alter their real names or use completely fictitious monikers for their screennames. On two of these occasions, users registered with a screenname that was made up of their conjoined first initial and real last name. However, neither user posted anything to the critique within the first day. By the second day, both users had changed their screennames to something completely independent of their real names, and both eventually contributed to a discussion thread.

The most interesting instance of the desire for anonymity was perhaps when one of the invited critics, who also had previously registered with a screenname that was indicative of their real name, e-mailed the curator at 21:00 on the 1st to request that they be made anonymous, and was "suddenly filled with anxiety about the web presence". (Appendix G.1 180) The curator responded accordingly, and that critic changed their screenname to the ironic verb of "display".

The reluctance by many to participate in the critique without anonymity suggests that the space of the virtual liberates through more than non-physical interaction but also liberates through disidentification. Just as physical space demands us to confront the consequences of our bodily actions, the discursive space of the critique demands a confrontation with the consequences of resolute subjectivity and ambiguous language. In this way, the fluid properties given to the total construction of identity in virtual space and networked communication provide the capacity to distance oneself from the self-image and assert one's subjective viewpoint without immediate social consequence. The anonymity of half the users in the virtual critique suggests that while there are many interested in participating in a democratic dialogue about art, the large portion that chose to remain anonymous associate social risk with the act of critique, despite a lack of physical immanence with their temporary public. The kind of social risks most easily imagined within the context of *CrossTalk* are those of linguistic inaccuracy and intellectual deficiency. These risks were perhaps felt highest among the

group of invited critics, who, because of their familiarity with the conventions of critiquing art were assumed to display a certain level of knowledge, wit and even revelation in their commentary. Framed to the general public as a group of "professionals", the invited critics participated with the knowledge that they would have to represent themselves personally *and* professionally. Accordingly, each assumed the risk of engaging in a spectacular 'discourse of contemporaries' that in its most negative capacity could publicly tarnish one's professional reputation and preclude future work-related opportunities.

Following the critique, in discussion with some of the participants, the curator received feedback that a number of users also felt intimidated by how "permanent" making posts on the message board felt. The fact that they knew their commentary would be published and be made public caused many users to spend a great deal of time drafting their posts—some writing multiple versions. While this is understandable behaviour as part of writing for publication—no different than my own curation of each word in this document—these responses were somewhat puzzling and somewhat troubling. Considering the permissions given to all users, including modifying and even deleting one's own posts, this kind of editing hardly occurred. Over the course of the entire critique only one user modified a previous post, and only two users deleted their own posts²⁸. The lack of editing indicates two possibilities: The first being that users genuinely overlooked these features or forgot that they were available to them (an unlikely reality), and the second

²⁸ In both of these cases, the user accidentally posted their content twice and deleted their 're-post'.

being that there may have been an oligopticon at work, intimidating and ultimately inhibiting users from (for all intensive purposes) the illicit behaviour of revising content of public domain. After all, the ascribed feeling of 'permanence' to the posting process by users, while valid in its subjective perception, is plainly illogical. Considering how easily posts could be deleted—a "remove" button sits next to a graphic of a paper sheet crossed-out by a red "x" at the top of every post—it would be ludicrous to suggest that the design of the interface suggested permanence (Appendix A fig. 14). However, the possibility still existed that, despite being able to remove or modify posted statements, another user could have witnessed such an act transpire. This witnessing of a revision by another user creates the possibility for that information to be announced or 'called out' to the other members of the critique—thereby discrediting the perceived accuracy of the revising user. The sheer paranoia of members tracking changes in the posting histories of other members created a self-policing behaviour within the critique. The assumed presence of the 'witnessing user' enacted an oligopticon hinged on the law of accuracy; wherein edits and deletions constituted negative acts of revisionism and retraction.

Significant discussion threads and themes

As stated in the methods subsection, each discussion thread has been analyzed for the number of repeated keywords, which serve not only as signifiers of the major concepts in each discussion thread but also as

rhetorical currencies that allowed a series of particular language games between users to proliferate. At a macroscopic level, discussion threads that continued for longer had a greater number of keywords and a greater number of derivations. This served to expand the rules of their respective language games, widening the scope of participation and contribution. The following is an examination of those rhetorical currencies—the overall themes of the critique that they illustrate and the relative success or failure of their deployment within individual discussion threads.

Space, transcendence, the image & the end

The two most prolific discussion threads in *CrossTalk* were *Net art or art on the net?* and *text vs. image (which is louder)* (Appendices B.4, B.3). Both threads had nine participants and generated twenty-five or more rhetorical currencies, fifteen or more posts, five cohesions, zero negations and one instance of an obstacle. Cohesions generated in both discussion threads generally took the form of clearly affirmative statements, beginning with words like "yes", "I agree", "I like" and "true". Specific examples of this include the comment directed to user Susan Hensel Gallery by user TheTuringPoint, "I agree with you that the piece is powerful," and a comment by user Ted Hiebert directed at TheTuringPoint, "Yes that's certainly a possibility..." (Appendix A fig. 11 & Appendix B.3 122,124) Other cohesions between the two threads took on a more eloquent, less directly affirmative tone in language. However they compensated by directly

addressing another user's interpretation and by including his/her screenname—a gesture of social alignment and giving credit to successful moves in the language game. Examples of this can be seen in the comment by user Jouissance, "I rather like Ted's reading" or the comment by user therealzachpearl, "I see the text 'acting' in the way that Ted proposes..." (Appendix B.4133)(Appendix B.3 125). It would also seem from these last two examples that user Ted Hiebert was instrumental in creating the conditions for these cohesions. While his comments were addressed with each of his posts, and could even be deemed catalytic—garnering more cohesions per post than any other user—his total posts per thread was only two. This low rate of posts and yet high rate of related cohesions highlights that while there may be certain participants who dominate textually through authoring (posting) more content, it is skillful observation and deployment of rhetoric that actually ensure the continuation of a language game.

These threads also had a wealth of shared terms and concepts, illustrated in their similar folksonomies²⁹. Significant terms appearing in both included, "the end" (and subsequently, "the beginning") expressed also in the words, "completion", "incompleteness", "emergence" and "infinite". The high currency of these words in both threads suggests that most users were attempting to spatialize and materialize their experiences of the artworks in terms of physical experience. Accordingly, the discourse became one of physical

²⁹ [disambiguation] A taxonomy of 'tags' used to identify web content to a search engine. It is also a methodology in web analytics to consider the rate of connection between groups of keywords and search terms.

terms—the endurance of the user in the exploration to determine the limits of the artworks. Both threads can be seen as indicative of a larger, (unconsciously) collective project of the temporary public to confront and delineate the terms of virtuality. Other shared terms of interest (but bereft of adequate time or space to be gone into here) are "information", "points", "pointers" "pointing" (in relation to meaning and signification) and "the image" as a categorical imperative.

Individually, each thread addressed disparate subtopics and carried a different tone of exchange between speakers. In *Net art or art on the net?*, ideas of space and the translation of virtual art into embodied terms dominated the discourse. User ErinK, who created the discussion thread, posed the question of Dina Kelberman's *I'm Google*:

Yes the work functions on the internet but for me it loses some of the impact I envision, experiencing it in a physical space where I could allow myself to be overwhelmed by the volume [of] images. Thoughts? (Appendix B.4 131)

This question sparked an array of poetic homilies on space, both physical and virtual. In a critical post by user Ted Hiebert, the idea of space is conflated with "a physicality of the image." (132) Following this is a querying of the volume of images in its totality as a space of its own—a space of transcendence in which all images are present, facilitated through the infinitude of the Net. The nomenclature of this space changes slightly with each successive post, from "spaces of contemplation" to "hypothetical space" to "never ending space". Functioning as a focalizing agent for this

investigation is the aspect of the scroll bar in Kelberman's piece, which, in addition to variants of "space", become the main rhetorical currencies of a language game about desire and fragmentation:

"If the number of images is finite (and it is <http://www.businessinsider.com/chart-of-the-day-the-largest-photo-libraries-in-the-world-2011-9>) then a hypothetical space could host them all, yet it would then become a constant state of growing and wholeness that is broken down in the interface that requires us to scroll. *I'm Google* can only be understood (i think) as an experience that is a fragment of itself, and maybe that is its netness." (Appendix B.4 135)

Ultimately, this thread is stubbed by an obstacle in the second-to-last post. In a comment by user Helena, concern over the original context of the images—the reality of each image beyond its 'function' as image—is brought into the discussion:

"[I]am not sure that I can add much to the consideration of the 'scroll' etc ... however I remain ambivalent about this piece for the way that it seems to flatten out a wide range of situations and experiences in favour of their visual composition and look." (139)

This statement creates an obstacle for two reasons. Firstly, it acknowledges the current rhetorical currency of the "scroll", but consciously does not address it or attempt to further that particular line of communication. Instead, the user redirects the discourse into a reading of the phenomenological and (possibly) ethical dimension of appropriating and remixing imagery. Labeling it the "Google effect," user Helena's observation of the flattening-out of context (and perhaps consequence) in the multitude of imagery is a valid discursive trajectory on its own. However, it fails to contribute to the greater interest of the invested participants for that thread,

which, for the latter half of the discussion, had been focused on concepts of navigating space and embodied sensations in aesthetic experience.

Performativity

In *text vs. image (which is louder)*, while tackling the question in the thread's title, participants also use Jaramillo's piece *Tricolor* as a node for exploring performativity in networked communication. The thread begins with a question by user TheTuringPoint of which is the more powerful speech act in *Tricolor*—the raked text or the icon of the flag? (Appendix B.3: 121) This user also asks whether not being able to read Spanish diminishes the impact of the piece. In the following post, the piece is affirmed to be "powerful" by user Susan Hensel Gallery regardless of its language, and then referred to as a, "liminal object open to individual interpretation." (Ibid.) This statement implies that the conceptual strength of the piece lies in its resistance to explicit meaning—a form of protest and performance through ambiguity and obstruction. Strangely, this implication is not explored until nearly the end of the discussion thread. Instead, the use of the term "object" within Susan Hensel Gallery's post is taken up, and it becomes the main rhetorical currency for a string of three more posts, until, in an almost custodial fashion, Ted Hiebert makes an influential post that returns the trajectory of the discourse to the speech act:

"I'm tempted to suggest that the [sic] in the context of the discussion thread—Speech Acts + the Net—there is an instance in "Tricolor" that might be generalized into a larger provocation. Namely, that the net

may be more a place of "acting" than it is of speech. Not, in other words, a place of information but one of performance."
(Appendix B.3: 123)

This statement is significant for two reasons. The first is that the introduction of, "place of acting," and "performance," create another unconventional notion of space that further builds the rhetorical currency of "space" in the discourse. This spatialization of the concepts already mentioned in other posts also assumes the idea of objecthood within it, and therefore allows the language game of "the act" and "acting" to move forward. This statement is also significant for the way it is a speech act in itself. It is a double-entendre that appears to focus the conversation, but also critiques the exhibition framework, insinuating that discussion of the works is confined to the context of established categories^{30 31}.

Net art or art on the net? and *text vs. image (which is louder)* were also the only threads where users posted attachments in the form of screenshots, which resulted from the fact that both discourses centered on a single artwork from the 'gallery', addressing aspects of the work and then expounding into related issues³². This happened explicitly at least once in the

³⁰ This comment was posted before the curator collapses the board categories, and goes to show the detrimental effects of instituting such categories.

³¹ This polemic gesture, though subtle in its eloquence, may have contributed to a more severe and extended version of that criticism made as the last post by user Helena in the thread *Digital Materiality* (Appendix B.5: 149). Helena's post addresses the artificiality of the exhibition's public 'space', stating that the obliged participation of the invited critics does not constitute a site of democratic participation at all.

³² All of these screenshots were of various stages in *Tricolor v.2007 [Redux]* or *I'm Google*. No external pictorial content gather from the Web was used to measure against the artworks or reinforce a textual comment. In keeping the use of imagery in the critique to the documentation of the artworks already presented, the content within the frame of the virtual critique begins to make the virtual gallery obsolete.

discourse for all three artworks, indicating that the net.cromantic aspiration of each artwork functioning as a node in the formation of a discursive site, in fact occurred. *Net art or art on the net?* centered on *I'm Google, text vs. image (which is louder)* focused on *Tricolor v.2007 [Redux]* and *the decorative* addressed *Banners & Skycrapers* (Appendices B.4, B.3, B.7).

In contrast to its counterpart threads, *the decorative* was a short and non-reciprocal discourse that was insufficient in generating cohesions (Appendix B.7). It contained only four posts—and a single negation. The negation was made by user Frenchy in the second post, questioning the accuracy of user display's use of the term "decorative" to describe Roth's work. Positioned so early in the thread, Frenchy's negation created an antagonistic tone within the discourse from its onset. As a result, *the decorative* holds the rank of the least productive of the conversations in *CrossTalk*. In contrast, the striking similarities in the number of users, posts and cohesions between *Net art or art on the net?* and *text vs. image (which is louder)* suggest that generating lively critical and social engagement may in fact be a formulaic process.

However, despite their proliferation, *Net art or art on the net?* and *text vs. image* were not necessarily the most agonistic exchanges in *CrossTalk*, and thus the possibility of their formulaic construction does not fully satisfy the goal of critical social engagement. One such thread that approached this was *the question of usage in performing the net* (Appendix B.1). It also generated five cohesions and one negation; doing so with only eight posts and five

participants total. In addition, although it may be proportional to the number of participants, these cohesions and negation were accomplished with only eleven rhetorical currencies compared to the twenty-five-plus currencies employed in *Net art or art on the net?* and *text vs. image*. This indicates that the five users involved in *the question of usage* were able to establish an equally efficient language game with fewer rules and less moves. This level of engagement is of course dependent on the ability of individual users to respond to and utilize rhetorical currencies, which in the case of the invited critics is likely to be higher given their academic backgrounds. The consistent presence of four invited critics in both of these prolific threads suggests a direct correlation to a higher rate of cohesions, which in turn produced more efficient language games. However, a downside to this effect is that the invited critics, through the deployment of similar rhetorical currencies enacted an exclusive language game of the artist-academic. This exclusivity was certainly felt by some non-invited participants in the critique. One registered member verbally described the proceedings to the curator as "smacking of elitism". Others simply said that they did not feel smart enough to contribute. While the perception of elitism and specialization here is not a phenomenon specific to virtual critiques of art but a common occurrence in any attempt to merge critical discussions of art with a more 'general' public, it is also necessary to consider the 'open' design of the message board system as an effort by the curator to counter this. A question that still goes unanswered is why any user did not take the initiative to start a separate

discussion topic that focused on casual observations or otherwise created a non-specialized 'space' for conversation? Although the ability to do so was made available to every registered user and made known on the exhibition website, the tone of the critique failed to attain a diversity in subjective perspective or expression worthy of being called a 'true critique'. Instead, it remained homogenously intellectual, never realizing a plane of immanence (Deleuze, 146) that would force the parameters of its dominant language game to expand into the discursive territories of other language communities.

Negations vs. obstacles

I would like to return briefly to the discussion thread *the decorative* to further explore the difference between a negation and an obstacle, and the ways in which one serves to advance and the other to deteriorate the discourse. While a negation implies a failure by a speaker in the discourse to move correctly within the language game, it actually breeds more room for agonistic exchange between speakers by inviting challenges and rebuttals of subjective viewpoints. The negation is a call to action in the rhetorical sense—one that engages with conflicting perspectives rather than disengaging from instances of difference.

In the case of *the decorative*, user Frenchy disqualifies the initial use of the term "decorative" by saying that it is too condescending (Appendix B.7 154). Her statement engages with the terms of the discourse set up by user display, while at the same time dissolves them through a

direct questioning of their applicability. This statement has been labeled thus far in this analysis as a negation, because the use of the term "decorative", even in a pejorative sense, still constitutes a move within the rules of a language game. However, due to its chronological placement as second in the thread, the statement in fact functions as a discursive obstacle for successive posts by other users. Although Frenchy's negation does advance the discourse, with both of the following posts attempting to posit new trajectories, neither one is successful in doing so. More importantly, neither post addresses the negation itself—the act of disqualification of the key rhetorical currency in the language game. What started as a negation, in the end functions as a rhetorical obstacle, reified by the willful ignorance of other users. Any agonistic debate of Frenchy's negation is sacrificed as successive users choose to ignore its proposition. By continuing to debate only the characteristics of the artworks, and not address the event of the critique itself, participants compact the effect of the negation until it becomes an 'elephant in the browser'—a collectively maintained obstacle that constitutes a particular type of temporary public fundamentally incapable of generating a language game.

Major obstacles

As demonstrated by the previous example, a trend developed within the critique of aversion to discussing the critique as a contestable event in itself. Efforts were instead diverted and channeled into re-establishing a focus on

aspects of the artworks. This implies a deficiency (even on the part of the invited critics) to discuss the critique as a contestable event in itself. Each obstacle that occurred triggered a rhetorical maneuver, but one that sought to refocus the discourse on the artworks—never centering on a language game that would potentially destabilize and reorganize the terms of the critique.

However, elephants in the browser come in different shapes and sizes—all offering challenges to the trajectory of the discourse in different calibers. In fact, the major obstacles that emerged in the critique were individual in nature, instances of ambivalence or disregard for the critical interests of others that became barriers to the discourse itself. The collective obstacle of *the decorative*, for example, while revealing an interesting social conundrum in the context of art critique is much different than a series of obstacles, for instance, that arose from users dougjarvis and display in *All the leftovers* (Appendix B.6). This second kind of obstacle is a more than an aversion to the preceding content, but a denial of its presence in the discourse. In the thread's first post, made by user .TIFF, the tone of the statements are immediately recognizable as being less academic than the majority of posts in the critique thus far. And, although she does not pose a direct question, she does explicitly address the larger category of the discussion thread—Form and Content— by specifying that she wants to talk about the content of

Banners & Skyscrapers, and that it makes her feel "uncomfortable"^{33 34}. The non-academic tone of her post may have positioned her statements outside a then precedent language game. However, even a negation of that tone or those statements by another user would at least have furthered the discourse through acknowledging a conflict. Instead, in the second post of the thread, user display averts the topic completely, beginning with the statement, "On Form:" The statement by user .TIFF is deflected, as the use of a header in display's post acts as an obstacle that punctuates with formalism and authority, breaking the trajectory of the conversation that .TIFF was attempting to set in motion. Hence, obstacles do not necessarily have to be statements of words and concepts, but can also communicate ambivalence through stylistic choices or the modes in which statements are 'presented'. Length, punctuation, syntax, formality of the grammar—all of these elements contribute to an intonation of the words, that if crafted in high contrast to the statement preceding it, can preclude communication as it moves outside the rules of the pending language game. Perhaps even more interesting is the fact that display's post is answered with another obstacle by user dougjarvis. His statement equally disregards the question posed by display about how the works "interrogate their existing templates", beginning instead with, "I am asking myself where the projects start and stop." (150) This statement

³³ There is no evidence of the *Form and Content* category in the transcripts. It was generated only 2 hours prior the curator's intervention to collapse the message board categories, and no documentation was taken of it during that period.

³⁴ Gender of the user is revealed in a following post. She refers to herself as "a gal". (Appendix B.6)

does nothing to address either of the two previous posts, and with its use of "I", is a rhetorical device to distinguish and identify in the discourse—disassociating the speaker from what has already transpired in the thread and once again moving outside any proposal of rules for a language game in either previous post. Eventually, *All the leftovers* does begin to generate cohesions and construct a language game. But the first instance of this does not happen until more than halfway through the discussion thread. This delay suggests that the back-to-back obstacles in the beginning posts accordingly suspended the possibility of cohesions and made for a more fragmented discursive space, described better as a series of evasive rhetoric maneuvers than an agonistic discourse.

Another example of an obstacle that is more formal in nature would be the eloquence of the language in Ted Hiebert's posts. While Ted's posts were unanimously interpreted as insightful and intelligent to other users on the message board, the length of some of his posts approached publishable essays. His inclusion of multiple theories, rhetorical questions and poetic word choices all made presumably well-intentioned obstacles that precluded a language game from taking shape. This is best exemplified in the discussion thread *Digital Materiality*, in which most of the content is a series of thought-provoking but ultimately overwhelming monologues about the artworks and the exhibition premise (Appendix B.5). These posts are extremely useful to the artists and the curator, but they are often inaccessible to anyone that does not have a post-secondary education in art

and cultural theory. Each post successively builds an atmosphere of the 'ivory tower'—a language game so particular that while of interest to the general public, its rules are too intimidating to play by for anyone who is not already familiar with the game. While being viewed by visitors to the site seventy-four times in the three-day critique period, *Digital Materiality* garnered only two more participants—both of them invited critics who were comfortable enough to attempt moves within that highly specialized language game. When cohesions did occur, they happened between Ted and longtime collaborator Doug Jarvis, making it doubtful that those cohesions emerged from a truly agonistic encounter in which the two speakers made a collective passage through the filtering mechanism of the critique (Massumi 340).

Major criticisms

Throughout the critique there were many criticisms of the individual artworks, including some that questioned their conceptual strength³⁵. However, more interesting for discussion here, are some major criticisms of the exhibition model and the conceptual/contextual framework of the curatorial thesis. The first of these project-wide criticisms was made by user Frenchy in the last post in the thread *All the leftovers*. Addressing user Ted Hiebert's proposition that the space of the net is a space of acting and performance she cites, "It is a place for acting—for the active participation of

³⁵ "I guess I am somewhat disappointed in the lack I feel somehow on a strong conceptual center to these works. They are all somewhat derivative, I have seen similar works both in the real world and on the internet." (Appendix B.1 116)

the observer. Although I appreciate this 'gallery', I also find it confining. I am used to roaring ahead and finding more..." (Appendix B.6 153) While the use of the rhetorical device, "roaring ahead" could insinuate progression through physical space, user Frenchy grounds her comment in the successive 'movements' of navigating the Net by remarking that she is used to, "crisscross[ing] the net to find art in places [she] ordinarily would not find, by people who [she has] never heard of...it is an act of seeking through keywords..." Her desire to 'roar ahead' when experiencing networked art suggests that the use of frames in the website's design is visually restrictive and dissonant with the premise of a hyperlinked environment and experience. This is a valid criticism, and an issue that the curator had considered several times in the construction of the website. A 'framing', whether conceptual or graphic, does not appropriately convey the sensations of *différance* claimed by the curator to be present in the crosstalk phenomenon of the works, or the sentence image of the exhibition-experience. Of particular interest is also the fact that Frenchy references the curator in another post in *text vs. image (which is louder)*, in which she justifies her reading of *Tricolor* as "scrolling protest" based on the assumption that the curator would not have selected the work if it did not have political/polemical motives (Appendix B.3 128). Not only is the use of both terms "scrolling" and "protest" an instance of rhetorical currency that enabled her comment to move within the current language game, but the name and identity of the curator also become rhetorical currency upon which to mount her argument.

In *Digital Materiality*, users Ted Hiebert and dougjarvis extend this criticism, querying the conceptual strength of the term crosstalk as a metaphor to describe what can or had been realistically attained by the users in the critique and the exhibition model as a whole. Adding to this, dougjarvis introduces the idea of a "holographic" crosstalk, commenting that Ted's prolific reflections on the work and the exhibition-experience act like a projection or an extrusion of the content of the pieces that is achieved through the actions of the users in the sentence image (Appendix B.5 146). A cohesion then follows in which Ted affirms this 'holographic logic', explaining that holograms contain patterns of interference rather than a random deferring and overlapping of signs, and that this act of projecting meaning onto the content may be the most accurate way in which to envision crosstalk. Consequently, this implies that the thesis of the exhibition is not inherent within the works, but superimposed by the curator and then dependent upon the user to activate and reify it. While it could be said that this process occurs in the majority of exhibitions, where curators are often required to construct a thesis that is loose so that it can address an almost impossible amount of ideas within the works, Ted's critique exposes the labour involved in ideals of agonistic discourse. He quips that, "[l]atent in each of these pieces is such an idea—the question is how hard we need to work for it." (148) This comment is extremely poignant and useful for the net.cromancer in considering the ethical implications of such participatory curatorial work—as first explored in subsection four. As ideas of the virtual

exhibition are implicit in ideas of the digital economy, the act of networked aesthetic engagement in relation to democracy becomes problematic when it assumes maintenance of immaterial labour by not only the designers and programmers, but also the users who are complicit in the social function of the work. This subject of labour, and what could be called a pseudo-democracy present in the *CrossTalk* model, is taken up by user Helena in the very last post of the three-day critique period. In an almost seething but nonetheless valuable observation, she admits to not fulfilling her contractual obligation of making six required posts, and goes on to say that being obliged to be engaged in the exhibition is not her idea of democratic participation (Appendix B.5 149)³⁶. While this comment again rightfully elucidates the aspect of labour as a problematic factor in instituting a participatory component in the exhibition structure, it is also biting in the use of the word "oppressive" (Ibid.), insinuating the curator's contractual approach to structuring the critique employed a form of slavery upon the invited critics.

On a final and related note, also within *Digital Materiality*, Ted Hiebert explores the positive potential in the concept of failure as it relates to virtual interaction. Again, the ethics of net.cromancy are put under the microscope when considering the possible necessity of failure of crosstalk in order to contextualize the significance of virtual interaction and delineate the limitations of virtual critique. How does the net.cromancer justify failure as a

³⁶ The inclusion of this information seems spiteful and expository of the curator, in that it was never made public on the exhibition website and reveals a mechanical aspect of the exhibition's organization that deflates the egalitarian image of the conversation.

possibly productive force, and a negation in itself that furthers the particular language game of virtual exhibition? To imagine failure as a necessary component of net.cromancy means considering the exhibition as yet another kind of site—one of radical pedagogy among exhibition-goers where-in risks are perceived positively and are explored as a group. The negations and obstacles between individual users would need to somehow be foregrounded as immanent communal learning experiences. It is uncertain how this would be practically implemented, but the proposition of the net.cromantic exhibition becoming a positive experience of failure again reinforces ideas of agonistic discourse that prize conflict as a necessary obstacle to produce alternative and innovative thinking.

What is ultimately telling of these criticisms is that, while they are valid in their concerns and extremely useful to the curator for the purpose of this analysis, it is unlikely that they are useful to anyone else. The insular make-up of the thread that these criticisms occurred within gave way to an academic and poetic language game of interrogating a curatorial thesis. Unfortunately, for the majority of participants in the critique—as was evidenced in the lack of response to the thread—these critics were enacting the near solipsism that they were scrutinizing, and talking largely to themselves. This likely precluded a more culturally and rhetorically diverse discourse from developing. However, the inherent social value gained by those critics through the act of engaging in such a discourse should not be undermined. Nor should the cumulative thoughts and provocations of their

discussion be overlooked as valuable information to a larger body of curators and critics.

x. conclusion / futurity

The analysis of the events of *CrossTalk* offers the insight to net art curators that while net.cromantic methods are in fact capable of producing acute moments of agonistic discourse and social critical engagement in virtual exhibitions, it is ultimately doubtful that the specific *CrossTalk* model is capable of generating and sustaining a fully functional site. Indeed, certain tenets of net.cromancy were met. The combination of a virtual 'gallery' and virtual critique successfully created sentence imagery—instances where the experience of the critique blurred into and became integral to the experience of the artworks themselves. However, the disproportionate ratio of high visitor traffic to the website compared to the low number of invested participants in the critique aside from the invited critics suggests that the design of the exhibition model was not accessible enough or provocative enough to necessitate a more diverse, populous and active temporary public. As such, and in an effort to keep developing the efficacy of net.cromantic exhibition models, what alternative strategies could be applied to future iterations of combining virtual 'galleries' and virtual critique?

The primary strategy that faltered in the *CrossTalk* model was the invitation of critics, and the subsequent titling of their role as "critics" in the critique. Each critic's formal training in the arts, combined with referring to them as having such in the marketing materials and on the exhibition website, established a perception of formalism around the critique that influenced the behaviours of invited critic and general user alike. Framed as offering specialized knowledge from the perspective of an 'arts professional', the interactions of the invited critics became limited to a particularly conventional language game of critique that fulfilled what they interpreted as an imposition of the studio critique onto an interface for networked communication. Alternately, it is likely that the general user interpreted the purpose of the critique to do much the same—to extend conventions of studio critique into a virtual environment rather than democratize communication around networked art. Hence, while the message board was (un)structured to be an egalitarian apparatus, the expertise of the invited critics posed more problems than contributions to the construction of a temporary public. In a future iteration of this model, it would be wise to approach this differently, doing one of the following:

- 1) Include fewer critics: Even if *CrossTalk* had attracted twice as many users, and a larger proportion of those users had contributed to the critique, there were still too many users per capita who possessed academic training and specialized knowledge of the subject matter. By introducing academic language games into the critique on a fundamental

level, the discourse becomes fundamentally academic in tone. This diminishes its relevance to a majority of potential users and creates the perception that the critique is dominated and managed by an epistemic community of art professionals.

2) Invite critics who are interested in the arts, but have no post-secondary training in the arts: It is perhaps more important, if inviting critics, to consider communication and facilitation skills above all else when defining criteria for candidates. It is important that some of the invited critics at least have a passion for speaking about art, but is more important to the creation of an agonistic and productive discourse that the invited critics act to stimulate conversation and encourage participation through an inclusive language game. A good example of a demographic to consider for these tasks is secondary school teachers in the arts and humanities, who are used to facilitating conversations around the arts on a remedial level. These individuals, while certainly aware of the more academic dimension that the discourse could move along, would be more inclined to find a point of accessibility for the conversation and to help construct a collaborative learning environment.

3) Do not include critics: This option is attractive for two reasons. The first of these is that the practical experience of curating and organizing the exhibition would be less demanding without having to solicit, organize and liaise between a number of critics in addition to doing the same for the artists and other project collaborators. The second reason

is that the absence of invited critics is yet another removal of a mediating force in the making of the exhibition-experience. Without an indication of who might be involved in the critique or the general tone of its discourse—both factors communicated by and encapsulated by the figure of the critic as art expert—users/participants in the exhibition would produce a truly indeterminate outcome, their interactions and communications uninhibited by even the 'virtual presence' of critics. The knowledge by potential users that no expertise would be present as an integral component of the critique may encourage a broader spectrum of participants, especially those who do not see themselves as "creative" or "artistically-inclined," and are often discouraged from participating for fear of being judged as inadequate to the subject matter. However, as ideal and inclusive as this sounds, a lack of critics or guiding figures in the critique requires an even greater degree of engagement on the part of the user. A truly committed and invested temporary public would be prerequisite to a discourse being established, and without the obligatory figures of invited critics there is no guarantee of such invested interaction. The challenge then in providing an accessible non-didactic critique that still necessitates a temporary public is in creating a pre-existing language game for users to respond to that is general and broad enough to accommodate the rules and moves of subsequent, related language games.

A possible solution to this challenge was touched upon by user Ted Hiebert in his ponderings of digital materiality and its relationship to speech acts—a relationship initially positioned by the curator. Instead of seeing it in linguistic terms, however, Ted suggests that the materiality of disembodied experiences lies in theatricality and performative space:

"...an imaginary space that reveals the equally imaginary ways we construct relationships in the physical world. Digital materiality then as equivalent to imaginative impact. It might be a relational principal [sic], with all the complexities that sort of reference would demand." (Appendix B.5 144)

This statement does demand a complex mapping of its implications. But, it is worthy of such investigation for its radical pedagogical value. Using performativity as the analog to connect relational forms in both physical and virtual interaction suggests that the critique could not only be made more accessible and attractive to the average user if the element of performativity in networked communication were emphasized, but also that it would serve to educate the general population about how virtuality involves and elucidates deeply embedded psychological processes.

Envisioned as an alternative to the *CrossTalk* model, a future direction in net.cromantic exhibitions could be the interpretive framing of the critique as an imaginative, creative activity. While the association of terms like "imaginative" and "creative" with artistic activity seems contradictory to the argument to expand the language game of the critique to include rules that are not in themselves art-specific, the premise of performance in critique capitalizes on the factors of anonymity and revisionism enabled by virtual

communication and interaction. It encourages mutable identity among participants and assertions of subjectivity without immanent social consequence. If conceptualized and communicated to the public as "theatrical", the critique has potential to be interpreted as an experimental, boundless act, centered on whimsy and liminality in the performative construction and delineation of identity. For example, if participants in the critique were asked to "perform"—encouraged to use fictitious screennames, avatars, 'personal vocabularies', speak in multiple voices or even create multiple user accounts—then the critique would become a form of play and experimentation that conveys and reflects the nomadic narrative at the conceptual foundation of the functional site.

Of course, foregrounding this narrative in the critique presents risks. In choosing to prioritize self-expression and performativity there is the possibility that the critique becomes more of an online vaudeville production than a critical discourse revealing new perspectives on the artworks or the exhibition itself. However, self-expression and identification are innate aspects of networked communication and interaction processes, regardless of whether or not they are ever pronounced to the user. This is evident in the transcripts of *CrossTalk* wherein at some point in each discussion thread a reference to ideas of performance or identity construction is made. Participants in *CrossTalk* were well aware of this dimension of their virtual interactions, and it could also be considered negligent of the curator not to openly acknowledge this phenomenon in the interpretive framework of the

exhibition model. Tactics to encourage participants in the virtual critique to be performative in their interactions and contributions would potentially illustrate a quintessential paradox of virtuality: the simultaneously liberating and dubious character of identity in virtuality. The conscious acceptance of this paradox on the part of the user, along with a concerted embrace of that phenomenon begets a carnivalesque discursive space in which, much like agonism, the debasing of certainty in identity (or rather the debasing of the illusion of that certainty) allows for the greatest diversity of language games and proliferation of immanent democratic interaction.

This element of the carnivalesque in discourse also evokes the way that Gilles Deleuze has described the critique as an event that requires an act of becoming. Participants in a carnivalesque discourse do not 'look back' upon an event in order to interact, but constitute the event of which they speak. The relativism of the carnivalesque enacts a social turbulence that represents the essence of all events and the ensuing necessity of its participants to be 'present' within it. In other words, the carnivalesque discourse represents the circumstance of a becoming—an event that lacks historical precedence or inherent political structure, because it exists solely in the contemporaneous experience of polyglossia. Thus, the carnivalesque requires site-specific identities to manifest and respond tactically and flexibly. This is in stark opposition to the value of precedence in the aforementioned 'artist-academic language game', demonstrated in its specialized and historically determined vocabulary and tone. The specificity

of such a language game allows for little experimentation. A misspelt name of a historical figure or an incorrect word choice in the description of an artwork, though small in their 'textual scale' fall outside the rules of the game and produce discursive obstacles. On the other hand, while the amount of negations may increase in a theatrical envisioning of a virtual critique, due to the breadth of expressions that the performative encompasses, the consensual abolition of convention among critique members also creates a language game defined by experimentation. As such, it is a language game that encompasses nearly all conceivable rules and moves, thereby dramatically decreasing the frequency of obstacles in the discourse.

A last consideration for future iterations of the *CrossTalk* exhibition model addresses the role of templates in new media and networked communication. While the use of templates in digital documents and interfaces is pervasive in contemporary networked communication practices, there is also a conceptual dimension of the template that extends beyond the consistent blank input box of an e-mail client or a predetermined set of available typographic characters. The template is a conceptual trope that signifies a foundational form for customization by the user. And as such, it could also be argued that the concept of the template is now essential to the social construction of democracy and inclusivity in networked communication practices and their viable use and application on the scale of a networked public sphere. Templates enable and empower users by simplifying the observation and execution of protocols. Accordingly, graphical templates

contribute to a 'templative' experience of the Net in general. This can essentially be described as the emergence of a consistent lexicon of web design. It is a standardization of design elements, in which websites limit the complexity of their features and layout to comply with a lowest common denominator of interface design that is generally accepted by users to be ubiquitous. This templative lexicon of interface design quickens the reading of information, and also produces iconological forms associated with the navigation of websites and software applications. The propagation of this lexicon arguably allows for faster response and content generation by reducing technical learning curves; aiding in the shrinkage of what could be termed critical gaps in ~~new~~ media literacy for a large number of potential users of virtual exhibitions.

Disparate levels of ~~new~~ media literacy undoubtedly affect the reception of virtual exhibitions in terms of accessibility and social perceptions of exclusion through the required level of technical knowledge. However, media literacy can only be enriched through engaging with the technology in question, through experiential learning processes of trial and error. This is also akin to the call-to-action outlined in the theoretical tenets of net.cromancy, which claim that net art curators can only delimit the capacities of networked art and exhibition practices through diligent engagement and exploration of virtuality.

Considering then that templates signify an emerging visual and conceptual framework for understanding mass protocols of networked

communication practices, the net.cromantic exhibition should strive to incorporate templates in both a practical and critical capacity. In an exhibition model like *CrossTalk*, the use of templates is apt for the design of the virtual critique interface as a means to simplify its protocols and empower its users. And, while it must be said that the message board application used in *CrossTalk* incorporates the concept of templates already through the use of a consistent dialog box, menu options, emoticons and so on, it is also quite complex when compared to the posting interfaces of *Facebook*, *MySpace* or *Twitter*, which essentially offer a single input-field for text and a button to submit.

Taking cues from the success of these templative designs, future iterations of the virtual critique interface should be mimetic of popular communication-based interfaces such as social media websites. The simplicity of these interfaces conceals the true array of options available to the user, garnering and facilitating interaction between larger, diverse populations of media literacy. Although only a few users of *CrossTalk* specifically voiced concern about the difficulty of navigating the interface, it should be assumed that there were equally as many users who experienced difficulty and did not take the time to provide such feedback. Of those who did voice that the interface was hindering, complaints were unanimously centered on the abundance of menu options and textual information. This abundance of possible navigational paths and permutations was received as visually and operationally overwhelming. And, while this aspect of the interface's design

could be seen in one light to amplify the indeterminacy of the critique, thus empowering critique participants, the *mélange* of features and texts actually decreased the immediacy of the critique experience. For users who were intimidated by the wealth of possibilities, this indeterminacy threatened to shut down communication completely. This phenomenon advocates that the use of templates has a larger social and political function—to provide limitations through ubiquitous designs structures. And, that in the absence of a veritable hierarchy of access and control in the critique templates serve to establish quintessential rules for the playing of a language game.

While it is hard to say how this idea of templative experience would translate into physical display spaces like galleries or museums— it is easier to imagine this translating to a virtual exhibition model. Perhaps the most congruent translation would be an exhibition model that is digitally acquired by the curator and utilized like an open-source piece of software— downloaded, edited and redistributed on the Net. This software could offer a basic exhibition layout—a graphic template—as well as a predetermined menu of customizable features to create a user-interface—a procedural template. While these delimitations may seem to infer a cookie-cutter methodology of virtual exhibition making, it is in fact the delimiting protocol of the template that holds liberating potential—standardization makes 'openness' possible (Galloway 142). The means to accomplish this openness would also be present in the open-source status of the exhibition software; like any other open-source model, its code would be editable, reproducible and

distributed. Given the proper programming knowledge, the template could be renovated and redistributed in countless permutations for others to use or develop further. Over time and, of course, considerate dissemination of the software, the model's template would become a recognizable visual and procedural scheme.

The sociopolitical implications of templates also can and must be expanded to consider how the exhibition functions as a template in itself for viewers/users to engage in aesthetic experiences. A net.cromantic exhibition constructs a particular type of aesthetic experience within networked art and communication that is conditional, operational, discursive and agonistic. The repeated implementation of net.cromancy as a curatorial methodology would likely begin to ascribe these attributes to a more general understanding of networked art and communication that effectively become the terms of engagement for the user. As an exhibition template, net.cromancy potentially functions as a pedagogical tool for the curator to create recognition and accessibility within user-experiences of net art and virtual exhibitions. While contestable as a pan-curatorial issue, the need for pedagogy within ~~new~~ media art curation is an immediate and ongoing concern. ~~New~~ media curators and artists alike are often necessitated to educate their audiences and project collaborators, whether by intentional or unconscious instances of technology and commodity fetishism. The lack of awareness in both publics about the ideological challenges and practical realities of displaying and disseminating ~~new~~ media art not only signals an educational gap between

artists and art institutions, it again evokes Walter Benjamin's critique that society is failing to understand and therefore adapt to the rapidity of its own technological progress. In particular, over two decades have passed since the advent of Internet art, and yet the critical issues of its presentation and contextualization are still largely misunderstood both in and outside the context of the art world. Can the idea of templative experience in virtual exhibitions provide a point of access for curator and casual user alike to better understand the network as both a medium and a sociological model, which depending on its (re)presentation has political implications?

Specifically in terms of net.cromancy, which strives to venerate the social and critical potential of virtual exhibitions, templative exhibition models present an opportunity for broader communities of users to engage. Despite their respective level of technical acuity, templates enable users to create and contribute at a foundational level, and at the same time learn to recognize patterns and rehearse procedures essential to a fuller understanding of networked communication and virtual interaction. This line of thought returns to the civic obligation of net art curators (discussed in subsection five) to develop methods that acknowledge and include these broader communities of users. It is only through this acknowledgement, along with the cultivation of users—not of a particular kind, but a diverse range—who are enabled through conscious design strategies and conceptual frameworks of the exhibition model to critically participate, that an essential

social understanding of the radical and progressive potential within experiences of networked art and communication is made possible.

This task again is affinitive to the study of necromancy in which the divination of the necromancer, attained through non-physical, nomadic forms of communication, also constitutes a method of futurity. Divination affords the necromancer an extension of the self through time and space, beyond the limitations of physical experience and beyond the categorizations of the past, present and future. All experience breaks down into a continuity that elucidates the underpinnings of perception and understanding. If used as a metaphor for the objective of net.cromancy, this idea of extension and futurity implies the simultaneous pursuit of an underlying ontological project—one that seeks to delineate the position of virtual exhibitions within the larger framework of human experience. That is to say that the study of net.cromancy is not just the work of the curator to revive and even innovate virtual exhibition practice, but also (and perhaps more so) to make the concerted effort to expand the definition of what it means to virtually exhibit acts of cultural production. In the exploration of its distributed dynamics and the delimiting of its unique phenomenological characteristics, the concept of virtual exhibition takes on new life—as an analog for complex and largely immaterial social processes that cannot be easily mapped or analyzed through physical congregation and interaction alone. In viewing net art curation as a necessary, investigational trajectory in cultural authorship and social research, practitioners of net.cromancy enable virtual exhibitions to

transgress their typical discourses of art and art history, and begin to inform broader questions within language, communication and the relational mechanisms that construct our very concepts of the social and the political.

Works cited for Section Two

- Deleuze, Gilles. *Negotiations 1972-1990*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. Print.
- Derrida, Jacques. (1974) *Of Grammatology*. Corrected edition. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, trans. Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976. Print
- Deutsche, Rosalyn. "Agoraphobia." *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996. 269-327. Print.
- Galloway, Alexander. *Protocol*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004. Print.
- Hall, Stuart. "Encoding/decoding." *Culture, Media, Language*. Ed. Stuart Hall et al. New York: Routledge, 1980. 128-138. Print.
- Krysia, Joasia. "Introduction" *Curating Immateriality: The Work of the Curator in the Age of Network Systems*. Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2006. 7-25. Print.
- Liotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Geoffe Bennington & Brian Massumi, trans. Theory and History of Literature, Vol. 10. University of Minnesota Press, 1989. Print.
- Massumi, Brian. "On Critique." *Inflexions*, Vol. 4: Transversal Fields of Experience, December 2010. 337-340. Print.
- Mauws, Michael K. and Nelson Phillips. "Understanding Language Games." *Organization Science*, Vol. 6, No. 3, May/June, 1995. 322-334. Print.
- Meyer, James. "The Functional Site; or, The Transformation of Site-Specificity." *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art*. Erika Suderberg, ed. University of Minnesota Press, 2000. 23-37. Print.

Appendix A: CrossTalk Screenshots

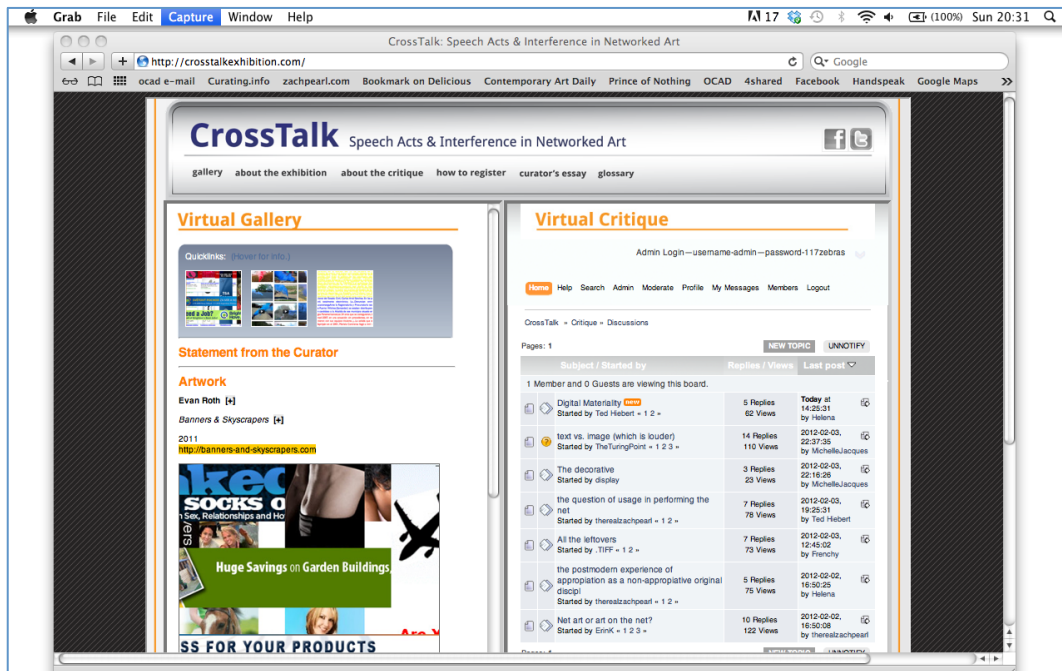


Figure 1. General screenshot of the exhibition homepage. The 'virtual critique' frame shows the list of discussion threads or 'topics'.

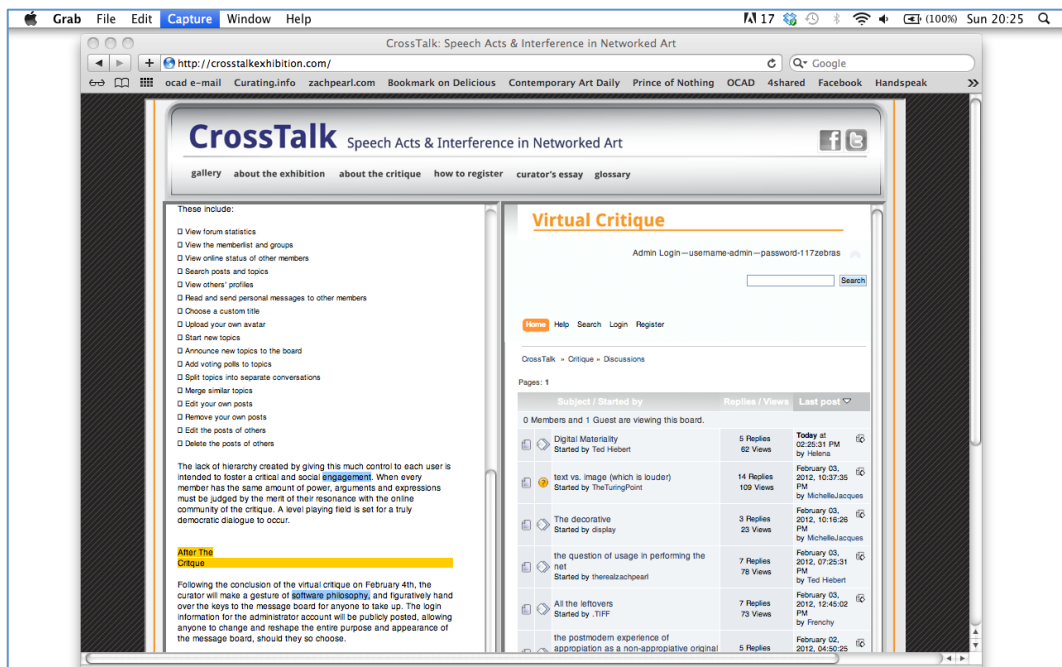


Figure 2. View of the 'About the Critique' page, including the list of permissions for registered users in the left hand frame, and a view of the list of discussion threads in the virtual critique in the right hand frame.

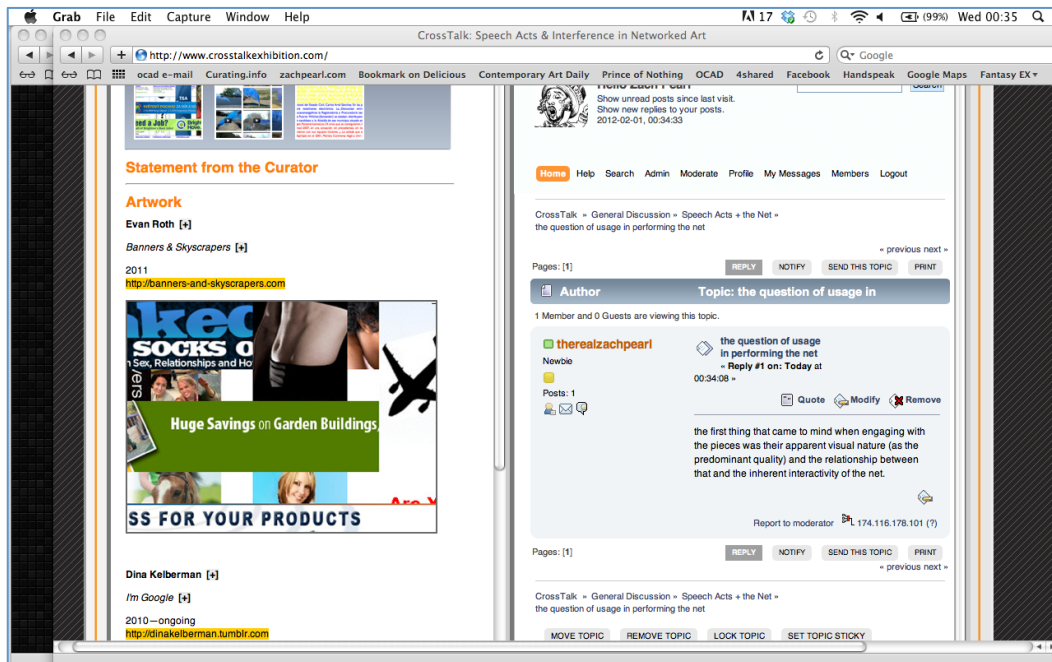


Figure 3. First post of the message board by *therealzachpearl* in the right hand frame.



Figure 4. Example of navigating the site, including 'About the Exhibition' page in the left hand frame, the discussion thread *text vs. image (which is louder)* in the right hand frame, a zoomed-out version of Cynthia Lawson Jaramillo's *Tricolor v.2007 [Redux]* and the 'pop-out' glossary, showing the definition for "net art".



Figure 5. View of the account profile for user *therealzachpearl* in the 'virtual critique' frame, and Evan Roth's bio in the 'virtual gallery' frame.



Figure 6. View of the account profile for *therealzachpearl* along with Evan Roth's *Banners & Skyscrapers* running in a scaled-down window. The curator initially believed that therealzachpearl may in fact have been Roth, creating an appropriated identity for the critique as yet another work within his practice.

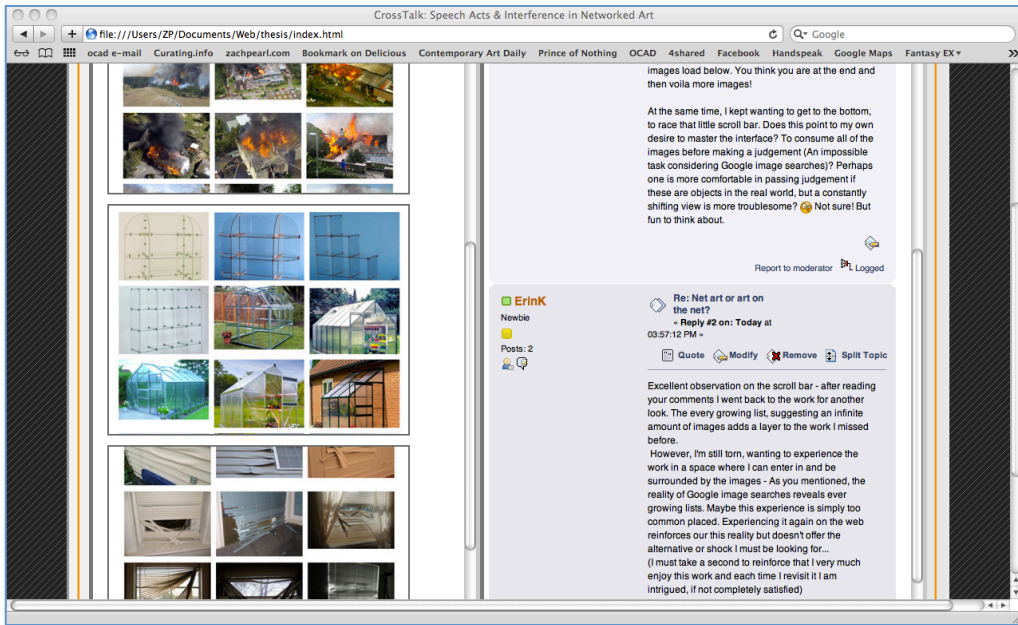


Figure 7. A view of 'stills' from Dina Kelberman's *I'm Google* in the left hand frame of the 'virtual gallery' and an excerpt from *Net art or art on the net?* discussing the desire to see Kelberman's piece as an object in a physical space.

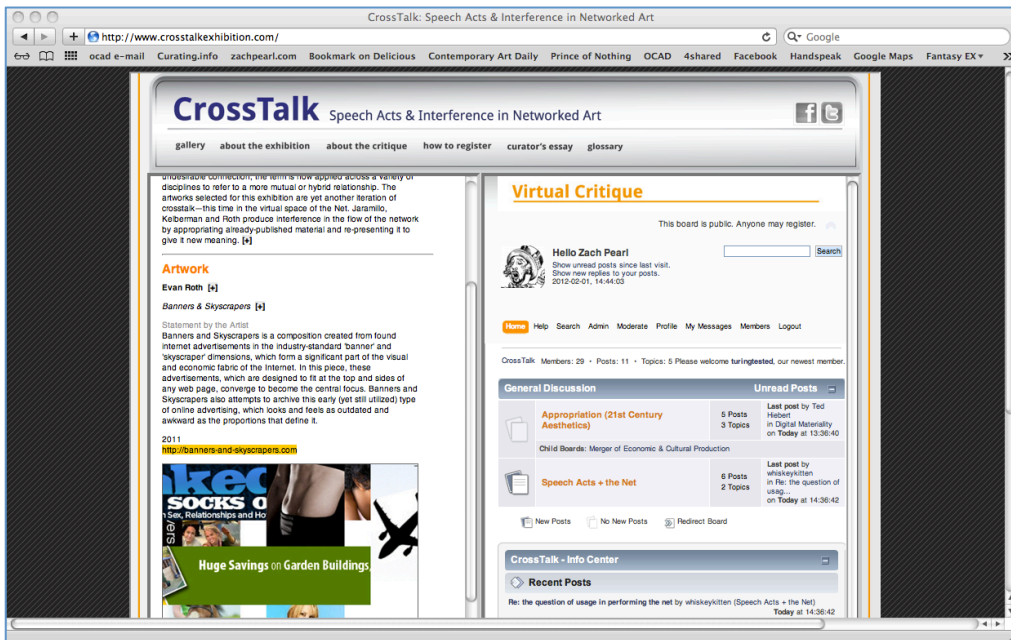


Figure 8. Record of the disappearance of the category descriptions on the message board in the right hand frame. This occurred before the curator collapsed the board into the single category, and was done by an unknown user.



Figure 9. View of Dina Kelberman's *I'm Google* on the left hand side, and an excerpt from *Net art or art on the net?* on the right. In the excerpt, user Jouissance contemplates the intention of Kelberman's piece as a purposeful frustration of the desire to see all the images at once.

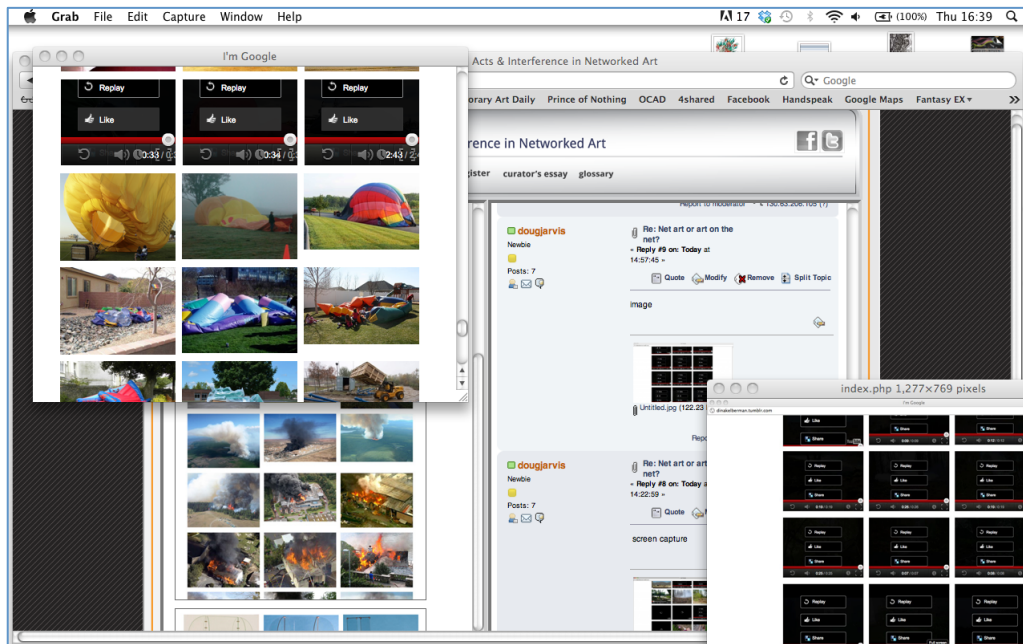


Figure 10. Another view of Dina Kelberman's *I'm Google* while also viewing a post by user doujarvis in which he posts a screen capture of the work to comment on the image created by the grid of already-played YouTube videos.

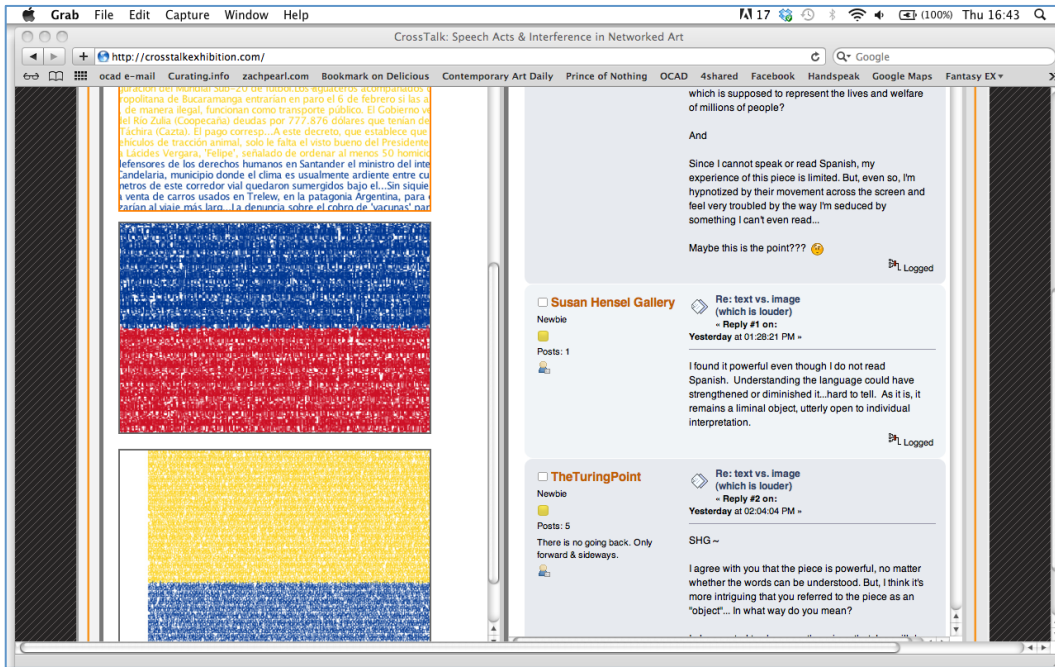


Figure 11. View of 'stills' of Cynthia Lawson Jaramillo's *Tricolor v.2007 [Redux]* in the left hand frame and the beginning posts of the text vs. image thread, which discusses issues of power in language.

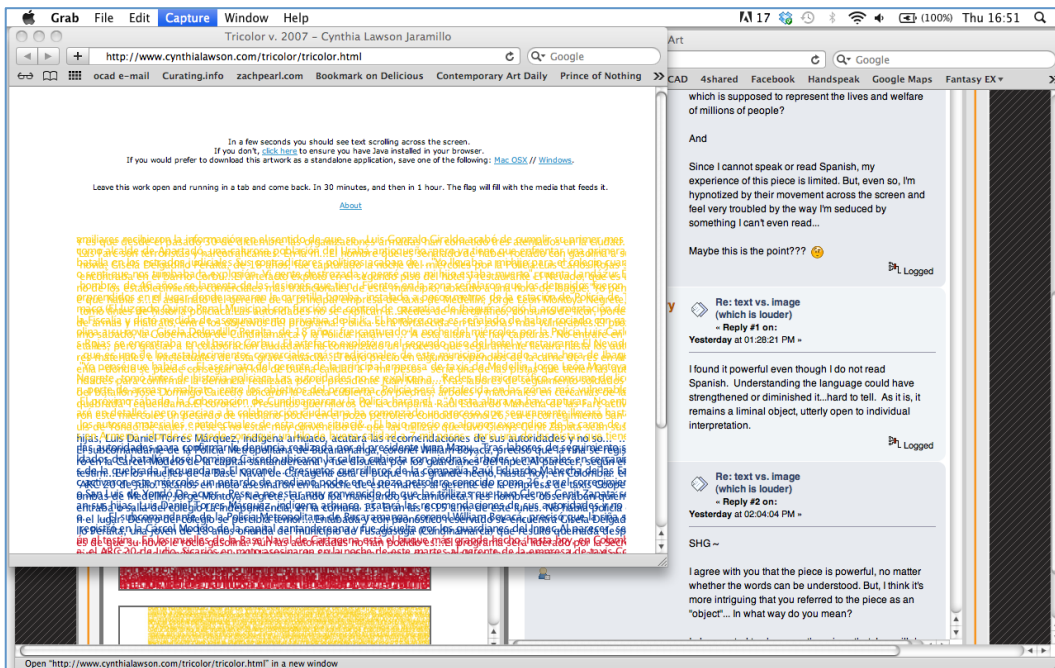


Figure 12. Same view as above, also showing *Tricolor v.2007 [Redux]* in a new window.

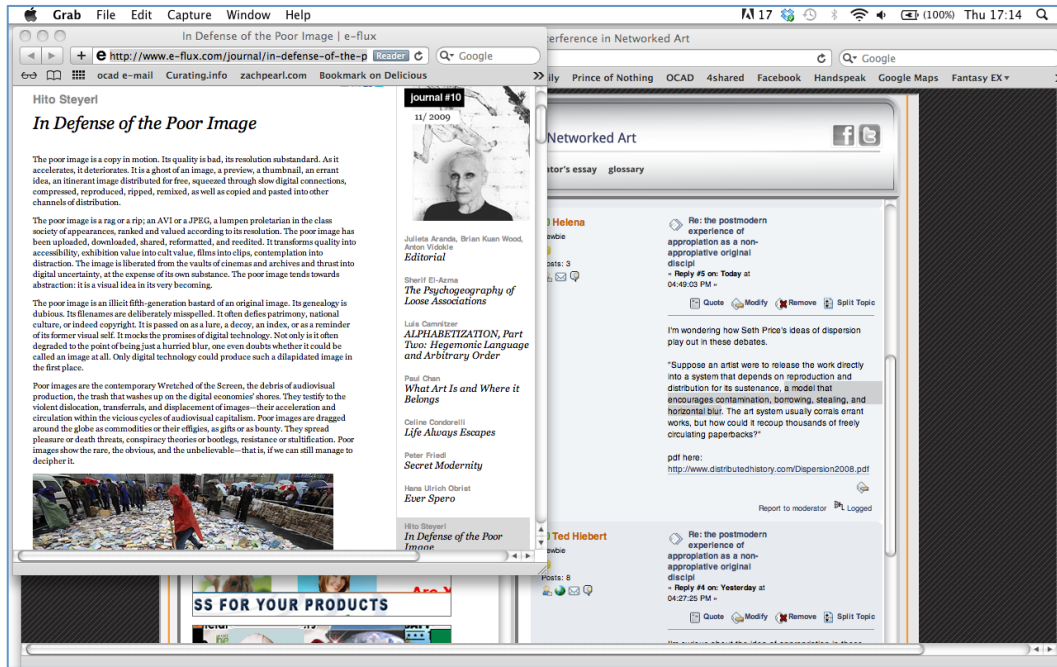


Figure 13. View of user Helena's post in *the postmodern experience...* that includes a link to a E-Flux article by Hito Steyeri, and the actual article in a new window.

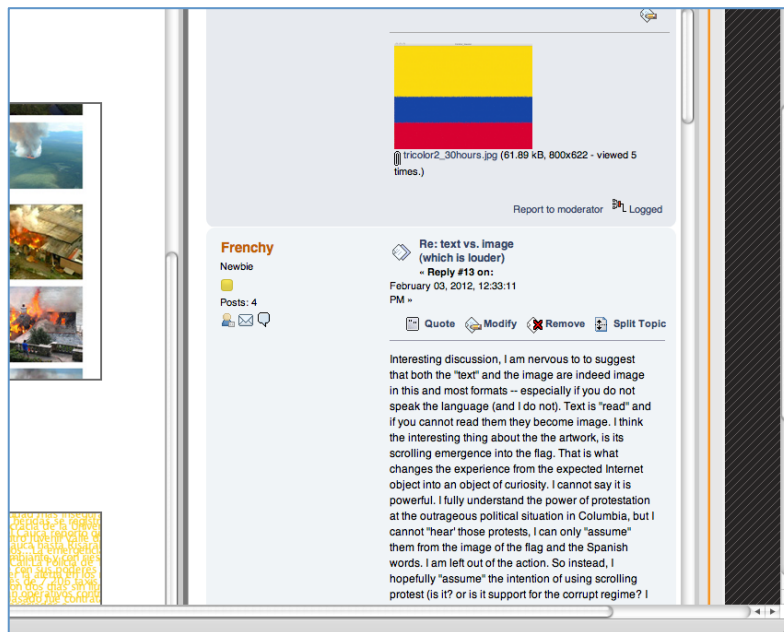


Figure 14. Example of the buttons and features available to each user when viewing a post in the virtual critique.

Appendix B: CrossTalk Transcripts

SubContents

B.1	<i>the question of usage in performing the net</i>	111
B.2	<i>the postmodern experience of appropriation as a non-appropriative original disciple [sic]</i>	117
B.3	<i>text vs. image (which is louder)</i>	121
B.4	<i>Net art or art on the net?</i>	130
B.5	<i>Digital Materiality</i>	141
B.6	<i>All the leftovers</i>	150
B.7	<i>The decorative</i>	155

Statements of interest in the transcripts are color-coded according to the following system of labeling and notation:

- general note
- rhetorical device
- critique about the work/exhibition
- comment about net art/virtuality
- direct address/naming
- cohesion
- obstacle/negation

Each color-coded comment is accompanied by a footnote. The quality of the writing in the notes is casual, immediate and exploratory. They make no attempt to be objective, or even comprehensible at times. Still they are a valuable index of the research process and should be interpreted as a kind of 'field note' that communicates the first impressions of an evaluative process.

Appendix B.1

Critique => Discussions =>

the question of usage in performing the net

Topic started by: [therealzachpearl](#) on 2012-02-01, 00:34:08

Participants: 5 / (in order of posts) therealzachpearl, whiskeykitten, dougjarvis, MichelleJacques, Frenchy & Ted Hiebert

Posts: 8 / Cohesions: 5 / Negations: 1

Rhetorical Currencies: (11)

apparent
culture/culture of speed
engage/engaging/engagement/terms of engagement
entity
form(s)/forming/aesthetic form/considered form/mashup of forms
malaise
the net
performance/performing
project(s)
relation/relationship
work(s)/the work(s)

Title: **the question of usage in performing the net**

Post by: [therealzachpearl](#) on 2012-02-01, **00:34:08**

the first thing that came to mind when **engaging**¹ with **the pieces** was their **apparent**² visual nature (as the predominant quality)³ and the **relationship** between that and the **inherent interactivity**⁵ of **the net**⁴.

+++++

[1] "engage/engaging/engagement" is used a lot in this thread as the preferred synonym for viewing the works—sign of media-literate users or a rhetorical mimicry of the text already used by the curator? Either way it circulates like verbal currency which brings into question the value of the actual etymological value of the word versus its cultural value and temporally specific one in the context of this conversation. [2] What is meant here by "apparent"? Apparent can also connote something palpable or tangible, so this could be an unconscious observation of the materiality (materiality 2.0) that is discussed in Ted's thread. [3] So net art is still plagued by the dominance of it being a visual art. This is undeniable. Do people suppose it to be anything different—as technology and the rest of the world is still governed by visual sensory perception? If so, this is a larger sociological issue. —Still, a valid challenge to my own statements of truly convergent media experiences. [4] The relationship between the visuality of the net with its inherent interactivity?? Well, I suppose that they do sustain one another, as once again, it's

mostly a visually interactive world as well. But, the net is potentially interactive beyond visibility if sound —text to speech and such—it utilized...it can still be a nomadic experience.

[5] This appears in the curator's essay—establishing a vernacular for the discourse.

+++++

Title: **Re: the question of usage in performing the net**

Post by: **whiskeykitten** on 2012-02-01, **14:36:42**

I thought the same thing¹...I also enjoy this idea of "performing the net"² as noted in your subject heading³...

The NET.... what the heck is it?⁴ More and more it seems to be its own **entity**,⁵ a growing, expanding thing that has some sort of informed intelligence. We **engage** with its programmed responses⁶ (thinking Google algorithms here for example)⁷ but this is ultimately like having a conversation with any other person⁸... it has a mind of its own in how it will respond to us.

I like how these **works** point out **the Net's apparent relationships**, ways of working, **aesthetic forms** etc.⁹ By drawing our attention to these aspects of **the Net**, makes me think it is more human than technology. :)¹⁰

+++++

[1] Cohesion [2] Restating the initial utterance as a way to ensure what follows is taken as relating directly to the first comment [3] Beyond just acknowledging *therealzachpearl*—holding accountable for what's been stated—interesting tactic for it not helping to mount a criticism. [4] Generic query. 'Opening up' subject matter—most likely for own trajectory in the discourse. [5] This idea of "entity" is mentioned a few more times in this thread—the preoccupation of identifying or discerning if the Net constitutes a form of intelligence, which seems to be more of a psychological mechanism of the human brain than an ontological query into artificial intelligence. [6] Engaging with programmed responses is an interesting idea in its empirical nature—the endless search for data [7] casual nature of phrasing with parentheses makes it sound more conversational—alluring. [8] It is really? or have we started to superimpose views of interface and networked communication on human interaction? [9] Are these relationships apparent until they are deconstructed by artistic practice? "The net's apparent relationships" signifies that there is an understanding of the Net from a macro-micro perspective, which is interesting but still polar/binary in thought. [10] used to lessen the seriousness of the previous statement. Too tangential?

+++++

Title: **Re: the question of usage in performing the net**

Post by: **dougjarvis** on 2012-02-02, **15:04:25**

I keep thinking that what this **project** is about is not what the three artists **works** are doing necessarily, but what we are all **forming** through¹ the variety of **terms of engagement** with the event in general².

I want to think that³ the potential for this **project** lies in the **terrain**⁵ that

we make up, not what it represents⁴. I can't get past the fact that⁶ this chat forum is as much an ingredient in **the work**, if not more, than⁸ the vitamins⁷ we have ingested in the left.

++++
[1] This totally disregards the statements made already and actually starts a whole new topic...not even a subtopic of what was said before... [2] expands conversation into the social and also begs the question: what are the possible terms, e.g. how can different forms of engagement be distinguished and categorized? [3] implies distrust or skepticism that the event/exhibition won't fulfill his expectations [4] relational aesthetics [5] reference to curator's essay? [land]scape? [6] Ambiguous [7] food metaphor is interesting —information=ideas of food? nutrition? digestion? etc. [8] First mention of crosstalk effect—not sure if it's forced or not...
++++

Title: **Re: the question of usage in performing the net**
Post by: **whiskeykitten** on 2012-02-02, **20:24:47**

I hear you doug!¹

And to further this idea²... isn't this also what we do in galleries? Isn't it just a different set of rules or **engagements** that we negotiate?³ These expectations are driven in part from history but also physical experience as well (just like **these works**⁴) which in turn change our interpretations of **the work**⁴.

++++
[1] Cohesion [2] transition [3] Comparison of negotiation in gallery space to negotiation of virtual space. Are they the same in sociopolitical terms? Do they require the same navigation? Primary difference would be the bourgeois sensibility of gallery behaviours. Are net behaviours conditioned culturally at this point, or is this something being established now that will become convention? [4] Here the use of the word "work" starts to function both as a rhetorical device to focus the discourse, but also appears to take on a larger connotation as the pursuit of creation and manifestation in addition the individual pieces.
++++

Title: **Re: the question of usage in performing the net**
Post by: **MichelleJacques** on 2012-02-02, **23:01:15**

Whiskeykitten¹ - thanks for pointing out sense of **the net** as being its own **entity**². I was trying to put my finger on the strange feeling I have been getting from looking at these **projects**³, in which the expected vocabulary of **the internet**⁴ is communicated to me in unexpected configurations, as though the little person inside my laptop decided to shuffle around all the information just to mess with my head⁵.

+++++
[1] Directly addressing—not a common way, so far in the analysis, to start a comment. But, one very much in the agonistic spirit. [2] Cohesion—being grateful for an enhanced perspective (although this feels like a rhetorical device as well—a stepping stone into her own statement, perhaps) [3] This is a particular use of colloquial/more conversational language—use of simple verbs and adjectives: strange, looking, feeling [4] Good linkage here to the concept of the exhibition through the use of the word "vocabulary". The more important thing to ask is if this was done consciously or not? It could be a way to focus the conversation through the curator's terms, or it could be an unfettered use of the word which would help to prove my thesis that the Internet functions as a language. [5] anthropomorphism and narrative
+++++

Title: **Re: the question of usage in performing the net**
Post by: **Frenchy** on 2012-02-03, **13:03:43**

I guess¹ I am somewhat¹ disappointed in the lack I feel somehow on a strong conceptual center to **these works**². They are all somewhat¹ derivative, I have seen similar **works** both in the real world and on the internet³. They seem to be observing and commenting on the world, which is good⁴, but with a sort of banality I find disturbing.
It's probably not their fault, but⁵ the **malaise** of the **culture** . . .

+++++
[1] vacillation—to 'soften the blow' of what she is about to say? [2] I guess this warrants the question: how conceptually rich can an artwork be in which the content is always uncertain and contingent on other systems of production? [3] Implying that the works are not even utilizing their 'netness' to their full potential [4] affirmation—this is insurance that she won't be totally attacked by those who have already expressed their like for the works [5] Shifting the blame—making the artworks indirect targets of her critique—its sounds like sympathy, but is also back-handed. [6] This relates to Johann Drucker—>complicity with the terms of the market.
+++++

Title: **Re: the question of usage in performing the net**
Post by: **dougjarvis** on 2012-02-03, **16:21:52**

Frenchy¹, you bring up a good point². **The works** themselves all use tools of the internet, applications and devices that we use to navigate the collective database. However, are **the works** that Zach⁴ has chosen to present in this forum doing much more than animate otherwise static files? Are **the works** changing the way that **the 'web'** functions in its own right?³

Roths work is still loading the same 627 advertisements⁵. Is there a way for us, as an audience, to dynamically change those ads?

As I have touched on in other posts, the **project** for me⁶ is more about

Zachs⁴ proposal for a group of art practitioners to create interference around and through a discussion of **the works**. In this way⁸ the 3 **projects** are departure points for the development of a **work⁷ engaging** with questions of art and technology.

It is hard to say, at this stage⁹, whether his initiation has taken any **considered form**, whether the view, reply, discuss format of this **project** has lead to any transformation of thinking around the current state of net-art¹⁰.

++++++
[1] Second direct address [2] Cohesion—vague adj. [3] Is this a critique of the works or of the lack of technological sophistication in them? It sounds like Doug wants them to be something else—not statements, but interfaces or programs in their own right. They are web art, not software art. [4] Why bring me, by name, into the conversation? This does demonstrate, however, the breakdown of formal conventions of art experiences such as addressing the curator by full name or surname, or even referring to them by name at all. [5] Ennui. [6] Fluffing himself up and also building credibility. [7] Again, describing the exhibition as an open work/relational aesthetics piece—emphasizing discussion/discursive dimension of creating the work [8] a kind of staging—creates a hypothetical tense in which the speaker again evades direct interrogation or opposition [9] Non-committal phrasing [10] First real critique of the exhibition—interesting that it's a conceptual critique too and not a formal/visual.

++++++

Title: **Re: the question of usage in performing the net**
Post by: **Ted Hiebert** on 2012-02-03, **19:25:31**

I think you're on to something here Doug. There seems to be a moment when the romance of remix gets caught in the mud, so to speak -- when content isn't pushed fast enough to keep us enthralled with the **mashup of form** -- or when the speed of **the regular web** outpaces that of the critique. When Frenchy talks of the **malaise of culture**, I take this as a gesture towards the digital dialectic of distraction and boredom, which seem to be the challenges faced by any sort of **project** that aspires towards **performance** (especially online). It seems to matter a lot where **these works** situate themselves in **relation** to the **novelty of form** -- the danger of which is that when **forms** become stable, **the net** seems to generally just move on. I think it's actually an interesting **relationship** -- though replete with the ironies of a slow critique of a **culture of speed**.

++++++
[1] Cohesion [2] In combination with the direct address to Doug makes me wonder why the conversation stopped here. Does solidarity beginning to form between these two speakers inhibit further discussion? [3] Essentially, calling the project romanticist or idealist [4] Admission of an aphorism—signals that the flexibility of the aphorism already breeds too many connotations to accurately describe what he is actually getting at. [5] He's referencing Manovich here, I think—the comparison between DJing and net art. [6] Frenchy has been the most directly addressed. This insinuates her commentary was the most provocative/inflammatory/productive. [7] Seems to be rising as the *currency* of the conversation versus "work" earlier in the thread. [8] Performance ironically re-enters here in the last comment. Was it a red herring for what actually

transpired? And also, Ted is right to point out the behavioural challenges of doing an exhibition like this. Media-convergence has made society generally less attentive and more accepting of "multi-tasking". [9] This ties into where I'm going with my thesis document—that newness played a large part in the success of net.art and the public is saying: now what? The shininess of net art has faded. [10] Seems to be padding himself here against my own objections to his comments. [11] This relates to Hassan's *temporality of democracy*.

+++++

Appendix B.2

Critique => Discussions =>

the postmodern experience of appropriation as a non-appropriative original discipl

Topic started by: [therealzachpearl](#) on 2012-02-01, 00:50:29

Participants: 5 / (in order) therealzachpearl, Jouissance, TheTuringPoint, Ted Hiebert, Helena

Posts: 6 / Most active: Helena/ Cohesions: 0 / Negations: 1

Rhetorical Currencies: (7)

appropriation/non-appropriative
circulating/circulation/re-circulation
deal(s)
idea
materiality/materialize(s)
network(s)
novel

Title: **the postmodern experience of appropriation as a non-appropriative original discipl**

Post by: [therealzachpearl](#) on 2012-02-01, **00:50:29**

I think¹ the terms of engagement are different, to talk about **appropriation** is to dismiss the experience of web **recirculation** as an autonomous aura-less flux², is there even such a thing as a net generated **materiality**? not in terms of code or storage but in terms of it being produced in the **network**?³

+++++
[1] Establishing personal/subjective perspective. [2] Critique of curator's thesis. [3] Interesting, because this is where my thesis started in the Summer—how does the productive aspect of networked interaction (operational dimension and the immaterial labour of that) get to a material thing?

+++++

Title: **Re: the postmodern experience of appropriation as a non-appropriative original discipl**

Post by: [Jouissance](#) on 2012-02-01, **12:29:10**

re: **materiality of networks**¹

There's a nice **game** described in a Bruce Sterling **novel** ('Distraction'² maybe) that **deals** with just this question, and that **materializes** the net³ (or **networks** more generally, I suppose)⁴ as a kind of pivot point between nonlinear relations and goal-directed behaviours⁵

++++
[1] Reinstating, but also manipulating therealzachpearl's statement into what Jouissance wants to talk about. Could this be called a *transfiguration of the discourse*? [2] The idea of games, and also the idea that science fiction writing often acts as prophecy for technological innovations to come. [3] Materializing not just the experience of networks but the Net as a structure—singular entity. ...A little naive, perhaps. [4] Retreat...buffering. [5] I have no idea what is mean by "pivot point" here.

Title: **Re: the postmodern experience of appropriation as a non-appropriative original discipl**

Post by: **TheTuringPoint** on 2012-02-01, **12:46:50**

Please post a link to that **novel**¹, if you can find one². Sounds amazing! :D³

++++
[1] First (and maybe only) time that the critique moves toward a social networking function. I like this blurring, but by far the other participants are not responsive and feel obligated to keep the conversation focused on the art rather than general interaction in virtual terms. [2] Indirect address to Jouissance. [3] Colloquial. Reinforcement (fluffing???)

Title: **Re: the postmodern experience of appropriation as a non-appropriative original discipl**

Post by: **Ted Hiebert** on 2012-02-01, **16:27:25**

I'm curious about the **idea of appropriation** in these works -- but from an inverted perspective¹. It seems old fashioned to me to make too big of a **deal of the idea** that the content for these projects is harvested from elsewhere². However, the **idea** that the boundary between **appropriation** and originality (or authenticity) is collapsed in some way by these works is fascinating³. That's what I take to be the **provocation of the topic subject, no?**⁴ The **idea** of an "authentic" act of **appropriation** -- authenticity here qualified in terms of artistic purpose⁵ I suppose?

Is this a **revival of the myth of artistic intention as a new mediator**⁶ of the postmodern authentic?⁷

+++++
[1] Seems to be an inversion targeted towards therealzachpearl. [2] Critique of curator's thesis—antiquated. [3] This is more where I was going—work on rephrasing my argument for future app. [4] Redirect to the topic title. Ted seems to be obsessed with following the titles of the topics and categories of the board throughout all of his posts. Is he trying to instate order or is he just anal when it comes to taxonomies?? Could be generational too.... [5] I think this has been a concomitant factor in the creation of art for all of art history, whether determined by the artist or the person historicizing the practice. [6] Relates to net.cromancy. It's a revival of more than virtual exhibitions, but more so the tenacity or criticality of mediations. Mediation is always present in the media arts. How do we take advantage in a productive dimension? [7] He doesn't want to assert...leaving his stance open through punctuation. Also referencing—academic tone.
+++++

Title: **Re: the postmodern experience of appropriation as a non-appropriative original discipl**
Post by: **Helena** on 2012-02-02, **16:49:03**

I'm wondering¹ how Seth Price's **ideas** of dispersion² play out in these debates.

"³Suppose an artist were to **release the work directly into a system that depends on reproduction and distribution for its sustenance, a model that encourages contamination, borrowing, stealing, and horizontal blur**⁴. The art system usually corrals errant works, but how could it recoup thousands of freely **circulating** paperbacks?"³

pdf here⁵: <http://www.distributedhistory.com/Dispersion2008.pdf>

+++++
[1] Generic introductory device. [2] Bringing in an actual theory, and one that could still be of use in the way that I'm talking about software curating. [3] How is quoting the most 'objective' of rhetorical practices? [4] I like the hacktivism inherent in this statement. [5] Pedagogical. The link by itself would a sufficient prompt.
+++++

Title: **Re: the postmodern experience of appropriation as a non-appropriative original discipl**
Post by: **Helena** on 2012-02-02, **16:50:25**

or¹ Hito Steyerl's **celebration of the poor image**²:

<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/>

+++++
[1] Continuation of previous post—no capitalization, no reiteration. [2] I see this as connecting

to larger ideas of failure that have been spread throughout the discussion threads.

+++++

Appendix B.3

Critique => Discussions =>

text vs. image (which is louder)

Topic started by: [TheTuringPoint](#) on 2012-02-01, 12:44:14

Participants: 9 / (in order) TheTuringPoint, Susan Hensel Gallery, whiskeykitten, dougjarvis, Ted Hiebert, therealzachpearl, RichardChesler, Frenchy, MichelleJacques

Posts: 15 / Most active: TheTuringPoint / Cohesions: 5 / Obstacles: 1

Rhetorical currencies: (25)

act/action/acting/activated
begin/beginning
code(s)/the code
Columbia/Columbian/Columbianeity
emergence/emerged
general/generally/generalized
generic
image(s), the image
information/informative/information codes
language
object(s)/object-like/Internet object/object of curiosity
perform(s)/performance
piece/the piece/this piece
place
point/pointed/pointers/the point
power/powerful
read
Spanish
speak(s)
speech
start
story/stories/storytelling
text/text-like
time
troubled
words

Title: **text vs. image (which is louder)**

Post by: [TheTuringPoint](#) on 2012-02-01, **12:44:14**

I am wondering¹, in regards to Cynthia Lawson Jaramillo's piece [which is the more powerful² "speech act"³](#)? The **words** that are not her own, but are being compiled from many sources, or the **Colombian flag** which is

supposed to represent the lives and welfare of millions of people?

And⁴

Since I cannot **speak or read Spanish**, my experience of **this piece** is **limited**⁵. **But, even so**, I'm hypnotized by their movement across the screen and feel very **troubled** by the way I'm seduced by something I can't even read...⁶

Maybe this is **the point**???⁷ ??⁸

++++
[1] Posing question to forum rather than asserting an observation. On one hand, it is a very democratic way to begin a critique, but is it agonistic? [2] thinking about the language of the Net in emotional, visceral terms—how do we bring embodiment to every aspect of perceived reality? [3] Reference to show title/concept [4] Use of formatting—distinct break for "And" is like a pause and a punctuating device—has affective properties. [5] How is text image? (I think this is being asked from a more cultural than metaphysical perspective) [6] The seduction of the moving image and its ability to pacify the subject—Baudrillard. This the pitfall of new media art in many ways. But, it also raises questions about how entwined our perception of reality is with ideas of closure and maintaining an instinct to get to the end of things. [7] Bookending with another open query. [8] This translates to an emoticon on the board—confused face: 0_o
++++

Title: **Re: text vs. image (which is louder)**

Post by: **Susan Hensel Gallery** on 2012-02-01, **13:28:21**

I found it **powerful**¹ even though I do not **read Spanish**. **Understanding the language could have strengthened or diminished it...hard to tell**². As it is, it remains a **liminal object**³, **utterly open to individual interpretation**⁴.

++++
[1] positive critical statement—interesting that the theme of power emerges here...a very assertive adjective. [2] Implying that the piece may actually suffer in its native language from being too literal and not symbolic enough. [3] I like this way of speaking about net art—like the constant 'becoming' of an object, but not an object yet. [4] reinstating subjectivity and defending against direct critique of her own sentiments.
++++

Title: **Re: text vs. image (which is louder)**

Post by: **TheTuringPoint** on **2012-02-01, 14:04:04**

SHG ~¹

I agree with you that **the piece is powerful**, no matter whether **the words can be understood**². But, I think it's more intriguing that you referred to **the piece** as an **"object"**³... In what way do you mean?⁴

I also wanted to share another **piece**⁵ that Jaramillo's reminded me of. I stumbled across it sometime last year while surfing around:
<http://woj.com/polishness/queries/>

++++
[1] Direct address. The use of the tilde is interesting here. Etymologically it indicates a similarity between words or numbers. [2] Cohesion with reinstatement of power. [3] This concept of the Internet as an object is a wish-imagining of the virtual on a material level. [4] Direct question versus the pan-forum question in the initial post. [5] Hyperlink as gesture of engagement? Or, is it a showing-off of having experienced net art in another context?
++++

Title: **Re: text vs. image (which is louder)**
Post by: **whiskeykitten** on 2012-02-01, **14:26:50**

I found it interesting in **this piece** how the content is bounded by the white space that surrounds it, in a way² this makes it more **object-like**¹... and yet its inside is constantly being reconfigured. Quite different than framed 2D **objects** in the real world!

And yet... after some **time**, the **text** becomes **unreadable**, and again becomes more and more "**object**" like³ and less **text-like**.

When thinking about **text and object**, I can't help but **wonder**..⁴ where does the work **start and begin**?? At what point is the "**best**" time to engage with it?⁵ I have to say I like this confusion a lot⁶. :D⁷

++++
[1] This is a good point—mimics a modernist gallery—something that I purposely avoided in the design of the site. [2] Reticent to make a declaration on its objecthood. [3] Again, talking about text in material terms. [4] Reiteration—very pedagogical. This user is a facilitator. [5] Issues of "the end" again. [6] Admits that the work is troubling, but sees the merit in this. [7] Affirmation.
++++

Title: **Re: text vs. image (which is louder)**
Post by: **Ted Hiebert** on 2012-02-01, **17:18:48**

Great comments¹. Given that the **text** quickly becomes illegible (even if one **speaks** the **language**) would it be fair to say² that **this piece** is more "**act**" than "**speech**"? Is there a difference to be articulated here between how the work **performs** and what it might be saying?³ I'm tempted⁴ that the [sic] in the context of the discussion thread -- **Speech Acts** + the Net -- there is an instance in "Tricolor" that might be **generalized** into a larger

provocation⁵. Namely, that the net may be more a **place of "acting"** than it is of **speech**⁶. Not, **in other words**, a **place of information** but one of **performance**.

++++
[1] This is not really a cohesion—more of a whitewashing and segue into the conversation.
[2] Criticism in the form of a question. [3] More attractive due to its animation than its symbolic gesture. [4] Buffering. [5] Critiquing the structure of the critique—the pre-determined categories that I set up. [6] Alluding to activism here?
++++

Title: **Re: text vs. image (which is louder)**
Post by: **TheTuringPoint** on **2012-02-01, 18:20:58**

TH~

Do you think that¹ the internet is a **place** people see less of a division between **information** and **performance**², i.e. without clear boundaries, and that a tension is born from that?

I **read** on the 'about the critique' page that you're also an artist³. Do you deal with ideas like this in your own work?⁴

++++
[1] Direct address and question—no bookending with rhetoric here. [2] From here the idea of performance becomes the central thread in the discussion. This is ironic, considering that the thread started by therealzachpearl, supposedly centred around performance, barely mentions it. [3] Showing that the User has 'done their homework' in the exhibition. [4] Turning the critique subject matter into a personal realm. Aggressive maneuver.
++++_

Title: **Re: text vs. image (which is louder)**
Post by: **Ted Hiebert** on **2012-02-01, 18:27:52**

@TTP¹

Yes that's certainly a possibility² -- though I'm **curious**³ what would be at stake in the blurring of **information** and **performance**? Is **performance** the natural extension of **information online**⁴ -- knowledge waiting to be **activated** by a **dramatic body**⁵? Or perhaps also the opposite: participation online itself serving to lay down **information codes** that keep the digital dream evolving?⁶

In my own work I tend to think that **information** is a bit obsolete -- I like **stories more than data**⁷. **Not to say**⁸ that **stories** can't be **informative**, **just to suggest**⁸ that I'm **curious**³ about **what happens when the idea of information is troubled** a little bit⁹. I'm not generally an artist who works online though -- photography mostly -- though that's also certainly a medium with its own **codes of information**.

++++
[1] Direct address. [2] Cohesion. [3] Functions like "suggest" in his last post. [4] Ethically at stake? How does he mean this? [5] This is unclear to me. [6] Liking the poetics, but I think it's making light of a more serious issues, which is how the Internet functions as a form of escape on a individual and societal level. [7] Does not all data tell a story? [8] Soft-touch. [9] Myth of informational truth like Barthes' myth of photographic truth?

Title: **Re: text vs. image (which is louder)**
Post by: **TheTuringPoint** on 2012-02-02, **01:39:44**

I think you hit the nail on the head with the **story-over-information comment**¹. The vastness of it all (internet, that is) is a hard concept for people to grasp even now, **unless we give it some kind of story or narrative**. **Human beings like things that have beginnings and endings**². So, we are **storytelling** through the internet and maybe **storytelling into it our vision of how it should be and that is making some kind of performance necessary**³.

I think that's something in Evan Roth's **piece** that is attractive and also **frustrating**⁴. Looking at it again just now makes me feel like all those ads are some kind of **code** to crack. Not like **the code** you were talking about before **maybe, but a riddle hidden in all those images...**⁵.

++++
[1] Cohesion. [2] Ideas of closure and the translation of the death drive onto other non-human entities. [3] Not sure of how this should be interpreted yet. But it sounds like it could have some merit if expanded. [4] The seduction phenomenon again. [5] A fade-out technique to substitute a real, firm conclusion OR an invitation through the ellipsis for others to pick up on the thought.
++++

Title: **Re: text vs. image (which is louder)**
Post by: **therealzachpearl** on 2012-02-02, **15:08:52**

My position is different¹, not only because I do **read spanish**, but because I'm **somewhat close to the conflicts that are portrayed**² [**in the text**] as they resonate with the context that I grew up in.

Because of that I see the **text 'acting'** in the way that **Ted proposes**³. **The piece** is in a way **performing stories** that construct an identity, and that

identity is somewhat synthesized in the symbol/icon that is **the flag**.

To the original question⁴ I can't see 'a' visual in the piece, the construction of **the flag** is a becoming of identity that is only **pointed** at through **image**⁵. But at the same **time text** is also just a vector, one to **the generic** condition of violence that is the **normalized** representation of **Colombianeity** in mass media⁶.

My response would then be **time**. I find that **it is in the accretion of the piece that lays its power**; but at the same **time** that can only happen through an understanding of the role of the **stories in the piece**⁷ (to my anyway)⁸, even if one is deny access to them quite quickly.

++++
[1] Staging, but very clear—delineative(?) [2] Revealing personal connection—strengthens argument, but also makes the speaker more vulnerable to arguments of any objectivity. [3] Cohesion. [4] Steering the conversation backward. [5] conceptual gesture is stronger than the image (I would agree with this) [6] Allusion to the general process of flattening that news media can enact. [7] Again, the gesture is prized. But, this time it's reinforcing Doug's comment about the animation being the most alluring aspect, especially for this who cannot read Spanish. [8] Backing up a little bit by playing the 'subjectivity card'.
++++

Title: **Re: text vs. image (which is louder)**
Post by: **TheTuringPoint** on 2012-02-02, **17:01:38**

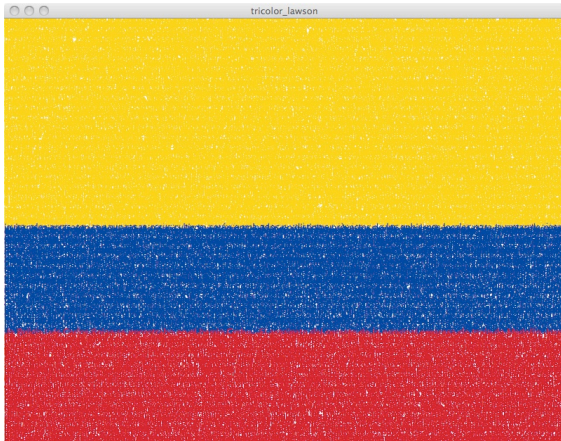
@therealzachpearl¹:

Are you saying that you think¹ the letters in **the piece** are subjected to violence because they are vectorized?!² and that this relates to being **Colombian??**³

++++
[1] Direct address and query. [2] This is an interesting concept in the 'poetics of typography'—good tangent, even if it comes from misunderstanding...[3] To punctuate question with alarm or anxiety.
++++

Title: **Re: text vs. image (which is louder)**
Post by: **RichardChesler** on 2012-02-03, **11:46:21**

*1
I ran the application version of 'Tricolor v.2007' for about 45 minutes. Here is a snapshot²:



+++++

[1] This is an interesting post for many reasons. The primary one being the reproduction of the artwork within the message board and how that image interacts with the documentation of it already on the left side, and potentially the piece as it is actually running in a separate browser window on screen. [2] The second thing about this gesture is the rhetorical function of using an image to replace an argument of text, and then subsequently, how this comments on the larger topic of this thread which seems to question the boundary between those concepts.

+++++

Title: **Re: text vs. image (which is louder)**
Post by: **therealzachpearl** on 2012-02-03, **11:58:06**

@TTP,
no, I'm saying the **stories** in the **text** are **generically** violent, and that they **act as pointers** towards the construction of an identity that is only hinted at through **the flag** as a somewhat universal agreement of nationality, in this sense neither **text** nor image seem to me to be loud, it is instead the **time** mediation of both the one that **speaks** to me.

+++++

[1] Direct address. [2] Cynthia's piece is glossing over and adding to the problem of national identity by continuing to fold everything into the icon of the flag. [3] ...and in the larger sense, the compression of time and space within virtuality—think this is the root.

+++++

Title: **Re: text vs. image (which is louder)**
Post by: **Frenchy** on 2012-02-03, **12:33:11**

Interesting discussion¹, I am nervous to suggest² that both the "text" and

the **image** are indeed **image** in this and most formats -- especially if you do not **speak** the **language**³ (and I do not). **Text** is "read" and if you cannot **read** them they become **image**. I think the interesting thing about the the artwork, is its scrolling **emergence** into the **flag**. That is what changes the experience from the expected **Internet object** into an **object of curiosity**⁴. I cannot say it is **powerful**⁵. I fully understand the **power** of protestation at the outrageous political situation in **Columbia**, but I cannot "hear" those protests, I can only "assume" them from the **image** of the **flag** and the **Spanish words**. I am left out of the **action**. So instead, I hopefully "assume" the intention of using scrolling protest⁶ (is it? or is it support for the corrupt regime? I have no way of knowing), **because otherwise I doubt Zach would have chosen it**⁷.

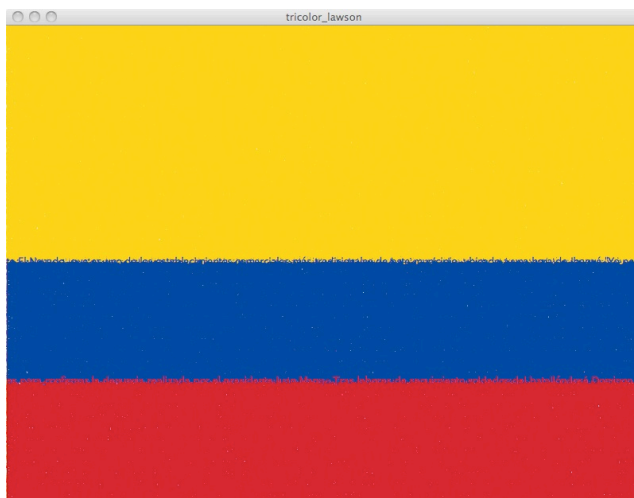
+++++

[1] Generic. Serves as a socially acceptable interjection. [2] Echoes Ted's own rhetorical device...vacillation, vacillation. [3] Arguing here for the poststructuralist view that text is a 'visual text' in its own right, with image-like qualities that perform symbolically. [4] I am troubled and fascinated by the use of the term "expected Internet object". I think this is more related to Leigh-Ann's insistences on talking about templates. Which is a good point, but I think here it's more integrated into a discussion that the group sees as relevant. I see Frenchy using a tactic of amalgamation and perversion—shifting the nuances of the conversation in the direction she would like to see it go. [5] Obstacle. [6] Sees a tentativeness with the work. It is not convincing enough for Frenchy. [7] Using me as anchor for the argument here. How am I as curator also a piece of currency in the critique???

+++++

Title: **Re: text vs. image (which is louder)**
Post by: **RichardChesler** on **2012-02-03, 13:32:44**

after 2.5 hours:



++++
++++

Title: **Re: text vs. image (which is louder)**
Post by: **MichelleJacques** on **2012-02-03, 22:37:35**

True...¹for me² the **Spanish text** becomes **image** because I don't **speak** the **language**³...but eventually⁴, when the image of the **flag emerged** I finally had a **text** that I could **read** because I recognized **the flag**⁵. A different effect, I'm sure, than that experienced by someone who can **read Spanish**, but a message of a certain impact, nonetheless⁶.

++++

[1] Cohesion. Although, phrasing is awkward, because it doesn't acknowledge RichardChesler's offerings or attempt to interpret them. [2] Asserting subjectivity. [3] I think this is meant to summarize a non-Spanish-speaking perspective and bring closure to the issue. [4] Narration. [5] Speaking to the moment of 'materialization' in the piece....maybe that's what emergence is alluding to? [6] This is a tricky comment to digest. It feels very subjective in its use of "I", but the "someone" seems like a zero-institution and also a specific response to what's already been said. The assertion that the piece has impact, regardless of this ambiguity sets up an obstacle to the discussion carrying on any further in a way that queries the "power" of the piece. The use of the word "certain" however, in its vagueness, opens up a new trajectory into defining "impact" or "power".

++++

Appendix B.4

General Discussion => Appropriation (21st Century Aesthetics)

Net art or art on the net?

Topic started by: [ErinK](#) on 2012-02-01, 13:28:47

Participants: 9 / (in order of posts) ErinK, whiskeykitten, Ted Hiebert, Jouissance, MichelleJacques, therealzachpearl, dougjarvis, RichardChesler, Helena

Posts: 17 / Most active: dougjarvis / Cohesions: 5 / Obstacles: 1

Rhetorical Currencies: (29)

attention
complete/completion
crash(ing)/almost-crash
curator/curated
desire
end/an end/the end
frustrate/frustrating
function(s)/functioning
gallery/gallery space
Google/google effect/Google image search(es)/Google imaginary
image/the image/the images/amount of images/quantity of images
volume of images
incomplete/incompleteness
information
infinite
interface
intrigued
overwhelmed/overwhelming
point(s)
potential(ly)
process(es)
reach(ing)
real(ity)
screen, the
scroll/scrolling/scroll bar
search(es)/searching
selection/selected
shifting
space/space of contemplation/space of the net/space of web/exhibition space
ideas of space/issues of space/hypothetical space/never ending space
physical space/virtual space
surround(ed)

Title: **Net art or art on the net?**
Post by: **Erink** on 2012-02-01, **13:28:47**

I am **intrigued** by I'm **Google** by Dina Kelberman¹ - is this (or perhaps a better question is **must this be net art?**² Is the **net medium integral to the artwork?**³

While the images are compiled from the internet and stored on the computer, I can equally imagine this work in a **physical space** and I wonder if the spatial experience of the overwhelming **quantity of images** and **the formal colours and compositions**³ might have more impact in this manner of display. **Yes the work functions on the internet**⁴ but for me it loses some of the impact I envision, experiencing it in a **physical space** where I could allow myself to be overwhelmed by the **volume [of] images**⁵. Thoughts?⁶

+++++

[1] Fairly formal setup—almost journalistic. [2] Is this resistance to virtual art because the whiteness of the background in Kelberman's piece echoes the physicality of a white wall in a gallery? Maybe. The allusion to its formal, wall-hanging-like aesthetic is fair. [3] In a conceptual sense, no. The premise of the work—curated photos in a grid—could easily be done physically. [3] Referencing artist statement. [4] Affirmation [5] in a technical and embodied sense, a physical form of Kelberman's piece would lose interactivity through sheer scale. However, ErinK's desire to be inside or overwhelmed by the artwork is typical. [6] Prompt—pedagogic.

+++++

Title: **Re: Net art or art on the net?**
Post by: **whiskeykitten** on 2012-02-01, **14:55:04**

For me... **I was intrigued** by the **scroll bar** (also mentioned by **Ted**)¹ in this work, which one would not experience if these were printed out and hanging in a **gallery space**. **If they were... there would be a definite beginning and end of the project...**² it would read as **complete**. Instead on my computer... that little blue **scroll bar** is **constant shifting** up and up as more **images** load below. **You think you are at the end**³ and **then voila more images!**⁴

At the same time, I kept wanting to get to the bottom, to race that little **scroll bar**⁵. Does this **point** to my own **desire** to master **the interface**? To consume all of the **images** before making a judgement⁶ (An impossible task considering **Google image searches**)? **Perhaps one is more comfortable in passing judgement if these are objects in the real world**⁷, but a **constantly shifting** view is more troublesome?
:o Not sure! But fun to think about⁸.

++++
[1] Use of the word "intrigued" again —verbal currency— and referencing another post for credibility. [2] User supports the infinitude of the virtual. [3] Second time this is mentioned. Interesting how the idea of the "end" really starts to pick from a very early point in the conversation. [4] Conversational voice. [5] Drawn to closure—psychological dimension of virtuality. [6] Diving into psychoanalytic territory. Good, but, unfortunately, this strand isn't maintained past this post (on a conscious level). However, the concept of desire will remain a focalizing agent from here on. [7] Because we have to 'confront' them? [8] Backing up a little here. It diminishes the seriousness of her comment.
++++

Title: **Re: Net art or art on the net?**
Post by: **ErinK** on 2012-02-01, **15:57:12**

Excellent observation on the **scroll bar**¹ - after reading your comments I went back to the work for another look. The every growing list, suggesting an **infinite amount of images** adds a layer to the work I missed before².
However, I'm still torn,³ wanting to experience the work in a **space where I can enter** in and be **surrounded by the images**⁴ - As you mentioned, the **reality** of **Google image searches** reveals ever growing lists. **Maybe this experience is simply too common placed.** Experiencing it again on the web reinforces our this **reality** but doesn't offer the alternative or shock I must be looking for...⁵ (I must take a second to reinforce that I very much enjoy this work and each time I revisit it I am **intrigued**, if not completely satisfied)⁶

++++
[1] Cohesion. From here the conversation focuses on scrolling as means of navigation. But I'm also wondering how anthropomorphized the scroll bar has become; as a projection of our own bodies into the space of the screen? I guess these are the same concept in many ways, but I am more interested in talking about the psychological implications of projecting the body into symbolic space. [2] This is like an advertisement for net art. [3] Turn. [4] Consumption of art, art of consumption—disembodiment in a way though, which makes her comment wholly ironic. [5] Critiquing the tumblr format and the (now) banal experience of using search engines. [6] Guilt. Also, the buzz-word "intrigued" is used again.
++++

Title: **Re: Net art or art on the net?**
Post by: **Ted Hiebert** on 2012-02-01, **16:22:19**

The **idea of space** is a curious one in this project¹ -- I'm sympathetic to the **desire** for a **physicality of the image (a space of contemplation)**² but the project seems designed to exactly **frustrate** this tendency of the gaze. Is this what makes it a 21st century artwork?³ Is the **space of contemplation** lost, to be replaced by the **expanding space** of a **Google** imaginary?⁴ In this project **the images** are more of a **curated** archive than a purposeful

selection of singular perspectives⁵ -- **mashed together**⁶ to construct **archetypes of moments**⁷, but in doing so **smashing apart**⁶ the physical references to which the pictures refer. **Images** without reference, but with -- instead -- **an intensified power of association?**⁸ **There's certainly no room for contemplation**⁹ or the sort of **visual surround** that a **gallery** provides -- **but I wonder if the loss of that kind of space isn't partly the point of the piece?**¹⁰

++++
[1] Going deeper with the issue of space, but not really addressing which space—more metaphysical. [2] Does the physical necessitate contemplation? [3] Maybe it is 21st century in the sense of frustration navigating between contexts. [4] Spaces are expanded through the imaginary. [5] Treading on the artist/curator divide here and implying that the latter is not a creative practice. [6] Consonance. [7] Stretching it a bit far here, I think. [8] I think that encapsulates the concept of hyperlinking—rhizomic(nomadic) behaviours. [9] I disagree with this lack of 'space for contemplation' in the virtual. How often are we staring at things on screen in the same way we languor in a gallery? [10] Twisting critique into revelation.
++++

Title: **Re: Net art or art on the net?**
Post by: **Jouissance** on 2012-02-01, **16:30:08**

@ErinK¹ re: "I'm still torn, wanting to experience the work in a **space where I can enter in and be surrounded by the images**"²

Here again, **I rather like Ted's reading**³ which (to my ears) **points** out that **it is precisely the failure of the images to attract our attention as images that allows them to speak**⁴ in the context of this work. **I too share your desire to have them all laid out before me,**⁵ **but I wonder if part of the piece is frustrating this very desire?** More specifically, **frustrating** it precisely by **placing** it into contact with another **desire**, namely the **desire** to scan **scroll** (figuratively and literally)...which I suppose is a tricky line for a work to walk.

++++
[1] Direct address. [2] quotation—holding accountability for exact text. [3] Cohesion and projection of an argument through Ted. Ted is continuing to be the 'Solomon' of the board. [4] The failure of not just the images, but the now quotidian nature of seeing multiple images on a screen. Think about the evolution of operating systems and the discourse of windows. It is very much a concept that has carried over from Enlightenment philosophy. The window onto the world has transmogrified into the window into possible worlds of the virtual. I think that the element of failure is important to understanding the condition of the imagery within the sociological construction of the medium and not the artwork itself. [5] Cohesion with ErinK [6] I think that Jouissance is correct on this bit.
++++

Title: **Re: Net art or art on the net?**
Post by: **MichelleJacques** on 2012-02-01, **22:56:57**

It's interesting that the conversation has turned to the **issue of space** and our expectations around **the image** and its physical context. This reminds me of video art, which held all of the **potential** to be a more democratic form because it could be disseminated on the airwaves. Now, it is least likely to be seen on TV (although sometimes on Sunday morning channel 11 out of Hamilton programs video art!) and much more likely to be seen in the **physical space** of the art **gallery**...or in the **virtual space** of the Internet. Were the conventions of television too over-determined for viewers to figure out how to engage with something that didn't fall into the categories of entertainment or **information**?

Here, with I'm Google, it seems that our **desire** at first is to engage with the work as a determinate body of **information**. That's the way we use the Internet - we come to it for **information**, and even though we know that any given **search** could result in **infinite** results, we find ways to limit them - add **search** terms, only look at **the images** of a certain size, etc. - and reduce the **information** to the **space of the screen**. But the metaphorical implications of Kelberman's **scroll bar** encourage us to think about the **space of web** in a different way, and the **processes** and content of the work are integrally linked to being presented in the **space of the net**. Perhaps the conventions of the internet are more flexible than that of television.

++++
[1] Super vague way to enter. [2] Anecdotal. [3] For me, the answer to this question is an obvious "yes". But, Michelle doesn't have the theoretical background that I do, so perhaps this is her first time truly pursuing this line of thought. If the process of the exhibition is inciting that, then what a victory! [4] The most interesting aspect here is the continued use of desire and then the subsequent word choice for "body of information". [5] I think the most valuable thing here is the follow-up question: what are the conventions of the Internet? How much effort have we really devoted to analyzing this?
++++

Title: **Re: Net art or art on the net?**
Post by: **MichelleJacques** on 2012-02-01, **22:58:09**

(I should be transparent about the fact¹ that until I read this thread I had assumed that Dina's **scroll bar** never stopped **shifting** because of **some malfunction in my ancient computer**¹.)

++++
[1] This disclaimer begins so formally and then ends so casually. It's probably a general effort to make the conversation less structured by including an aside, or afterthought.—things you can't really accomplish in physical critiques.
++++

Title: **Re: Net art or art on the net?**
Post by: **therealzachpearl** on 2012-02-02, **10:12:34**

I was just thinking about this some more and it occurred to me that **while the tentative of the piece is the infinite amount of images, there is in fact an end¹**. In this sense **if someone was willing to scroll for a really long time²** it could **potentially reach a point** where either there would be no more **images** or the **images** would loop. **(any volunteers?)³**. Where this got me however was **to think about the mediation of the screen, and the very specific way of controlling the flux of images. If the number of images is finite⁴** (and it is <http://www.businessinsider.com/chart-of-the-day-the-largest-photo-libraries-in-the-world-2011-9>)⁵ then a **hypothetical space** could host them all, yet it would then become a **constant** state of growing and wholeness that is broken down in the **interface** that requires us to **scroll⁶**. I'm **Google can only be understood (i think) as an experience that is a fragment of itself⁷**, and **maybe that is its netness**.

++++
[1] Unsure whether this is a criticism or a pure empirical statement. [2] This statement makes it sound like an arduous task through "really long time"...in a way it discourages others from actually committing and doing it. May be an unconscious defensive tactic. [3] Posing a challenge—that is a psychoanalytical moment, for sure. [4] the mediation of the screen, or of the browser window? [5] First instance of a citation. Raises the stakes of the conversation a bit. [6] So, if the navigational protocols of HTML changed from scrolling to some over maneuver (let's say moving forward and backward in perspective, so that there was a change of scale), there would more radical experiences of virtual space, or is this a wish-image of space imposed the virtual—the superimposition of Cartesian space onto the Net? [7] This I agree with...it contributes to its openness in Eco's terms, because the fragmentation allows for many more references to and semiological systems to be created at the micro-perceptive scale, which make the work a portal for the passage of references and keep it 'open'.
++++

Title: **Re: Net art or art on the net?**
Post by: **Ted Hiebert** on 2012-02-02, **11:02:01**

That's a lovely way to look at it¹. Here the vision is that of Borges' library²-- a library so comprehensive that it contains a copy of every book that was every written or could ever be written. The analogous photo library -- which I guess is how we've been imagining I'm Google -- would at least cap out with the possible images³ (this might be Vilem Flusser's notion of the "set" of photographic possibilities, for instance)⁴. Instead of really embracing this allegory though, I'm Google -- it seems -- perhaps⁶ represents a single line of passage through a massive (if not infinite) set of possible lines of passages⁵. The notion of incompleteness, then, allows for a certain specificity to the selection that is I'm Google⁷ -- it's actual character, over

and above any particular reading the viewer brings.

++++
[1] Cohesion. [2] Analogy. [3] Why this fascination to the highest possible volume of images? It's so material in nature? [4] Pedagogic and a little showy. [5] Again, like Frenchy, a critique of the conceptual strength of the work. [6] Soft-touch. [7] Again, this idea of failure being central to success of the work re-emerges.
++++

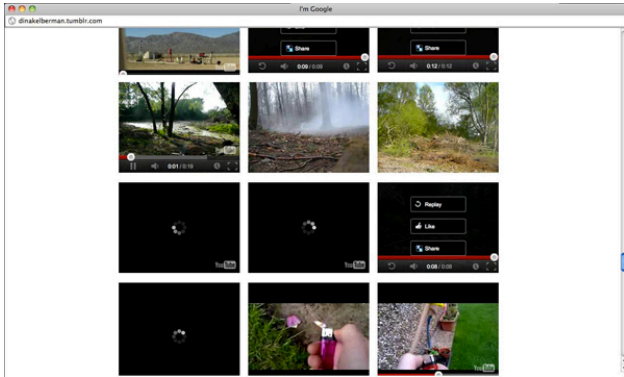
Title: **Re: Net art or art on the net?**
Post by: **dougjarvis** on 2012-02-02, **14:16:27**

I am taken¹ by the fact that this work, out of the three, is the one that is being populated (has been populated) by the artist them self². The aesthetic of **Google** is borrowed in a slowed down methodical **process** of **searching**, with human power, the vastness of the **information** landscape³ that we all **imagine to exist**⁴. It is the contribution of the human factor in this work that holds my **attention**². The amount of time, the old-school value, that is given to the succession of files, helping to render out **ideas of space** and relations to the database entries that are **selected**, is causing me to want to put the work, and myself, in a shared environment with the artist⁵. It does not seem to matter to me how the work would function within a static or **ever changing space exhibition space**, but more, when is the work functioning?

It is provoking me to question what we think the audience is doing?

++++
[1] Dramatic. [2] So the greater human-factor is attractive—this makes sense when the conversation has hovering around closure and how the psyche navigates issues of the disembodied. [3] This would seem a cybernetic relationship...not really "human power". [4] Speaking on others' behalf—drawing others into the conversation indirectly. [5] This seems like the real reason, and not the human factor as much. I think Doug respects the mental, immaterial labour of a human being versus the insensible 'labour' of an algorithm. [6] Negation to ErinK and whiskeykitten. [7] Prompt.
++++

Title: **Re: Net art or art on the net?**
Post by: **dougjarvis** on 2012-02-02, **14:22:59**

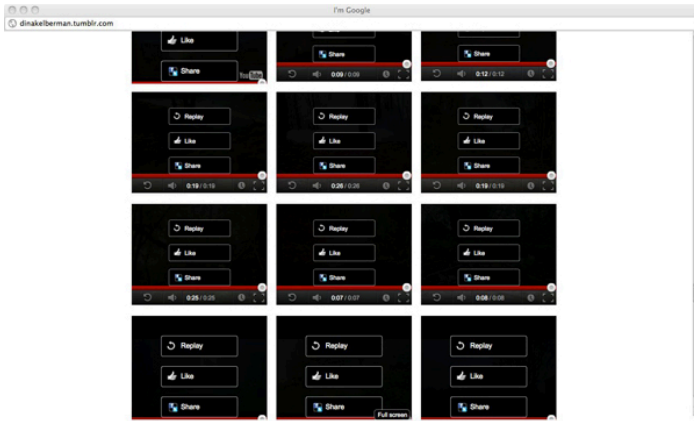


+++++

[1] Hard to tell here what Doug is pointing out. So, it's unclear if it's an illustration of his previous comments, or if it's a new, visually expressed, comment about the 'all video' stretches, and the pattern of interfaces within an interface that emerges? Either way, this the only consecutive post of images, and the first in the timeline of the critique. It encourages therealzachpearl to post an image a the end, and RichardChesler will post images of Cynthia's piece later in the text vs.image thread.

+++++

Title: **Re: Net art or art on the net?**
 Post by: **dougjarvis** on 2012-02-02, 14:57:45



+++++

[1] See above.

+++++

Title: **Re: Net art or art on the net?**
Post by: **RichardChesler** on 2012-02-02, **15:37:10**

I think that the hyperlink is a 'ship of fools' (especially on tumblr as you click and are brought to other tumblr pages there is no narrative forming, because the hyperlink within tumblr doesn't need to maintain this) - I like how 'Im Google' has used the **never ending** template on tumblr to create a narrative within tumblr. But it also **ends up** going nowhere as the artist has set up the work to continually form and never **reach completion**¹. So it too is a ship of fools, but there is a captain as the artist is the **curator** of which **images** to post and where the **images** evolve to.

WhiskyKitten and therealzachpearl (please stand up)² - there can actually be **an end** in the sense that there is **potential** for the web browser to **crash** after you have **scrolled** for too long. Even if **the images** were **infinite**, you could never **reach completion** because the limits of the software puts restrictions on how you will view the artwork³. But the **potential** for **crashing** that **exists** within software is fantastic in the sense that **the crashing** is a sign that you should stop and go outside⁴.

+++++

[1] I'm not sure about the creation of a "narrative", if the narrative is perpetual formal visual succession. But, I do like that the differentiation between the usually aimless content of tumblr and the careful selection in I'm Google is addressed. [2] Reference to an Eminem song—"Will the real Slim Shady please stand up?". [3] Good reminder of the software as an integral contributing factor. The Net (and OSs in general) are successions of 'frames'. [4] Preaching.

+++++

Title: **Re: Net art or art on the net?**
Post by: **dougjarvis** on 2012-02-02, **15:42:46**

Like¹²

+++++

[1] Cohesion. [2] Being 'cute' by appropriating a vocabulary from Facebook. Also, on a side note, I was told in person by "RichardChesler" that he did not appreciate this post...he thought it was gross to bring FB protocol into the conversation.

+++++

Title: **Re: Net art or art on the net?**
Post by: **therealzachpearl** on 2012-02-02, **16:18:50**

I actually kind of experience a **crash**¹ a second ago, it wasn't a proper **crash**,

and the machine recovered from it (so I keep scrolling)² I wasn't prepared for the almost-crash and that threw me off a bit³, but the thing that kind of keeps me scrolling, is the understanding the finitude of the piece, and the potential for reaching the last image⁴ [of right now]. are there elements of relationality on this piece then?⁵

++++
[1] Picking up on RC's vocabulary and reinforcing "crash" as an alternate for "the end". Also, interesting that the conversation is materializing through descriptions of similar translocal experiences—the "crash" is having to do with the hardware. So, now the discussion about the work has entered a mixed reality realm beyond the theoretical discussion of space. [2] This is poetry for a larger understanding of how the Net has affected our psyches. [3] Probably the most casual phrasing so far. [4] Closure! closure! closure! [5] I'm not sure how I'm Google is a relational piece...unless this is only made clear when the experience of it is visibly, publicly discussed through a forum such as this???

Title: **Re: Net art or art on the net?**
Post by: **Helena** on 2012-02-02, 16:43:22

I'm stepping into the middle of this rich discussion¹ and am not sure that I can add much to the consideration of the 'scroll' etc² ... however I remain ambivalent about this piece³ for the way that it seems to flatten out a wide range of situations and experiences in favour of their visual composition and look⁴. Maybe it's a critique of the flattening effect that google et al have on our lives?⁵ How scenes of other people's domestic lives or of devastation by fire gain equal status in our attention spans⁵ as do images of fences or clouds.

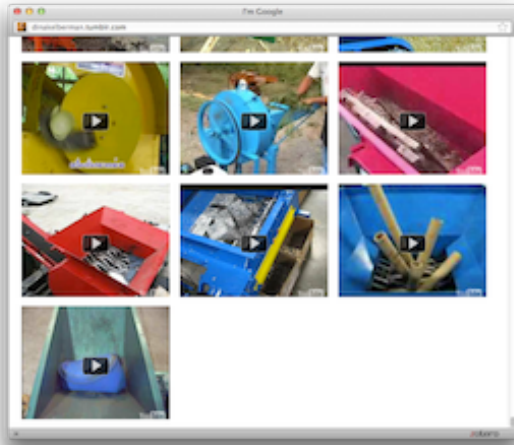
There's something all too slick and easy about this mimicry of the 'google effect'⁶ that leaves me with an uncomfortable taste in my mouth⁷. It makes me want to ask, and what?⁸

++++
[1] Apologetic and flattering, but still feels strategic. [2] Excusing herself a bit. This is staging for redirecting the discourse. [3] Obstacle. Implies that she's read through all comments and isn't satisfied by any current perspective or reading. [4] The flattening effect of the virtual is something that I've thought about before...there's potential to expand on this. [5] I agree with this to a certain extent. But, it's a direction that implies apathy within Dina's process. I think Dina would have to know the original context (which is usually transmuted by its publication to the Net) in order to answer for the moral/ethic implications of what she's doing. [6] I think that this is something purposeful within the piece—to draw our attention to the problematic aspects of blogging templates like tumblr. [7] Using unconventional sensory descriptions—illustration. [8] This is probably the harshest critique that a work receives throughout the three days—it made me mad.

Title: **Re: Net art or art on the net?**

Post by: **therealzachpearl** on 2012-02-02, **16:50:08**

is this **the end?**¹



++++
[1] This is very amusing that it turned out to be the last post in this thread. It's really a move toward the idyllic moment of a constituency that I'm looking for. This user is trying to get a collaborative evaluation or investigation going—a multi-modal 'writing' of the exhibition. Shame it didn't go anywhere. Also, the possibility that it would have continued with other images...it could have developed in a whole other gallery.

++++

Appendix B.5

Critique => Discussions =>

Digital Materiality

Topic started by: [Ted Hiebert](#) on 2012-02-01, 13:36:40

Participants: 3/ (in order of posts) Ted Hiebert, dougjarvis, Helena

Posts: 5 / **Most active:** TedHiebert / **Cohesions:** / **Obstacles:**

Rhetorical Currencies: (10)

critique
digital
imagine/imagination/imaginary
interact(ing)/interaction(s)
interface
interference/interfere/interfering
material(ity)
pattern(s)
poetry/poem(s)/poetic(s)
remix

Title: **Digital Materiality**

Post by: [Ted Hiebert](#) on 2012-02-01, **13:36:40**

If we're going to talk about materiality and the web, then I'm going to start¹ by reflecting on my experience as a user of these art projects. It's a curious three-fold configuration, each project requiring a different tolerance threshold before one even begins to interface with it²-- the necessary consequence of "free" media³, perhaps,⁴ though I have in my mind a Facebook post by Alexander Galloway, who this morning **critiqued** Facebook as a "factory" where people are put to work in the construction of their own public/personal narratives. It's a Matrix-style **critique**, but updated to a user-friendly 2.0 world in which the reliance on **interface** quickly turns into a production activity for the system itself. In his framing essay, Zach Pearl⁶ says that "to express oneself on the Net is to surrender,"⁵ and it makes me hyper-aware going in to the **critique** of these projects that there is little difference between expression and consumption when it comes to Net culture⁷. It's an interesting short-circuit of the communicative equation.

So -- first impressions --⁸ in Evan Roth's artwork what strikes me first is the demand for patience: "Loading 627 internet advertisements (Please be Patient)". It's a very material demand in the end -- an acknowledgement made by the artwork itself that some investment is required. It's curious --

particularly in an age of instant feedback, and "real time" **interaction** (to quote from Paul Virilio). And perhaps not by accident. The result of my patience is an ad-collage, **most obviously a sort of language poetry updated for an internet era -- every message a persuasion of one sort or another, here brought together to remix and collaborate (what ad's never actually want to do)**⁹. More interesting, however, is perhaps the conceptual implication of adverts talking to themselves. When the viewer is optimized (as we no doubt are) **this consolidation of persuasion is like a perfect hit of digital affect in the morning -- just in case we were feeling numb from a night's sleep Roth's digital poem lets us know that our patience and attention are appreciated**¹⁰. Less than a surrender, and more a new digital subjectivity -- digital affect for a world gone numb.

With Dina Kelberman's site, what first jumps at me is not the content but the **throbbing scroll bar**,¹¹ set to constant Tumblr expansion and I mouse my way down the page. The images don't demand a close look, which I find refreshing -- **hyper-content that is made to not be seen too closely**¹². And yet the associations sketch out in curious ways, from solar panels to crosswalks to forest fires -- transitioning seamlessly, almost like a digital dream. **I'm not in control of my dreams either, so I feel no anxiety about this act**¹³-- though it's not exactly one of immersion. Instead, it's a survey gaze -- **distributed materiality**, condensed visions presented in a snapshot stream. **It's the world we're trained to want, but never actually find**¹⁴-- the world itself moves too slowly for us to engage at **the speed of digital materiality**¹⁵. In some ways, it's like a visual version of listening to the radio on scan -- content loosely brought together to frame images not for what they actually represent, but how they pass through each other, morphing the visual world in the process. **In a curious way**¹⁶, **this reality remix leaves the world outside the screen feeling strangely immaterial and foreign**¹⁷.

For Cynthia Lawson Jaramillo, before I even get to the artwork I'm taken to the latest Java website and pleasantly informed that my system is out of date. I **imagine** I'm not alone. **It's a strangely material reminder in that to encounter oneself deprived of digital content frames the interface all the more powerfully**¹⁸. Once upgraded I encounter a curious blend of explanations in English and scrolling text in Spanish, a somewhat glossolalic encounter since my Spanish is not what it used to be. My first inclination is to set the page to "speak" but it's a function deprived by the interface. Consequently, I sit back -- surrendered -- to the aesthetic of scrolling text I cannot read, marching across the screen like a karaoke script or a cartoon of army ants. Here and there I recognize words and names -- not enough to synch up my material mind with the digital content, but certainly enough to feel excluded from the **critique**. And, in a curious way, this digital exclusion results in an all the more material awareness. **It's compounded when the text starts to scroll over top of itself, and I realize that understanding was never the point. In an age of communication, this is a work that attempts to shut communication down**¹⁹-- **foregrounding the fact that digital materiality doesn't require us to understand, but only to participate**²⁰.

I realize that these first thoughts are both tentative and a bit over-extended. I also realize that it's unfashionable to critique the interface²¹. I just think that a discussion of digital materiality begs for a thinking *through* of interface²²-- not as the invisible condition of communicative surrender, but as a marker of the reversibility of web-based interaction²³.

+++++

[1] Supposing an audience that isn't there yet. Staring out "we" and then shifting to "I", sounds more like going through motions. [2] So, I think the element of mediation in any experience of the internet is trying to a certain degree. I guess this is more of an inherent feature in my opinion. [3] I am not sure how this relates to the concept of allegedly free platforms. [4] Buffering. [5] Beginning of my essay being used as linchpin. [6] Direct address. [7] Good that this is being pronounced. But, sad that it never actually elicits a dialogue. Also, sounds like my statement may be seen as foreboding rather than trying to suggest a repositioning of the user. [8] Disclaimer. [9] This comment highlights and questions the rhetorical dimension of each piece. [10] This is so obtuse. I'm not surprised that people were hesitant to respond to this thread (length excepted). [11] Again, scroll bar is the focus. [12] This makes me ask what is the difference between content and hyper-content? Are we talking any 'objects' that are linked? or reduced through thumbnail-type treatments? [13] Anecdotal and definitely pushing farther into the poetic/manic. [14] I think there's something very pithy in the paradox of distributed materiality and condensed visions. Also, I agree with the idea of the rhizomic structure of the Net being the 'ideal world' or a signifier of utopia—hence why we have such an existential quandary with it. [15] This sounds like it could plug into Hassan. [16] This is vague. Allows him to be less accountable or coherent with what follows. [17] I think this is exaggerated—again the poetics. But, it's a good tactic—to try to reverse the conditions of the physical/virtual scenario and examine the relationship inversely. [18] How does the digital enable acts of exclusion and withholding? Ironic for its open-sourcing cultural value. [19] I wonder how Cynthia would respond to this accusation of closing communication down? I think it taunts us to consider iconography as a more relevant 'text' than typography on the Internet, but the act of communication is never "shut down". [20] This is the result of the apocalyptic/crisis-talk of the now 40-something generation of artists who lived through the death of art-criticism in the 80s. I find this comment useful to contextualize where Ted is coming from. But it's also offensive to me as someone who is trying to find ways to fuel agency. [21] Confessional and transparent. I think he's trying to open his own sentiments up for more interpretation and examination. But, it actually buries it in more subjectivity and probably discouraged people from commenting, because it destroys any hint of concretion. [22] I agree. I need to push this idea when talking about software curating. [23] I have no idea what is meant by 'reversibility' (?)

+++++

Title: **Re: Digital Materiality**
Post by: **Ted Hiebert** on 2012-02-02, **12:02:52**

So yesterday I made a first gesture towards a thinking-through of the works in this exhibition. Today I want to make a second gesture, going beyond a critique of interface -- or digital materiality -- to try and engage something

perhaps more **allegorical**¹. In a sense, today I want to try and do exactly the opposite -- let the **interface** disappear into the **imaginary** spaces constructed by each of the pieces. The result will be equally **tentative** and **over-extended**. I **imagine** this as a first step towards some sort of theory of **crosstalk**, as the natural object of the exhibition as a whole. Zach Pearl talks of **crosstalk** as a new form of speech act, but it doesn't seem that way to me today². Instead I'm wondering about a different kind of **digital materiality**, something more theatrical than linguistic -- perhaps **materiality 2.0**³-- a version of the interpretive story where I talk myself into my own (**digital**) delusion of the works. In so doing perhaps there is a point to make about the **digital** itself -- less as a formal space that sits in contestation of materiality, and more an **imaginary** space that reveals the equally **imaginary** ways we construct relationships in the physical world. **Digital materiality** then as equivalent to imaginative impact. It might be a relational principal⁴, with all the complexities that sort of reference would demand. "If you can't find it meaningful," says Nicolas Bourriaud, "you're not trying hard enough." Today I want to try a bit harder.

To go beyond the interface with Banners and Skyscrapers is also to go beyond form. It's to let the words selected step beyond their own context, to allow them to transform from adverts to poetry. **Instead of a political gesture or an appropriative remix we end up with something else**⁵. "Little town of click here career / Why not stub technology / Enjoy the trip / Fitness begins at a fitting specialist. Keep us moving / Find new and rare community products / In the response in one minute / Pre-packed travel ideas. For the dead new passion / The whole world is my quality / Ready to ride wireless / We can help cheap." **And so the story goes. There is of course a disjointed, almost panicked quality, to poetry of this sort -- and that remix aesthetic seems often part of the point. There are no passive words here -- adverts wouldn't have them, so why should poetry?**⁶ Instead, a woven **pattern** of activated concepts, **interacting** and reacting in a gesture that is almost alchemical. The words perhaps line up by accident, juxtaposed on screen in a mock-competition to see who grabs my attention first. Yet the accident is no accident, and the **interaction** that replaces interface is one that's as interesting or meaningful as I allow it to become. "The whole world is my quality." From this it might follow that quality is a function of how I engage the world around me -- I say might because I'm fully aware that the logic is not sound, but the provocation seems like it might work. **Adverts and poetry do share more than a few things in common -- less about literal messages and more about persuasion, allowing ourselves to be moved in some ways by the messages we encounter**⁷.

In I'm Google, when one looks past that living pulse of the Tumblr scroll bar one finds an evolving visual stream. Instead of the a surface read today, I look into the images themselves. **I find myself contradicting what I said yesterday** about the images demanding that I keep moving -- **I find myself pausing, caught up in the details of difference**⁸. This survey of solar panels, it turns out, has nothing to do with solar panels at all -- what I'm drawn to is the strange ways in which these alien apparatuses are situated in their

landscapes, always angled upwards in a 21st century heavenly gaze. What catches my eye, in other words, is the predictability of the solar panel, which quickly fades as anything except the overarching sign of my meditation. Instead, how cultures prop up their solar gazes seems key to me at the moment. Here, a set of panels propped awkwardly on a hill, seemingly precarious like they might tumble at any moment; the next image shows the apparatus behind a fence -- strangely protected in ways the other one was vulnerable. The next one has a ditch running underneath, in case the solar panels leak, perhaps; and a few pictures later, a pair of squares propped up in a field with a pile of snow at their feet -- the solar panel as pre-emptive snow-shovel. I continue to click as solar panels turn into parking lots and parking lots to forest fires. I pause and notice how one forest fire is indeed completely different from the next. A meditation on burning wood or on the allegories of fire -- from Bachelard's Prometheus Complex, to Borges' dreamer. In every instance, the stories of fire step beyond the mere facts of combustion to insist on traumatic or transformative affective impacts. And so the story goes -- **I'm Google focuses in some way the content stream itself -- less a database than a catalyst for meditations of various sorts⁹.**

Today's experience of Tricolor makes me work a bit harder, perhaps, than the other two pieces¹⁰. My Spanish is rusty, but I begin a piece together the story this page is telling: "El hombre que es señalado de haber rociado con gasolina a su novia..." I think that means he covered his girlfriend in gasoline -- what a traumatizing way for the story to begin. "Gisela Delgadillo Peralt, 18 years old, was captured Tuesday night by police... The artifact exploded in the second floor of the hotel El Nevado.... The assassination of the chief of the taxi company. Police presence will be strengthened in the more vulnerable areas." Before I get to the end, the blue text begins -- I look to see whether the story has changed -- "At 5:30 in the morning on Tuesday, the trucks were attached and could no longer advance. It was about a photography exhibition -- in black and white -- featuring 21 people from the community. Violence is not the only problem in the region of Catatumbo..." By now, the story is being over-written, but this time it is more than a political gesture or commentary. This time it is my story that is being over-written too -- before I was able to read and decipher much of it -- the story of gasoline and photography and violence -- a provocative three-part theory of something, just waiting to happen. I **imagine** I could refresh the page and start over with a new set of stories -- at least I'd like to think it would be a new set of stories -- but I decide not to refresh the page, just in case. **It seems more meaningful to not be able to recover the story that I'm now losing -- as though the purpose of the piece was to reinforce the fragility of this narrative that I have just worked so hard to construct¹¹.**

What unites these three encounters today really is the act of engagement -- refusing to defer to the logistics of the pieces and insisting on an attempt to creatively engage¹² the content of the artworks themselves. It is an act that is, of course, neglectful of context -- which is perhaps also the shortcoming of an engagement of this sort. Instead, this form of readership uses the artworks as an imaginative catalyst for its own stories -- and the question

that results for me is whether this sort of personalized re-telling (even if unfaithful to the artworks themselves) forms one part of an emerging theory of "**crosstalk**"¹³. What does it mean to be implicated in **crosstalk**, as a witness or as a participant, and **does one's own voice add to the mix -- or does the viewer have a responsibility to remain silent**¹⁴.

+++++

[1] Summarizing and narration. [2] Now critiquing the analogy of language to the works. [3] I see the need to deploy a materiality 2.0, but I'm having a hard time being ok with the divorce of linguistics and theatrics... to me they are two edges of the same sword. [4] Again, I think the Internet is really (at least in the context of this message board) functioning as the 21st century signifier of the symbolic order. [5] I see how maybe appropriation doesn't suit Banners, but I don't see how it doesn't hold a political gesture...maybe Ted is referring to something concrete in the real world that can have a material parallel or a call to action?? I guess that is difference between art and activism, yet both stem from politics. [6] Equating the act of remix to panic or trauma? The idea of collapsing images and texts into a short, as perhaps an aggressive and cathartic response to the overwhelming amount of content on the Web? [7] It's hard to say here whether Ted is being critical that Roth does not push these associations and persuasions enough in his piece, or if he is observing that link become rhetoric and persuasion in images of advertising and the premise of the Speech Act in the curatorial thesis. [8] The words, "I find myself..." repeated, seem to position Ted in a place of faultless expression, rhetorically, as if he has no idea where even his thoughts are going, and thus cannot be held fully accountable for his assertions within the given post. [9] This is interesting, because the conversation in the critique focused on its flattening effect, whereas Ted is calling out it's ability to at least focus us on a thousand (or so) out of millions of available images and to determine a context for 'action' from that. [10] The more over relationship to language in Jaramillo's pieces seems to be giving the most 'difficulty' to users in critiquing it's relative efficacy as a work. [11] This observation is close to Jouissance's comment about I'm Google in Net art or art on the net? that the aim of the piece seems to be the frustration of completing meaning—meaning forever deferred or forever a 'trace' (Derrida). [12] The labour of engagement with the artworks. I agree that what unites them is the user's will and construction of meaning (to a certain extent), but this also begets 'work' on the part of the user—art induces conceptual labour. [13] Crosstalk is a performative act beyond the links to language, but now an internal language of creative construction—the interference of the art with the personal act of interpreting that work and the negotiation of that as crosstalk. [14] I can't help but feel this is a criticism about the pieces not incorporating a direct means to alter or otherwise affect their appearance or programmatic structure—sounds like Ted feels a bit "silenced"...even in his verbosity.

+++++

Title: **Re: Digital Materiality**
Post by: **doujarvis** on 2012-02-02, 14:54:30

Ted¹, do you think that a theory of **cross-talk** may involve some type of system that is able to account for the source of each tangent that the participant renders in their **imagination**? [Your meditation on the content](#)²

reminds me of a hologram, with the result being a suspended animation of your observations **interfered** into being³. Yet, in order to witness the conceptual event some kind of trace needs to hold ground.

Could you say that what this project is proposing is that the terrain that net-art is asking to inhabit now requires a participation of not just the architecture of our physical participation, but **the trance-like space of the imagination studio of our second selves?**⁴

http://www.ted.com/talks/amber_case_we_are_all_cyborgs_now.html

+++++

[1] Direct address. [2] Specifying the act. [3] This is possibly a fruitful way to envision the act of critique or interpretation itself that is not so antagonistic as subject and object, but the production of both in varying dimensions of experience. [4] I believe that this is more of a psychoanalytic statement than anything—referring to the production of ego and identity that is assisted by the 'imaginary' space of the Internet...however, hard to tell—obtuse.

+++++

Title: **Re: Digital Materiality**
Post by: **Ted Hiebert** on 2012-02-02, **16:51:39**

Doug¹ -- I do like the idea that **crosstalk** requires a version of logic that is more **holographic than photographic**². Holograms are based on **interference patterns** -- not simply **interference** itself, but the ways in which different **patterns of interference** begin to actually congeal (or maybe coagulate) around some kind of 3-dimensional image. Perhaps what **you call**³ holographic in this context is also a version of **digital** space that requires a different conception of dimensionality?

+++++

[1] Direct address. [2] Cohesion. Interesting that Ted refers to his own previous brand of "logic" as "photographic". Are the photograph and the hologram opposing in this paradigm or simply alternatives? [2] Another direct address—reveals familiarity between users—alludes to their 'real life' connection.

+++++

Title: **Re: Digital Materiality**
Post by: **Ted Hiebert** on 2012-02-03, **19:14:25**

I wanted to make one last post in this thread to attempt to constitute a first step towards theorizing the concept of **crosstalk** itself. I think I've changed my mind about how that comes together though. **I like Doug's idea of**

interference patterns¹ -- congealed moments of conflict that promise dialogic expression not contained by the members of the group. **However**² I'm not sure that the exhibit delivers on this possibility of **interference patterns**³. Instead, it kind of seems like the conversation is trapped in the space between **interface** and **allegory** -- not quite constituted enough to escape the parameters of form, not quite enthusiastic enough to really push a poetic of content.

To be generous would be to say that a failure of **crosstalk** to actually take form is itself a context-generating stimulus -- providing an opportunity for **interaction** without the constraints of ever having to actually say anything directly⁴. It's a **critique** that could certainly be levied against each of these artworks, each in its own way. Here, Banners and Skyscrapers is reduced to a **critique** of advertising; I'm Google is reduced to a screen saver; and Tricolor is reduced to a political commentary -- the formal constraints of the artwork rising to tell us what we already know, namely that web culture is little more than source material for our own customized gazes. Each of these pieces then becomes only as interesting as we let ourselves make it⁵ -- more personal reflection than **crosstalk**. Participation is key, and Bourriaud's mantra becomes the necessary caveat to the exhibition itself: if it doesn't appear meaningful then we, as viewers, aren't trying hard enough.

To be more critical might be more interesting, but would require that the works begin to stand up for themselves in some way⁶. In other words, it would require that the works tell us what they aren't about -- provoke a conflicted reading of the sort that escapes the limitations of its form and content. It's the moment when Banners and Skyscrapers does more than present an opportunity for each of us to compose our own language poem; where I'm Google provokes relationships that charge the visual stream itself; where Tricolor suggests there is more to the story than a newsfeed overwriting itself. In other words, a moment where as viewers we come across the talk itself as already **interfering** with something or other. **Latent** in each of these pieces is such an idea -- the question is how hard we need to work for it, inevitably coupled with the irony of having to work to find conflict and uncertainty and personal stakes in the projects themselves⁷.

It makes me wonder whether **crosstalk** itself might also fall in this strange space -- a space of **interference**, but without real **patterns**. **If we try hard enough we could probably make it mean anything at all -- but then there's no real crosstalk, only the soundtrack of digital cacophony**⁸.

+++++

[1] Cohesion [2] Positioned turn. [3] Critiquing again that the design/structure of the exhibition interface does not allow for a collective 'passage' or account for a meta-action or truly dynamic discourse to occur that would move beyond pontification of the artworks' virtuality. [4] Quipping that the delayed-response of the message board facilitates many people talking to themselves—directing an ambiguous and ambivalent other of the "others" or the "crowd" without having to confront or assert one's position directly—Deleuze would call this the plane of immanence for the subject.

[5] This statement can be applied to any form of 'analysis' or critical archaeology.
[6] Obstacle (to oneself!) Takes Ted's own commentary to a theoretical realm beyond the terms that even he is willing to outline. The mounting of this argument and then the lack of its exposition is an obstacle to others further investigating that concept or constructing that language game. [7] Again, the involvement of the personal demanded by the act of critique—what could be the ethical concerns here?
[8] Implying that the exhibition model is non-specific to the artworks—a template that can be imposed onto any art-viewing experience.

+++++

Title: **Re: Digital Materiality**
Post by: **Helena** on **February 05, 2012, 02:25:31 PM**

just a quick response¹ to Ted H's² latest ... I think the 'failure' of crosstalk³ (which I feel somewhat personally responsible for, having not managed to post my six required messages within the given period)³ is a reflection of the artificial nature of the project⁴. Yes, we live in an era where we are encouraged to offer our opinions, from the banal 'like' of Facebook to the Reader's Comments that now accompany most online newspaper reviews. But having to respond for the sake of risks fetishising discursiveness for its own sake⁵.

What this project has revealed for me⁶ is that the insistence to participate and to respond is somewhat oppressive in itself⁷. I've Having to dialogue with people that I don't know about artworks that I have no strong reaction to is not my idea of democratic participation⁸. Sorry!⁹

+++++

[1] Affording herself that the post to be not as long or in-depth as it probably deserves to be. [2] Direct address—piggybacking. [3] Returns to the concept of failure. She does place it in scare quotes, but it's position in the beginning of the post labels her comment as an assertion of failure. [4] This is cloudy. She seems to soften the critical statement before by suggesting she is partly to blame. However the inclusion of this information is also slightly inappropriate and tactical in the way it reveals 'behind the scenes' details of the relationship between curator and critic to the general public. [5] Suggesting that participation and democracy become new commodities in the push towards participatory models. [6] Buffering. [7] Equates the contractual nature of the invited critics roles as that of slaves or citizens under despotic rule. [8] This is interesting again for the connection between democracy (democratic actions) and labour. But, it also shows Helena's personality as being a bit anti-social—'closed' perhaps—and not acknowledging the fact that she knew these were the terms of her participation as well as perhaps her misunderstanding of what it means to communicate virtually—anonously. [9] A last attempt to defer social consequences for her commentary.

+++++

Appendix B.6

Critique => Discussions =>

All the leftovers

Topic started by: .TIFF on 2012-02-01, 21:25:05

Participants: 5 / (in order of posts) TIFF, display, dougjarvis, whiskeykitten, RichardChesler, Frenchy

Posts: 8 / Most active: .TIFF, display/ Cohesions: 5 / Negations: 3

Rhetorical Currencies: (24)

act/acting/activate(d)/active/activity
appreciate
asked
audience
browser
computer
content
engage(s)/engaged/engaging/engagement
exist/existing
file(s)
form(s)/formalism/formally/ubiquitous forms
gallery/galleries
inform/informed
off
on/online
participate/participation/part of
place
play/player
provoke/thought-provoking
public space
script(s)/Javascript
viewer
witnesses/witnessing
work(s)/working/artwork/network

Title: **All the leftovers**

Post by: **.TIFF** on 2012-02-01, **21:25:05**

If we're talking about the **content** of the art pieces, then I would say **I really like the calming effect of Ms. Kelberman and Ms. Jaramillo's pieces**. The one by Evan Roth's is kind of...well...uncomfortable to me¹. But also **thought-provoking**². I mean it is certainly interesting to see all those ads, **which I kind of think of as the "leftovers" of the websites that I visit**³. :P⁴

++++
[1] I think this means the geometry and order of their compositions/designs, versus the hectic visual overload of Evan's piece. [2] Buffering. [3] This is a quirky but interesting analogy. [4] To reinforce that the comment is figurative.
++++

Title: 'predesigned arrangement'¹
Post by: **display** on 2012-02-01, 21:57:06

On Form:²

A question to be **asked**³ is to what degree the 'predesigned arrangements' (referred to in the Curator's essay)⁵ interrogate their **existing templates**⁴? When appropriating an **existing form**, by my lights⁶, the success of the work requires a critical **engagement** with also that **form** and not only the **content**⁷. How does the **form** impact, **inform**, and frame our experience of the **content**? Apart from its **obviously satisfying formalism**, I am **compelled** by the Kelberman piece for the way that it critically **engages** with the **forms** of both the tumblr blog and the google image search⁸. Our expectations of **the episodic and the random**⁹ are subverted with sustained duration and control. **The Jaramillo and Roth pieces do not read to me as engaged formally**¹⁰. **The forms** (templates) seem less considered. **This feels key to me**¹¹ when **working** in such a **ubiquitous form**.

++++
[1] This was either lumped in when I collapsed the boards, or Leigh-Ann actually changed the name of the thread and then another user changed it back before the next post. [2] Total disregard for the initial post. [3] Formal and doesn't address anyone. [4] Is this the point of the pieces? It's certainly not what I wrote. [5] Asserting she's looked at the rest of the material on the site. [6] Obtuse. [7] Critique of the quality of curation. [8] Positive critique. Perhaps a result of Frenchy's retort in the "the decorative" thread. [9] Is this how the internet is perceived. I think of it as being all about duration. [10] Self-explanatory. [11] Prompt.
++++

Title: **Re: All the leftovers**
Post by: **dougjarvis** on 2012-02-02, 14:33:23

I am asking myself where the projects start and stop¹. What boundaries am I putting on each **work** as I encounter it initially, or after seven viewings? I **appreciate**² that net-art is intended to be in and of the **network(s)** that **inform** the **works**. **However**³, this project, in general, is engineered to **provoke** the **audience** into being **part of** the **work**. So, **given that we are asked to participate**⁴, where do you put the parameters of what it is you think you are **witnessing**? How are the **works** putting you in a situation

where you have to decide where you are in relation to the **content**, in relation to the device you are collaborating with to experience the **works**?⁵

++++
[1] Negation: Again, not addressing previous statements. [2] There seems to be a theme of art-appreciation in this thread. [3] Turn [4] Using the premise of the exhibition as an alibi. Damages credibility, since the whole post now sounds obligatory. [5] Turning to the political here.
++++

Title: **Re: All the leftovers**
Post by: **whiskeykitten** on 2012-02-02, **20:29:48**

I am reminded here again of the idea of **performance**... which was brought up by zach² in another post¹. The more I consider these **works** and this project, it seems to have many qualities of **performance art**: **ephemerality**, **temporary**.. etc.³ Does the **work exist** when the **computer** is not **on**? **When a tree falls in the forest does it make a sound?**⁴

In this way, perhaps **performance** is a good metaphor for networked art. It is only as "there" as its **viewer/player/avatar** who **activates** it/**witnesses** it for a time⁵..⁶

++++
[1] Piggybacking—makes it sound more credible if it's already been mentioned. [2] Again, my name enters the conversation. But, it's unclear if whiskeykitten is referencing me or therealzachpearl, who unbeknownst to her is not me at all. [3] This is the whole dimension of it that I originally wanted to explore. [4] Aphorism. [5] Relationality. [6] Invitation.
++++

Title: **Re: All the leftovers**
Post by: **.TIFF** on 2012-02-02, **23:33:22**

@whiskeykitten¹

I am not a very philosophic kind of person...more a gut feeling kind of gal², but I am trying to think through this connection to **performances** that you've mentioned. I never thought of being **on** the internet in this way, but I am trying to imagine some things they have in common. **I don't know if this is the proper kind of thing to do in an art-critique :-[{{{will be the first to admit I am amateur at this kind of thing}}}**³ but here are some comparisons that came to mind....

browser window = stage
online accounts/profiles = masks or costumes

script = computer script (Javascript and stuff like that)
ads/pop-up windows = coughs/sneezes/cell phone rings⁴ (inspired by mr. Roth's piece :)⁵

++++
[1] Direct address—interesting that it is the Twitter format. [2] Buffering [3] More buffering and looking for approval to keep participating in the conversation. The emoticon is also not standard...shows some creativity in its own right, which makes the self-doubt ironic. [4] These comparisons are valuable for pursuing the performative thing later. [5] This is almost feeling like a suck-up move to the artist.

Title: **Re: All the leftovers**
Post by: **display** on 2012-02-02, **23:54:07**

Not being well-versed in **performance practices**¹, your comment (whiskeykitten)³ was **engaging**². While I'm not necessarily interested in the **ephemerality** and/or temporality bits, I admit that I did not account for my **activity** as much as my expectations⁴. My mode of **engagement** is typically in the **gallery** or in **public space**. I suppose⁵ that my response, while likely being **informed** by my trackpad activity⁶, didn't account for what that **activity** brought to bear **on** my read **on** the piece. I like that. Getting back to **Form and Content** then⁷ I suppose that my **activity** is another layer **on** the **form**⁸ - one I hadn't factored in⁴.

++++
[1] Allowing flexibility for her comment through self-admitted ignorance. [2] Indirect negation to .TIFF [3] Why the use of parentheses? This comment already ignores the one made just previous. The parentheses are even more secluding and elitist in nature. [4] Cohesion with whiskeykitten. [5] Uncertainty here feels like stubbornness—she's already admitted to seeing it from a different perspective. [6] this is unclear [7] This seems truncated, and then hollowed by its function as a transition into reiterating the category that she constructed. [8] This I agree with in a metaphorical sense. Together they become an operational relationship.

Title: **Re: All the leftovers**
Post by: **RichardChesler** on 2012-02-03, **11:33:10**

referring to netart as similar to **performance** is a good analogy¹ - the thing about web-based **works** is that they are just **computer files** sitting **on** a server. Only when a web **browser** on your **computer** accesses the **file** on the distant server will the **files** be **activated**² (html is parsed and displayed, **javascript**, **php scripts** are parsed and executed, **databases** called)³ and all of the **content** displayed. so it is like a tree falling in the forrest or a **play** being **performed** without an **audience**. When you **computer** is **off** or web

browser closed, the **artworks** (files) still **exist on** the server. **I guess my question is,**⁴ **is this any different to when art works are stored away in galleries storage spaces when they are not on display?**⁵ they still retain their 'artness' but can only speak to **viewers** if they **exist in gallery/public space** for them to be experienced.

++++
[1] Noting the uncaptialized entry...haven't seen that casual tone yet. This is also a piggybacking.
[2] The connection between conceptions of work and activating a file are interesting, because it alludes to the act of viewing also being work—a form of labour. In defines of servers and files and net art: They artworks don't really sit ...because they are still usually spread apart across many servers...i think, so they are always activated in their potential. [3] pedagogical [4] Leaving things open to interpretation. Not a true assertive, critical statement. [5] Good analogy. Again there's a wish-image—gallery to virtual display of art.
++++

Title: Re: All the leftovers
Post by: **Frenchy** on 2012-02-03, 12:45:02

I would agree to this notion of art crawling on the net to be one of performance¹. **For me -- and I troll the net for artwork all the time**²--it is an act of seeking through keywords, finding an interesting artist, digging their works out, collating into a file on my own computer. **In other words, the Internet can make each of us curators**³. I collect works that work for the publications I work with, objects I find compelling, and those that simply appeal on aesthetic or other grounds. In doing so, I crisscross across the net to find art in places I ordinarily would not find, by people who I have never heard of and perhaps never will. **It is a place for acting -- for the active participation of the observer**⁴. **Although I appreciate this "gallery," I also find it confining. I am used to roaring ahead and finding more**^{5...6}

++++
[1] Cohesion. Introduction of the word crawling is a interjection of personal vocabulary, though.
[2] Subjectivity reminder, and offering of personal context. [3] This has already been explored a bit, but a good topical comment. [4] I agree with this statement, but it needs expanding.
[5] Criticism of my exhibition model. [6] Illustration of the "finding more"
++++

Appendix B.7

Critique => Discussions =>

The decorative

Topic started by: [display](#) on 2012-02-03, 00:05:19

Participants: 4 / (in order of posts) [display](#), [Frenchy](#), [dougjarvis](#), [MichelleJacques](#)

Posts: 4 / **Most active:** n/a / **Cohesions:** 0 / **Negations:** 2

Rhetorical Currencies: (5)

decorative/decoration

form(s)/format/interlacing form/not-yet-well articulated form

particular/particularly

piece(s)/these pieces

respond/responding/response

Title: **The decorative**

Post by: [display](#) on 2012-02-03, **00:05:19**

Bringing up **form** again¹ - but from a different angle, **can we talk about**² these 'predesigned templates' in the realm of the **decorative**?³ The Roth **piece**, in **particular**, seems to beg this question⁴.

+++++

[1] A rather abrupt entry. And, it's not clear that she has referenced form in another thread, so it makes this beginning to a conversation sound already enclosed in some respects. [2] Addressing many who are not yet present. Call/response tactic (?) [3] Talking about a kind of internet 'craft' or the idea of the virtual readymade? [4] Saying that Roth's use of the banner is a decorative gesture or the interlacing pattern? or both?

+++++

Title: **Re: The decorative**

Post by: [Frenchy](#) on 2012-02-03, **12:57:22**

I actually like the Roth **piece** the best¹, **particularly** for its use of tumblr and YouTube². It drags the gallery into the mainstream Internet surf. Its "**decorative**" aspect that I am assuming you are **responding** to the **formats** of both Tumblr and YouTube, is confusing³. Real world artists all have **formats** that they **respond** to in terms of art supplies. Even jeff koons giant panda sculpture has **responded** to the limits of his material, and has used the sites as his YouTube confines. I think "**decorative**" is a bit

condescending and not the accurate word⁴. As a new medium for art, the internet provides a new set of structures in which to work, and it takes time and a different kind of artist to go beyond the confines of the medium⁵ (which is what I am assuming you are getting at)⁶. **Decoration** is the application of ornament to an object -- I think that is not what is happening here -- I think each of these artists are reaching for **forms** that can use the specific and **not-yet-well articulated forms** of the internet to express themselves⁷. There are other artists out there who are doing strange and wonderful works (young girl bloggers who do video and photos constructions on their shoes, fancy foods and kitties)⁸.

+++++ [1] Negation [2] Positive critical statement. Naming specific templates here, but it's clear that Frenchy is talking about I'm Google and getting the title wrong. [3] Critiquing Leigh-Ann's word choice. [4] Contesting the vernacular of the discourse. There is also an ironic condescension to the tone of what she's written. [5] The future of net art enters the board for the first time. [6] Subjectivity reminder—passively asking for clarification. [7] More aligned with my interpretation and thesis—that these pieces are investigations, or interrogations; not concrete statements. [8] This is an interesting subcultural injection...wish it would have been picked up and carried on.

Title: **Re: The decorative**
Post by: **dougjarvis** on 2012-02-03, **15:59:55**

In **response to this thread**¹, it makes we want to ask the artist (Roth) how they came up with the drifting, **interlacing form** that they have used. How did these decisions get made?²

+++++ [1] Standard interjection. [2] Asking about the conceptual value of the lattice pattern.

Title: **Re: The decorative**
Post by: **MichelleJacques** on 2012-02-03, **22:16:26**

Decoration got such a bad rap in the twentieth century¹. But it must have some value given its persistence and the vigour with which its merits are debated². **That's a whole other conversation**³. My usual interaction with my screen is one of superficial scanning until something or the other catches my eye, and I actually feel as though the **decorative aspects of these pieces serve to focus my attention to the content**⁴.

+++++ [1] Expanding the issue to a sociohistorical scale. Also "bad rap" is a colloquial device. [2] Again, implying a conversation about the relationship of craft culture and net culture.

[3] Digression [4] Competition in a highly visual environment of the WorldWideWeb.

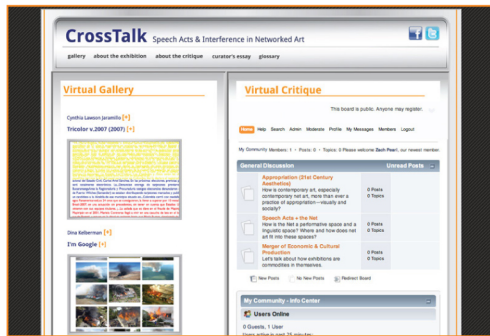
+++++

Appendix C: Press Release

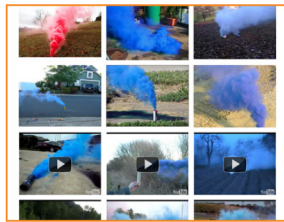
Virtual Exhibition Empowers Viewers through Virtual Critique

Toronto, Ontario — 01/04/2012

This Winter, an unusual and extremely interactive exhibition promises to breath new life into the inundated space of the World Wide Web. Opening on February 1st, *CrossTalk: Speech Acts and Interference in Networked Art* is an experimental exhibition curated and designed by OCAD University graduate student Zach Pearl. Featuring works of net art (art made on and disseminated through the Net) by Evan Roth, Cynthia Lawson Jaramillo and Dina Kelberman, *CrossTalk* combines a virtual gallery with a real-time virtual critique. Visitors to the site will be able to view each artist's piece and at the same time participate in a live online discussion about their work via message board. The idea behind this unconventional model is to offer a way for the public to become part of the exhibition through conversation. *CrossTalk* also provides visitors from many different locations and backgrounds the chance to connect and exchange ideas using art as the centrepiece.



Over the course of three days, February 1st through the 3rd, the public is invited to log on at: crosstalkexhibition.com, view the artworks, register on the message board and participate in an open, unmoderated critique. Registering on the message board is free, easy and similar to interfaces that the majority of users will already be familiar with. To get the discussion going, an international group of six curators and critics, including former Institute of Contemporary Arts Head of Talks Helena Reckitt and Art Gallery of Ontario contemporary Canadian art curator Michelle Jacques have been invited to post their commentary first. After their initial posts, those six curators and critics will stay active in the critique, but as equals to any other participant.



Every person who registers on the board will receive editing privileges, and have the same amount of control as any other person. This is an intentional move by the curator to hand the reigns over to the audience for a change, and to create the conditions for a true democracy amongst visitors. Just like a piece of software, the *CrossTalk* exhibition model sets up conditions and variables and lets its users determine the final product or outcome.



Lastly, *CrossTalk* is unique in the way its featured artworks are made. Each of the selected pieces use publicly available content from multiple other users on the Internet to generate their respective looks. Dina Kelberman's piece *I'm Google* uses Google's Image Search as a continuously changing and evolving image-bank for constructing a visual poem. Evan Roth's work *Banners and Skyscrapers*, culls over six hundred images from banner advertisements and collages them together to form a moving fabric of consumerist imagery. And, Cynthia Lawson Jaramillo's piece *Tricolor v.2007* rakes Colombian online new sources, building the national flag in text that is laden with nationalist tone and flavour. In these different but related approaches, each work symbolizes a kind of interference in the large flow of culture and communication that the Internet represents. By collecting and reassembling the content of others to create new meanings, Kelberman Roth and Jaramillo turn the usership of the Net into a material itself.

More about the Artists:

Evan Roth (1978) is an established digital media artist and part-time professor at Parsons The New School for Design in New York. His body of work is diverse and often politicized, dealing with issues of authorship, appropriation and public space through a wide range of interrelated media and disciplines, from graffiti and illustrative typography to open source technology and net art. Evan received his bachelor's degree in architecture from the University of Maryland and his MFA from the Communication, Design and Technology school at Parsons The New School for Design. After graduating Evan worked at the esteemed Eyebeam OpenLab as Research and Development Fellow from 2005–2006 and a Senior Fellow from 2006-2007. He was also a 2005 recipient of the grand prize Prix Nora Krea at the Norapolis International Multimedia Festival. Evan permanently resides in Paris, France with his wife.

< <http://evan-roth.com> >

Dina Kelberman (1979) is an American multimedia artist, web designer and playwright who is best known for her comic strips and illustrations serialized in the Baltimore *City Paper*, on the humour blog *Mutant Funnies* and on *tinymixtapes.com*. Kelberman's comics are minimal but dynamic, and her characters strangely relatable and misanthropic. This duetting of disparate traits carries over into her net-based artwork where Dina curates the found photography and video of others to create a mapping of her own online-experience. Dina earned her BFA in 2003 at Purchase College, State University of New York. She continues to live and work in Baltimore, Maryland.

< <http://importantcomics.com> > / < <http://dinakelberman.com> >

Cynthia Lawson Jaramillo (1974) is a Brooklyn-based Colombian digital artist, technologist and educator. Her work concentrates on reconfigurations and representations of time and space through media, and has been internationally exhibited and performed, including at Giacobetti Paul Gallery, HERE Arts (NYC), UCLA Hammer Museum (LA) and the Museums of Modern Art in Bogotá and Medellín (Colombia). Cynthia has a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from Universidad de los Andes (Bogotá) and a Masters in Interactive Telecommunications (ITP) from New York University. She is currently Assistant Professor of Integrated Design in the School of Design Strategies at Parsons The New School for Design and an active member of Madarts, an arts collective in Brooklyn, NY.

< <http://www.cynthialawson.com> >

More about the Curator:

CrossTalk: Speech Acts and Interference in Networked Art is curated, designed and programmed by Zach Pearl. It is the culmination of his thesis work for the anticipated receipt of a Masters of Fine Art in Criticism & Curatorial Practice this Spring from OCAD University. Zach has formal, interdisciplinary training in variety of fine art, performing art and design practices. He came into curating serendipitously through museum education and private gallery positions that served as the bread n' butter of his early twenties. Currently, Zach's curatorial focus is on the intersection between new media, relational aesthetics and community art practices. Accordingly, Zach has worked independently to curate a variety of projects that integrate aspects of each area for a range of venues, including the Gladstone Hotel, the Textile Museum of Canada and the Art Gallery of Ontario. Zach currently lives and works in Toronto, Ontario.

###

Contact: Zach Pearl
1074 College St., Toronto, Ontario M6H 1B3
(c) 1.647.710.9550
(e) zp@zachpearl.com

Appendix D: E-vites & Updates

SubContents

D.1	General e-vite, sent to artists, critics & curator's contacts	162
D.2	'Fancy' e-vite distributed to targeted contacts & by request	163
D.3	Reminder e-vite, sent to all contacts on January 30 th , 2012	164
D.4	<i>Update: Early Registration</i> , sent on January 31 st , 2012	165
D.5	<i>Update: It Never Ends!</i> , sent on February 4 th , 2012	166

CrossTalk Speech Acts & Interference in Networked Art

Opening February 1st, 2012

Participate and shape the experience: February 1st, 2nd & 3rd

CrossTalk: Speech Acts & Interference in Networked Art is an exhibition that explores the concept of interference in language as a metaphor for tactics in contemporary net art. Artists Cynthia Lawson Jaramillo, Dina Kelberman and Evan Roth present works that create visual interference in the virtual realm by reassembling the content of multiple other Internet users. Using very different but poetic thinking, each artist reconstructs that content, opening it up to new meanings.

These ideas are also echoed in the experimental format of CrossTalk, which places the virtual gallery right next to a real-time virtual critique. Started and then stimulated by a group of six artists, curators and critics, the public is invited to join this free, three-day discussion about the art and contribute through text, image, audio or video.

By overlapping critique and exhibition in the same webpage, they interfere with one another until they become inseparable. The exhibition then becomes a uniquely public but virtual space where art and social interaction are one and the same.

3 ARTISTS :

Cynthia Lawson Jaramillo
Dina Kelberman
Evan Roth

: 6 CRITICS

Doug Jarvis
Frenchy Lunning
Helena Reckitt
Leigh-Ann Pahapill
Michelle Jacques
Ted Hiebert

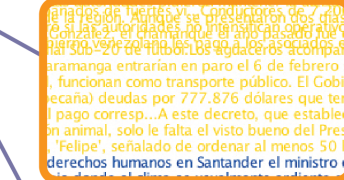
3 DAYS

BE PART OF THE PROCESS:

From February 1st through the 3rd, anyone and everyone who wants to participate in the critique is welcome to join and have their say! Just go to www.crosstalkexhibition.com and click on "Register" in the area labeled "Virtual Critique".



Still from Banners & Skyscrapers, 2011



Still from Tricolor v.2007



Image of I'm Google, 2010 - ongoing

HTML not displaying correctly? [View in browser](#)



CYNTHIA LAWSON JARAMILLO . DINA KELBERMAN . EVAN ROTH

Launching February 1 | crosstalkexhibition.com

Participate & shape the experience: February 1st—3rd

CrossTalk: Speech Acts & Interference in Networked Art is an experimental [online](#) exhibition that explores interference as a metaphor for trends in contemporary net art. Artists Cynthia Lawson Jaramillo, Dina Kelberman and Evan Roth present works that create visual interference in the virtual realm by appropriating and re-presenting the content of multiple other Internet users. Using diverse but poetic tactics, each artist disrupts and deconstructs that content, opening it up to new meanings.

This interference is echoed in the experimental format of CrossTalk, which places the virtual gallery in the same browser window as a real-time virtual critique. Over the course of three days, February 1st—3rd, the public is invited to log on at crosstalkexhibition.com, view the artworks, register on the message board and participate in an open, unmoderated critique. Similar to a piece of software, the CrossTalk model sets up conditions and variables that allow viewers to become users and makers of the exhibition. The ultimate message of the show will be shaped by those who participate.

Learn more — [view the press release](#)
Question or Comment? info@crosstalkexhibition.com

CrossTalk: Speech Acts and Interference in Networked Art is curated, designed and programmed by Zach Pearl. It is the culmination of his thesis research for the anticipated receipt of an MFA in Criticism & Curatorial Practice from OCAD University this Spring. Zach's project is unique in the fact that it will be the first completely virtual exhibition in the graduate program's history.

This thesis project has been advised thus far by Paula Gardner, Ph.D. (primary), Caroline Langill, Ph.D. and David Cecchetto, Ph. D.

Made possible in part by the generous support of the Graduate Studies Department at OCAD University.

Join the event on Facebook | Follow live updates of the critique on Twitter



Starting February 1 | crosstalkexhibition.com

Participate & shape the experience: February 1st—3rd

CrossTalk is an experimental online exhibition that explores interference as a metaphor for trends in contemporary net art.

Artists **Cynthia Lawson Jaramillo**, **Dina Kelberman** and **Evan Roth** present works that create visual interference in the virtual realm by appropriating and re-presenting the content of multiple other Internet users.

Using diverse but poetic tactics, each artist disrupts and deconstructs that content, opening it up to new meanings. This interference is echoed in the experimental format of *CrossTalk*, which places the virtual gallery in the same browser window as a real-time virtual critique.

How you can participate

Anytime from February 1st—3rd, you're invited to visit crosstalkexhibition.com and share your thoughts on the show's artworks in a virtual critique. The critique happens on a message board that is part of the exhibition's website. Registering on the message board is fast, easy and free. All you need is an e-mail address.

The critique is completely unmoderated. However, an international group of art curators and critics will be periodically stirring up the conversation. Critiquers are encouraged to pose questions, start new conversation threads and post related content. Images, .pdfs and external links that might broaden the discussion are welcome.

CrossTalk: Speech Acts and Interference In Networked Art is curated, designed and programmed by Zach Pearl. It culminates his thesis research for an MFA in Criticism & Curatorial Practice from OCAD University this Spring.

This thesis project has been advised thus far by Paula Gardner, Ph.D. (primary), Caroline Langill, Ph.D. and David Cecchetto, Ph. D.

Made possible in part by the generous support of the Graduate Studies Department at OCAD University.

Join the event on Facebook | Follow live updates of the critique on Twitter

UPDATE :

EARLY REGISTRATION



DUE TO POPULAR DEMAND, REGISTRATION FOR THE VIRTUAL CRITIQUE IS OPENING EARLY.

Artworks in the virtual gallery will not be unveiled until the stroke of midnight on the 1st, but **starting at 8 p.m. EST on Tuesday, January 31st**, *CrossTalkers* are welcome to log on to the site, register for an account, set up preferences, upload an avatar and explore the message board interface.

How you say?

Starting at 8pm tomorrow, simply go to crosstalkexhibition.com, and click on the link that says "Register" in the righthand frame of the website. Should you have any questions or concerns along the way, you can access step-by-step instructions by clicking on the "How to Register" link at the top of the page. *Looking forward to your comments and more!*

Question or Comment? info@crosstalkexhibition.com

Get connected: [Join the event on Facebook](#) | [Follow on Twitter](#)

UPDATE: IT NEVER ENDS!



Dear CrossTalkers,

A big thanks to everyone who visited the site over the three day critique period, and an even bigger thanks to those who posted to the message board. It was certainly a thought-provoking conversation...and a well attended one at that: From the 1st through the 3rd, the website averaged 200 views per day, and out of those 33 lasted an hour or longer. At midnight on Friday, the board had 41 registered members and 63 posts.

Not too shabby at all.
BUT, it's not over yet.

The wondrous thing about virtual exhibitions is that they never really end. The site is still up, and the message board is still active. The three day critique period was only an opening 'event'—a time-sensitive gathering of viewers and participants to the exhibition. However, the site continues on and remains available for people as a gateway to those artworks, and also as a perpetually evolving conversation. So, if you've registered, but haven't been able to pinpoint what you want to post quite yet, *or* if you're not registered yet, but you'd still like to contribute—you can!

And, on a related note...the curator is handing over the keys:

The model for CrossTalk was conceived not just as a website but also a functional site—a publicly available space on the Net that can (to a degree) adapt to the wants and needs of its community of users. Accordingly, the administrator login information has been posted to the homepage of the message board. The hope in doing so is that the critique can continue and be maintained democratically, with shared and equal access to its features. Anyone is now free to take the reigns of the message board's settings at any time should s/he so choose.

*Thanks again! and see you in the ether,
Your friendly neighbourhood admin*

Question? info@crossstalkexhibition.com | Follow on Twitter [@CrossTalkEx](https://twitter.com/CrossTalkEx)

Appendix E: Sample Statements of Understanding

SubContents

E.1	<i>Exhibiting Artist—Statement of Understanding</i>	168
E.2	<i>Participating Critic—Statement of Understanding</i>	172

EXHIBITING ARTIST—STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

This document serves to clarify the terms of the exhibition, *CrossTalk: Speech Acts & Interference in Networked Art*, for the exhibiting artist (artist, henceforth) and make any and all expectations of themselves or their artwork(s) for the duration of the exhibition known and explicit herein.

Please read the summary and terms of the exhibition below. If agreeable, fill in the appropriate fields and sign and date on the last page of the document. Once completed, please return this form either by mail or by e-mail as a .pdf to the curator at the addresses provided below.

This document must be received no later than December 16th, 2012.

Artist Contact Information :

First _____ Last _____

Daytime telephone _____

Primary e-mail address _____

Primary website/project _____

Blog/Tumblr/Other(s) _____

Curator Contact Information :

Zach Pearl

Toronto, Ontario _____
Canada

(c) _____

(e) _____

zpearl@faculty.ocadu.ca

Exhibition Summary :

CrossTalk: Speech Acts & Interference in Networked Art is an exhibition that explores the concept of interference in language as a metaphor for techniques of appropriation and assemblage in contemporary net art. Each selected artwork produces visual and virtual interference by reassembling other users' content, decoding and re-encoding disparate data to contest its stability and open it up to new meaning. This theme is also echoed in the experimental format of the exhibition. *CrossTalk* will simultaneously display the aforementioned net artworks in one frame—a virtual 'gallery'—and, in the other, an embedded message board devoted to a real-time virtual critique. By incorporating the public 'space' of critique the act of viewing and participating in the exhibition not only becomes a live, unfolding process of interference, but also the statements made in the critique become woven with and integral to experiencing the artworks.

- Exhibition Venue:** Virtual—Dedicated URL: <<http://www.crosstalkexhibition.com>>
- Exhibition Dates:** Commencing on February 1st, 2012 and continuing indefinitely, subject to the continued operation of the exhibition's hosting server and its maintenance.
- Virtual Critique Dates:** February 1st through the 3rd, 2012
- Exhibiting Artists:** Cynthia Lawson Jaramillo—*Tricolor v.2007* (2007)
Dina Kelberman—*I'm Google* (2010-ongoing)
Evan Roth—*Banners & Skyscrapers* (2011)
- Participating Critics:** Doug Jarvis, BFA, Artist & Curator— Media, Art & Technology
Frenchy Lunning, PhD, Professor—Design Comm. & Cultural Studies
Helena Reckitt, MA, Curator—Contemporary Art
Leigh-Ann Papahill, MFA, Artist—Digital Media & Installation
Michelle Jacques, MA, Curator—Contemporary Art
Ted Hiebert, PhD, Artist & Theorist—Media, Art & Technology

Exhibition Details & Terms :

- Delivery of the Work:** Selected artwork(s) will not be copied or transferred to the server hosting the exhibition, and the artist will retain all 'original' files associated with the work. The artist grants the curator permission to post a direct link to the artwork as well as supporting content about the work on the exhibition website. The artist is responsible for ensuring that the work is available and functioning for the duration of the critique, and for at least 60 days thereafter. Beyond that time period, as the exhibition is indefinite, the artist is kindly asked to notify the curator of any changes to the availability and/or functioning of the artwork at his/her earliest opportunity.
- Artist Fee:** The artist will be compensated a sum of \$200.00 CAN for the display of information about and hyperlinking to their artwork(s). This sum will be paid in full on the Monday prior to the launch of the exhibition—January 30, 2012.
Payment method for this sum should be arranged with the curator prior to this date. A receipt will be provided for tax purposes.
- Artist Bio/Statement:** The artist agrees to deliver a 200-250 word bio or statement regarding their practice or selected artwork by the date indicated on the accompanying Important Dates document. This information will be used as background information to assist in writing promotional material for the exhibition and the curator's essay which will appear on the exhibition website. Please indicate to the curator if this bio or

statement may be reproduced as a supplement to the appearance of the selected artwork on the website.

Fidelity:

Whenever possible, artists will be notified of any changes affecting the status of the exhibition or the display of information about, still images of, or hyperlinking to their artworks prior to such changes being implemented.

In the weeks leading up to opening of the exhibition website may be temporarily published, and artists invited to preview and review the site for information accuracy and functionality. During these periods, artists agree to not share or otherwise advertise the temporary live status of the website without explicit permission by the curator.

In the event that the exhibition receives press attention, the curator agrees to notify the artists immediately and share with them individually or communally if any information intending to be broadcasted or published is about them, their practice or their selected artwork. Whenever possible, the curator agrees to make this proposed content available to the artist for review and approval.

Good Faith:

The artist and the curator agree to consider this document as a declaration of good faith in the totality of the exhibition, in which any and all actions by either party is enacted in the best interest of both. Any and all issues that may affect the reputation, integrity or security of either the artist or the curator, the artists' work or the exhibition as a whole must be communicated to either party at the earliest convenience and by the soonest available means.

I, _____, hereby indicate by my signature that I have read and understood the above information and agree to abide the terms outlined within.

Signature _____ Date _____

AMENDMENTS

If any of the terms outline above are not satisfactory, please use the lines provided to propose amend-ments. These will be considered and used to draft a revised statement of understanding.

###

PARTICIPATING CRITIC—STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

This document serves to clarify the terms of the exhibition, *CrossTalk: Speech Acts & Interference in Networked Art*, for the participating critic (the critic, henceforth) and make any and all expectations of themselves for the duration of the exhibition's virtual critique period known and explicit herein.

Please read the summary and terms of the exhibition below. If agreeable, fill in the appropriate fields and sign and date on the last page of the document. Once completed, please return this form either by mail or by e-mail as a .pdf to the curator at the addresses provided below.

This document must be received no later than December 16th, 2012.

Critic Contact Information :

First _____ Last _____

Daytime telephone _____

Primary e-mail address _____

Primary website or blog (if any) _____

Curator Contact Information :

Zach Pearl

██████████
Toronto, Ontario ██████████
Canada

(c) ██████████

(e) ██████████

zpearl@faculty.ocadu.ca

Exhibition Summary :

CrossTalk: Speech Acts & Interference in Networked Art is an exhibition that explores the concept of interference in language as a metaphor for techniques of appropriation and assemblage in contemporary net art. Each selected artwork produces visual and virtual interference by reassembling other users' content, decoding and re-encoding disparate data to contest its stability and open it up to new meaning. This theme is also echoed in the experimental format of the exhibition. *CrossTalk* will simultaneously display the aforementioned net artworks in one frame—a virtual 'gallery'—and, in the other, an embedded message board devoted to a real-time virtual critique. By incorporating the public 'space' of critique the act of viewing and participating in the exhibition not only becomes a live, unfolding process of interference, but also the statements made in the critique become woven with and integral to experiencing the artworks.

- Exhibition Venue:** Virtual—Dedicated URL: <<http://www.crosstalkexhibition.com>>
- Exhibition Dates:** Commencing on February 1st, 2012 and continuing indefinitely, subject to the continued operation of the exhibition's hosting server and its maintenance.
- Virtual Critique Dates:** February 1st through the 3rd, 2012
- Exhibiting Artists:** Cynthia Lawson Jaramillo—*Tricolor v.2007* (2007)
Dina Kelberman—*I'm Google* (2010-ongoing)
Evan Roth—*Banners & Skyscrapers* (2011)
- Participating Critics:** Doug Jarvis, BFA, Artist & Curator— Media, Art & Technology
Frenchy Lunning, PhD, Professor—Design Comm. & Cultural Studies
Helena Reckitt, MA, Curator—Contemporary Art
Leigh-Ann Papahill, MFA, Artist—Digital Media & Installation
Michelle Jacques, MA, Curator—Contemporary Art
Ted Hiebert, PhD, Artist & Theorist—Media, Art & Technology

Details & Terms of the Exhibition & Virtual Critique:

- Deliverables:** The critic agrees to participate in a virtual critique via an online message board system accessed through the CrossTalk exhibition website over the course of a 72-hour period from February 1st through February 3rd, 2012. Beginning on February 1st, the critic will be expected to access the exhibition website and view each of the selected artworks featured in the virtual gallery. From that point onward the critic will be expected to periodically access the website during the 72-hour period, making a total of at least six contributions regarding the artworks or in response to others' commentary. Contributions to the critique are not limited to written text and may take the form of still images, video, audio, hypertext or any other content that can be posted within the message board. Critics are encouraged to acknowledge diverse perspectives and be accessible in their contributions to the board.
- Public Domain:** The critic acknowledges that as the virtual critique will be displayed and made accessible via the Internet, that all published contributions on his/her part fall under public domain and are subject to fair usage by third parties. In addition, for the duration of the virtual critique, the message board will be set to allow anyone accessing the exhibition website to register as a participant in the critique. Therefore, the critic acknowledges that their contributions will not only be publicly available, but also acknowledges the possibility of their contributions

being publicly contested by users other than the six explicitly invited participants.

Registration & Setup: The curator agrees to provide the critic with detailed information on how to register and login to the message board as well as navigating discussion threads three weeks prior to the opening of the exhibition.

Speaker Fee: The critic will be compensated a sum of \$100.00 CAN for their participation and the successful completion of the items listed in the “deliverables” section above. This sum will be paid in full on the Monday prior to the launch of the exhibition—January 30, 2012. Payment method for this sum should be arranged with the curator prior to this date. A receipt will be provided for tax purposes.

Critic Bio: The critic agrees to deliver a 200-250 word bio or statement regarding their practice by the date indicated on the accompanying Important Dates document. This information will be used as background information to assist in writing promotional material for the exhibition and the curator’s essay which will appear on the exhibition website.

Fidelity: Whenever possible, the curator agrees to notify critics of any and all changes affecting the status of the exhibition or the virtual critique prior to such changes being implemented.

In the weeks leading up to the opening of the exhibition, the exhibition website including the message board for the virtual critique may be temporarily published, and artists invited to preview and review the site for functionality. During these periods, critics agree to not share or otherwise advertise the temporary live status of the website without explicit permission by the curator.

In the event that the exhibition receives press attention, the curator agrees to notify the critics immediately and share with them individually or communally if any information intended to be broadcast or published features them or their past work. Whenever possible, the curator agrees to make this proposed content available to the critic for review and approval.

Good Faith: The critic and the curator agree to consider this document as a declaration of good faith in the totality of the exhibition, in which any and all actions by either party is enacted in the best interest of both. Any and all issues that may affect the reputation or integrity of the either the critic or the curator, or his/her intellectual properties, must be communicated to either party at the earliest convenience and by the soonest available means.

I, _____, hereby indicate by my signature that I have read and understood the above information and agree to abide by the terms outlined within.

Signature _____ Date _____

AMENDMENTS

If any of the terms outline above are not satisfactory, please use the lines provided to propose amend-ments. These will be considered and used to draft a revised statement of understanding.

###

Appendix F: CrossTalk Curator's Essay

Crossing Over

new languages and land[scapes] of networked society

What does the act of communication mean today?

However cliché this question may seem (especially at the beginning of an essay about art), it is a good one to keep asking ourselves in an age of unprecedented connectivity and rapid technological development. Thanks to an ever-expanding electronic and wireless network, we live progressively in the headspace of a virtual hive—an ephemeral yet collective space where communication is less and less associated with the private. More and more, communication occurs as a distributed action, exchanged between or available to hundreds, even thousands of people, and in multiple places at the same time. This phenomenon can be thought of metaphorically as a vast [land]scape. Entire mountain ranges of messages and expressions springing up from the earth only to disappear just as quickly—or to change their shape completely. The individual content of these messages are like bodies that inhabit and move through this space. In this sense, there is a whole virtual society of communication that operates parallel and intertwined with our embodied society; one made up of text-bodies, image-bodies, sound-bodies... They travel constantly across a variety of networks, mostly digital but analog ones as well. And, in the process, they transform one another through their overlapping—in our speakers, on our papers and on our various screens. They 'pop up' and interweave—in our web browsers, our bank machines, our smart-phones and our magazines. When these overlaps occur those messages influence one another, crossing over and distorting the intent, the reading and the meaning of one another.

In recent years, many producers of net art have begun to take advantage of this media and message convergence by using it as a material. The intertwining of virtual and social interaction on the Internet has become a perpetually growing 'bank' of images, texts, sound and video to be sampled, remixed and re-presented. Net artists are beginning to appropriate the Internet itself, and rightfully so. After all, appropriation in art (at least in the sense of a conscious conceptual method) is nothing new, and dates back to the 1920s with the advent of 'pure' collage works in the Dada movement. However, the means of appropriation and the scope of available material then and now differ by leaps and bounds. Nowhere is this perhaps clearer than on the Internet, where networked communication has given rise to what could be called a 'paradigm of networked appropriations'.

This shift is historically and culturally significant in two major aspects:

First, the amount of material available to net artists and the ways in which it's accessed have become far more immediate, prolific and unfiltered. Platforms like social media sites and blogging software have given a virtual voice literally to millions. As a result, contemporary net artists have gained a publicly available and perpetually growing supply of visual and textual material already on the Web. The sheer population of the blogosphere alone, which according to Technorati.com's annual State of the Blogosphere report, on average now generates over 900,000 posts per day, is evidence of this

communication 'sprawl', and one that for the first time in history is dominated by narrowcast rather than broadcast media.

Secondly, the methods for appropriating public content have become more technologically sophisticated and open source in recent years. Many pieces of net art, such as Cynthia Lawson Jaramillo's *Tricolor.2007* and Evan Roth's *Banners & Skyscrapers* (2011) use program scripts to automate the gathering of other users' content. Essentially, their art pieces also function as programs—aesthetic machines per say—that query other websites, download content and display it in a pre-designed arrangement. Jaramillo and Roth conceptualize the piece, and they design how it will look, but ultimately the program determines the actual content of the piece. Other artists, like Dina Kelberman, simulate the appearance of an automated gathering of other users' contents, but in fact carefully curate each element—a cybernetic aesthetic machine.

No matter the exact technique employed, the increased appearance of net artworks like these represents a building interest in visualizing the 'economy of appropriation' that the Internet has in so many ways given rise to. More often than not, this interest is also critical in nature with many artists examining the social and political duplicities and complexities of the vanishing line that once separated private from public spheres.

The artworks that result from this critical intent operate as a form of interference; not in the typical sense, but as a particular kind that disrupts the increasingly templative appearance and consumptive function of information on the Net and re-channels it into expository personal vocabularies. The artworks in *CrossTalk* are curations and remixes of public content in personal terms. In doing so, the appropriated content and the artist's visual framework overlap as they 'signal' to the viewer simultaneously. In the electronics field this kind of interference sometimes results in being able to hear both messages at the same time—a phenomenon called *crosstalk*. Traditionally, crosstalk has been used as a euphemism for a poor audio or electrical connection. However, crosstalk as a concept of relations has histories in other fields such as biology and political science that suggest it can be a productive force. The potential ways a message can be interpreted often lie insensible to us until we experience some kind of interference or crosstalk. Until we sense a message being mixed up or taken out of context we generally have trouble re-imagining it let alone our relationship to it. For the most part, our communication-saturated society now receives messages cynically and mechanically—a process whose dangers have been written about at length by such esteemed 20th century thinkers as Adorno, Althusser and McLuhan. Growing each day, however, are artists like Jaramillo, Kelberman and Roth, who are producing clashes, discrepancies and juxtapositions in their work. They are drawing our attention to the multitude of ways in which the teeming and streaming content of the Internet could be alternately read and—through appropriation—used as a medium.

This is perhaps the most overt and disconcerting in Roth's *Banners and Skyscrapers*, where the figurative detritus of Internet commerce—banner advertisements—are animated and woven together. The whole browser window in Roth's piece is overwhelmed with an undulating lattice of pure consumer imagery—each one hailing in succession. "**LOSE WEIGHT NOW**" is serendipitously positioned next to a dating website ad with a cliché photograph of a canoodling couple and the words, "Troubled Over Your Ex?" Only seconds later, a vertical (skyscraper) advertisement for an

audio/video technology company flows downward into the cropped head and face of a model for a South Korean clothing brand. The illustration of a sound and video advertisement penetrating a partial face is not only grotesque; it's not terribly far from physical reality. The power of the glissading visuals that *Banners and Skyscrapers* creates is also enhanced by the fact that the exact positions of the advertisements in relation to one another is automated—a process executed by a script that Roth wrote. This makes the moments in *Banners and Skyscrapers* when images do connect uncanny ones. This, in combination with the sheer number of conflicting typefaces and other graphics, saturated colours and stock photography paints an aesthetically nauseating portrait of the networked communication scape—Like watching fifteen television channels during the commercial breaks with the sound off.

In a more minimal but still powerful approach, Jaramillo's *Tricolor v.2007* also imbricates pieces of targeted virtual media. But, instead of advertisements the content is streaming snippets of online news feeds. Specifically, *Tricolor v.2007* rakes online news sources for content that is about Colombia. Jaramillo is originally from Colombia, and her work often addresses issues of how national and cultural identity are portrayed and shaped by the media. To visualize this most formative yet largely unconscious process, *Tricolor v.2007* builds an image of the Colombian flag (which is tri-colored) through lines of text that are taken directly from those online news sources. Letter by letter, and finally in sequential blocks of yellow blue and red, a nation's most recognizable symbol is deconstructed to reveal its fragility and its flux as yet another 'object' of cultural exchange—one that reorganizes itself constantly and rapidly. Jaramillo reflects this nomadic behaviour through the gesture of programming the flag to regenerate every six minutes.

Continuing this trend of visual deconstruction, but in yet another aesthetic departure, is Dina Kelberman's *I'm Google*. Using a tumblr blog as her platform, Kelberman culls the vast and wide Internet through Google Image Search. One picture or video at a time, she creates batches of images based on a concept or theme. Then, in a clean and strict three-column grid, she lays them all out, taking care that each concept or theme transitions into the next through similarities in color, shape or composition. From buildings on fire, to forest fires, to billowing smoke, to geysers, to bursting fire hydrants, to fire hoses, to spools of thread. What results is a digital scroll of visual poetry that abruptly and beautifully deconstructs each image it contains. Pushed up against their analogous-looking neighbours, the images deterritorialize one another until their nuances dissolve and they begin to flow as one image and one stream of consciousness. This anthropomorphism, and of course, the work's title, create a tongue-in-cheek account of 'the days in the life of Google.com'. Through a mixture of formal analysis and humour, Kelberman ties disparate users and contexts together into a playful but poignant display of one of the many new vernaculars of interaction and production on the Net.

Just as for centuries, the pictorial and performative vocabularies of artists have been referred to as a visual language, so too has the integration of digital media and social interaction on the Internet evolved into its own lexicon of signs, syntaxes, speech acts and exchanges. The artists in this exhibition recognize this evolution, and are beginning to use this novel language. They are exploring its structures and limits through various experiments. Their creations of online crosstalk attest to just one of many budding virtual 'speech acts'—linguistic expressions on the Net that highlight both the freedom and harrowing uncertainty of language through shifting meanings and ambiguity. The inability

to know the true meaning behind someone else's words, images or gestures is, after all, both the greatest and gravest aspect of what it means to communicate. The continual struggle to understand perspectives outside our own experiences is both a vice and a virtue of human experience, as sometimes even day to day acts of communication can be easily misread and ultimately frustrating. However, that tension also drives the creation of new forms of language and expression in the quest to resolve it. And, in an agonistic fashion, the artists exhibited here are celebrating that tension and its productive potential. Each work testifies to the emergence of a highly unstable yet highly malleable form of language owed to the complete convergence of media and culture on the Internet. More than ever, to express oneself on the Net is, in some ways, to surrender; to accept that the borders between text and image, sender and receiver, self and other, public and private are only myths and our own construction. And, that as our society crosses over the figurative bridge from the scape of the information society to the full-on networked society, our concepts of language and communication are collapsing, not expanding. They are condensing, to become one and yet all these things: the public and the private, the local and the global, the "you" and the "me"—in a perpetual moment of crosstalk, at the hinterlands of linguistic possibility.

Zach Pearl, Curator | February 2012

Appendix G: Select E-mail Transcripts

Appendix G.1
Subject: Add Topic?

On 2012-02-01, at 7:25 PM, [REDACTED] wrote:

Zach -

Do I need to modify the board to post a new topic? I'm unsure of the netiquette as well -is there a protocol as to how much information is required in terms of description of a new board (if that is indeed the procedure...)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

On 2012-02-01, at 7:36 PM, Zach Pearl wrote:

[REDACTED]

If by new topic you mean another "Appropriation..." or "Speech Acts...", then you'll want to click the button that says "Add Board". As for the info, really the only thing that's required is the title. I don't see any problem in keeping things simple and to the point if that's what suits you. Someone else can always add a description and whatnot if they so choose.

Cheers,
Z

On 2012-02-01, at 9:00 PM, [REDACTED] wrote:

Zach,

Is there a way that I can be configured as anonymous and still be helpful to the

project? I'm happy to post and respond, but suddenly filled with anxiety about the web presence.

Here's what I was about to post:

A question to be asked is to what degree the 'predesigned arrangements' (referred to in the Curator's essay) interrogate their existing templates? When appropriating an existing form, by my lights, the success of the work requires a critical engagement with also that form and not only the content. How does the form impact, inform, and frame our experience of the content? Apart from its obviously satisfying formalism, I am compelled by the Kelberman piece for the way that it critically engages with the forms of both the tumblr blog and the google image search. Our expectations of the episodic and the random are subverted with sustained duration and control. The Jaramillo and Roth pieces do not read to me as as engaged formally. The forms (templates) seem less considered. This feels key to me when working in such a ubiquitous form.

Let me know.



On 2012-02-01, at 9:09 PM, Zach Pearl wrote:



If you feel that you'd be more engaged as an anonymous user then that's fine with me. All you need to do is change your user name in 'Account Settings' under the 'Profile' tab. No one will be able to see the e-mail address that you registered with except for me.

Also, I like what you were going to post. But, also consider providing a link or an image with it. I think it might encourage other thoughts on what a template is or could be.

Cheers,
Z

On 2012-02-01, at 9:18 PM, [REDACTED] wrote:

Zach,

Thanks for understanding. The anonymity is key for me to be able to respond to this opportunity like a conversation vs. an essay.

I will try to find some blank templates as an example.



###

Appendix G.2
Subject: Re: trial-run

On 2012-01-17, at 6:41 PM, [REDACTED] wrote:

Hi Zach,

Thanks -- this seems more or less straightforward. When you ask for a "test post" is this just to familiarize ourselves with the system? There wasn't really any context for a commentary so I wasn't really sure what you were expecting. Also -- can you clarify the parameters of the 3 discussion boards -- you said that they aren't really topic guides but sort of are indications of what we might comment on? Anyways, I'm sure it will all be clarified once the exhibition opens. Will you be posting an initial curatorial statement that will give us some context for the projects?

Thanks,
[REDACTED]

=====
[REDACTED]

On 2012-01-17, at 8:59 PM, Zach Pearl wrote:

Hi [REDACTED]

My apologies if I wasn't clear in that last e-mail. Yes, the test post is just to familiarize yourself with the system. No expectations for it to be a critical comment about the art.

As for the 3 discussion boards, those are the three major categories that I see conversations in the critique fitting into. But, they're not meant to be permanent fixtures. If someone, for instance yourself, doesn't think that one of the topics I've selected is appropriate, then feel free to change it. You and everyone else that's registered has the permissions to do that. Or, if you'd like to get rid of them completely so that there is just one, general discussion board that is also fine with me. They are just suggested starting points. The interesting part will be to see what the whole group makes of them on the 1st...

Re: more context for the artworks—yes. When the show officially opens I'll have a general statement and an essay available explaining the works in more detail and my unifying concept. The artists have also offered brief statements about their pieces that you can read by clicking on plus sign next to the title of their works in the virtual gallery.

Cheers,
Z

On 2012-01-18, at 8:43 AM [REDACTED] wrote:

Thanks Zach -- this sounds great. I look forward to the conversation on the 1st.

Best,

[REDACTED]

=====
[REDACTED]

###