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GORGEOUS

ASIAN ART MUSEUM

June 20–Sept 14

www.asianart.org

Beautiful or bizarre? Ravishing or repulsive? When it comes to viewing art, there's only one thing we can say for sure: it's in the eye of the beholder. Artworks from the Asian Art Museum and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art—appearing together for the first time—invite you to get personal and explore what "gorgeous" means to you. Come take a look, engage in some one-on-one with the objects, and see what happens.

FRI, JUNE 20, 7–11 PM:
GET *GORGEOUS* ON OPENING NIGHT.
Dress up or dress down. We don't care, as long as you bring it. Take your nails to the next level with TopCoat Nail Studio. Boogie to the bottom-shakin' beats of DJs Dr. Sleep, Robot Hustle and Natalie Nuxx. The International Haus of Nu Benetton will present a runway performance of vicious voguing. Bring your loved ones or make new ones, and let's get our freak on. PS: the afterparty will be at The Stud.

This exhibition was organized by the Asian Art Museum in partnership with the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Presentation at the Asian Art Museum is made possible with the generous support of Prospect Creek Foundation, Helen and Charles R. Schwab, Fred Eychaner, The Bernard Osher Foundation, United, Jim Breyer, Eliza and Dean Cash, Sakurako and William Fisher, Fred M. Levin and Nancy Livingston, The Shenson Foundation, Pacific Gas & Electric Company, Hiro and Betty Jean Ogawa, and Lucy Sun and Warren Felson. Image: Marilyn Minter, *Strut*, 2004-05; Collection SFMOMA, Accessions Committee Fund purchase: gift of Johanna and Thomas Baruch, Charles J. Betlach II, Shawn and Brook Byers, Nancy and Steven Oliver, and Prentice and Paul Sack; © Marilyn Minter.

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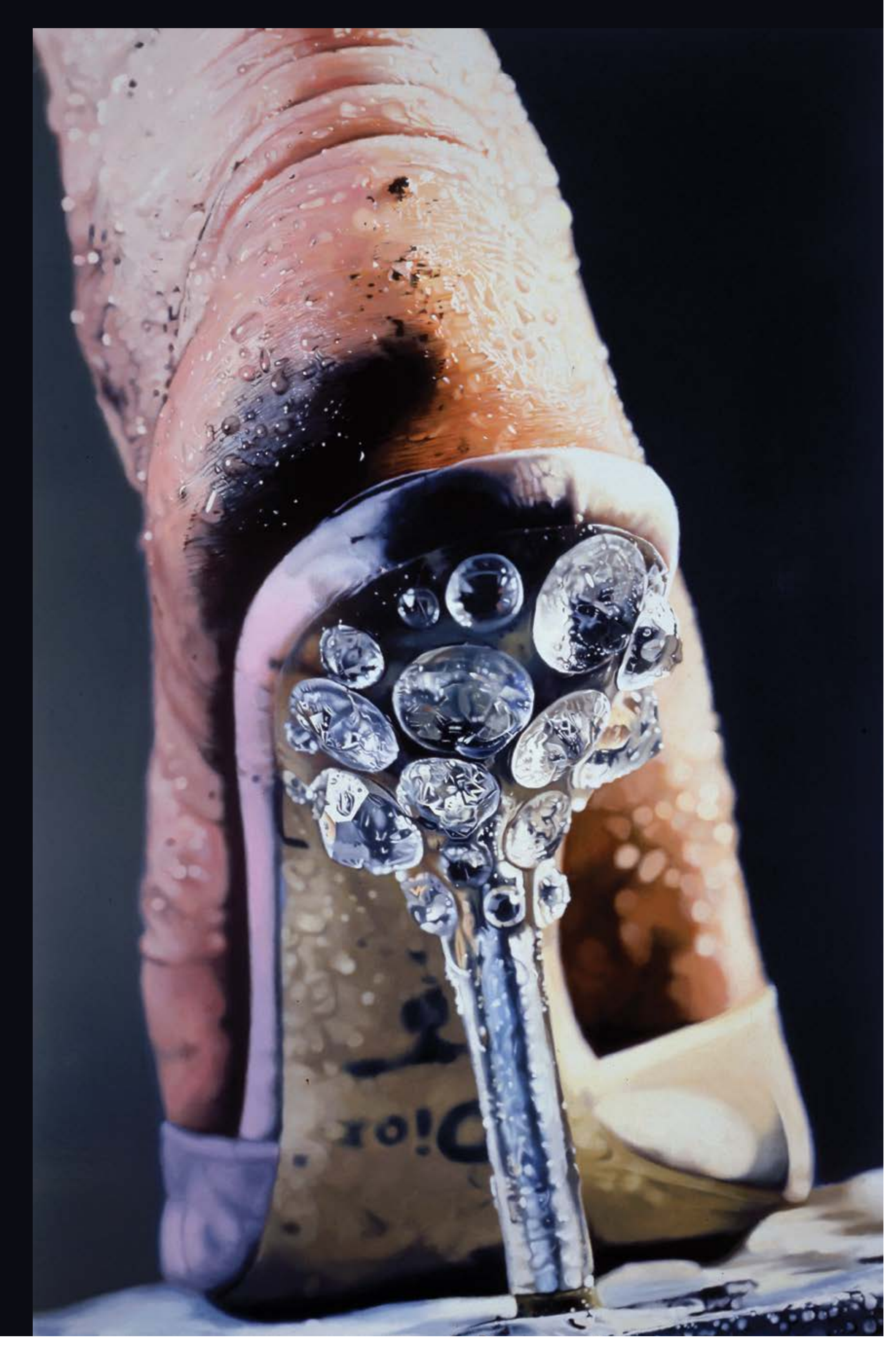

MODERNISM

FROM THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

THE ROBERT & JANE MEYERHOFF COLLECTION

JUNE 7–OCTOBER 12

Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Frank Stella, and more. See this captivating selection of the greatest masters of the postwar era, including a rare display of Barnett Newman's 15-painting masterpiece *The Stations of the Cross: Lema Sabachthani*.

HERBST EXHIBITION GALLERIES

Golden Gate Park ▪ deyoungmuseum.org

This exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington, and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. Presenting Sponsors: Penny and James George Coulter. Director's Circle: Estate of Dr. Charles L. Dibble. President's Circle: Bernard Osher Foundation. Curator's Circle: Lisa and Douglas Goldman Fund. Conservator's Circle: National Endowment for the Arts. Benefactor's Circle: Nion T. McEvoy. Patron's Circle: Richard and Peggy Greenfield and the Ednah Root Foundation. The exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

SF WEEKLY

Roy Lichtenstein, *Painting with Statue of Liberty*, 1983. Oil and Magna on canvas. National Gallery of Art, Washington, Collection of Robert and Jane Meyerhoff. © Estate of Roy Lichtenstein

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SFMOMA on the go

PUBLIC INTIMACY

Art and Other Ordinary Acts in South Africa

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Evelyn D. Haas EXHIBITION FUND

ART WORKS. arts.gov

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Public Intimacy: Art and Other Ordinary Acts in South Africa is jointly organized by YBCA and SFMOMA. Presenting support is generously provided by the Evelyn D. Haas Exhibition Fund at SFMOMA. Major support is provided by the James C. Hormel and Michael P. Nguyen Endowment Fund at SFMOMA. Generous support is provided by Meridee Moore and Kevin King, Mike Wilkins and Sheila Duignan, the Betlach Family Foundation, the YBCA Creative Ventures Council, Concepción and Irwin Federman, the National Endowment for the Arts, the George Frederick Jewett Foundation, Ronald W. Garrity, Kate and Wes Mitchell, and the Yerba Buena Community Benefit District.

Athi-Patra Ruga, *The Future White Women of Azania*, 2012; performed as part of *Performa Obscura* in collaboration with Mikhael Subotzky; commissioned for the exhibition *Making Way*, Grahamstown, South Africa; photo: Ruth Simbao, courtesy Athi-Patra Ruga and WHATIFTHEWORLD/GALLERY.

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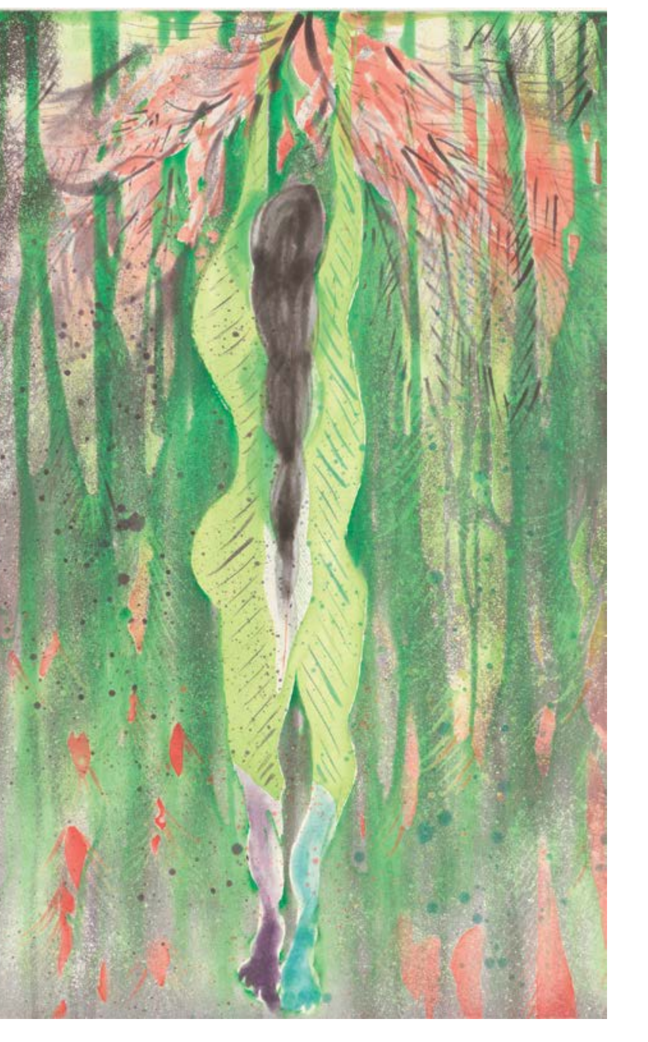

Chris Ofili, *Habio Green*, 2009.
Color etching, 32½ x 22¾", edition 20.

Adrian Tomine
Ako Castuera
Amy Sol
Andrew Hem
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Hamburger Eyes
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Absurd, 2014. Digital archival photograph, 62x42 inches.

Adam Parker Smith

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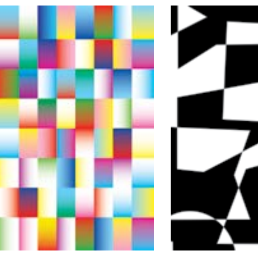
[PULLOUT]
RAFAËL ROZENDAAL
Colorful folded object with shadows, 2014.



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Luca Nino Antonucci lives and works in San Francisco, California. He received his MFA from the San Francisco Art Institute in 2010 and is a resident artist at Basement. He is editor and co-founder of Colpa Press, an independent publishing company specializing in art books. He has exhibited his own work widely in San Francisco, New York and Berlin.

Peter Cochrane is a writer, artist, and editor living in beautiful San Francisco, despite loving an overabundance of sunshine and warmth. He is a product of and believer in public education, co-founding the magazine HOLLOWAY, which is dedicated to the exposition of work made by students and alumni of public institutions. The combination of art and politics is what really gets him going. He is the managing editor for SFAQ's online counterpart, sfaqonline.com.

Terri Cohn is a writer, curator, art historian, and editor. Her research and writings focus on conceptual art, technology, public art, and socially-engaged art practices. A Contributing Editor to Artweek magazine for 20 years, she currently writes for various publications including Public Art Review, Art in America, SFAQ, Squarecylinder, Art Practical, and caa.reviews. Terri co-wrote and edited Pairing of Polarities: The Life and Art of Sonya Rapoport (Heyday Press, 2012), and curated exhibitions of Rapoport's work for Kala Art Institute and Mills College Art Museum (2011, 2012). She teaches core and interdisciplinary art history courses for the University of California, Berkeley, in their Art and Design Extension program.

David Cunningham is an architect and founder of David Cunningham Projects. He has organized and co-juried exhibitions at The Lab and presented off-site projects at New Langton Arts and in collaboration with Christian L. Frock's Invisible Venue (Oakland). He is currently serving as Vice President of the Board of Directors of Southern Exposure.

Peter Dobey is an artist and psychoanalyst raised in the exact epicenter of the Loma Prieta earthquake. The foreign correspondent for San Francisco Arts Quarterly currently lives in Dublin,Ireland and divides his time between Dublin, San Francisco and Paris.

Jarrett Earnest is an artist, writer, and co-director of 1:1, a collaborative that took the form of an art space in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. He writes regularly on contemporary art and pursues the interview as a distinct critical form, publishing long innovative interviews with artists such as Maurizio Cattelan, Richard Tuttle, and Nayland Blake, among others. He is presently at work on a book of writing and drawing, exploring the aesthetics of intimacy. All of his disparate projects engage the intersections of performance, poetry, the visual arts and politics.

John Held, Jr. curates the exhibition A History of West Coast Mail Art at the San Francisco Center for Book in February. Later in 2014, he will be organizing an exhibition at Ever Gold Gallery on Fred Martin and friends in the Fifties, and completing a residency at the Emily Harvey Foundation, Venice, Italy, in November/December.

Aaron Harbour is a curator, writer, and artist operating out of Oakland, CA. He is co-director of Et al., a gallery program in San Francisco, and has additionally curated exhibitions at The Popular Workshop, Important Projects, NADA Miami & New York, MacArthur B Arthur, Interface, Liminal Space, and Royal Nonesuch Gallery, among others. He runs Curiously Direct, an art criticism blog on Facebook, and has additionally written for Art Practical, Decoy Magazine, Art Cards, and several small publications/artist catalogues. He also produces art, and would gladly make art for the group show you are organizing.

Jackie Im is a curator and writer based in Oakland, CA. She has contributed to exhibitions at the Wattis Institute of Contemporary Art, the Walter and McBean Galleries at SFAI, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Queens Nails, the Mills College Art Museum, and MacArthur B Arthur. She holds a BA in Art History from Mills College and a MA in Curatorial Practice from California College of the Arts. She is currently the co-director of Et al., a gallery in San Francisco's Chinatown with Facundo Argañaraz and Aaron Harbour.

Austin Lee was born in Las Vegas, NV and is a recent graduate of Yale School of Art. His paintings use paint, digital technology, humor and allusion to reflect the world around him. His studio is in Long Island City, NY. His first solo show was at Postmasters gallery in NYC in 2014.

Constance Lewallen was born and raised in New York City. She received her BA from Mount Holyoke College and her MA from California State University, San Diego. She is currently Adjunct Curator at the University of California, Berkeley, Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. In 1996 she curated Jay DeFeo: Selected Works 1952-1989 for Moore College of Art in Philadelphia, which traveled to the UC Berkeley Art Museum. As Senior Curator, at the BAM she curated many major exhibitions including, most recently A Rose Has No Teeth: Bruce Nauman in the 1960s all of which were accompanied by catalogues and toured nationally and internationally. Her most recent exhibition, State of Mind: New California Art circa 1970 co-curated with Karen Moss, premiered at the Orange County Museum of Art in Newport Beach, California in fall 2011, and was subsequently presented at the UC Berkeley Art Museum and toured to four additional venues in the United States and Canada. Her book on David Ireland's house, published by UC Press, will be released when the house reopens.

Courtney Malick lives in Los Angeles, where she works as a writer, independent curator and private art adviser, focusing on video, sculpture, performance and installation. She received her MA from the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College in 2011. She has curated exhibitions and performances in both New York and San Francisco. She is a regular contributor to Artforum, San Francisco Arts Quarterly, V Magazine, and is a founding contributor of Dis Magazine. Malick has also worked as Studio Manager for photographer Jane Wattenberg; Curatorial Assistant at LACE for the exhibition L.A. Goes Live, part of the Getty's Pacific Standard Time; Assistant Director at Broadway 1602 and Daniel Reich Gallery; as an archivist at Vito Acconci Studio and as Curatorial Assistant to Larry List for the exhibition The Art of Chess at the Reykjavik Museum. In 2013 she was commissioned to write an essay for the scholarly online journal Viralnet.net in association with California Institute of the Arts, as well as contributing text to the catalog for the Palazzo Peckham exhibition at the 55th Venice Biennale.

Andrew McClintock was born in a cave in Cappadocia, Turkey in 1969. He is 5th generation Uchisar, and the first of his family to get a high school diploma. During his formative years, McClintock was granted the Richard J. Belzer scholarship to Yale's SOM school, where he received an MBA in International Finance with a concurrent PHD in Forensic Accounting. In 2008, McClintock was the chief whistle blower against Morgan Stanley's sub-prime swap epidemic. He was later held by the Obama administration under the Carlson Act of 1917 for inciting the American mortgage crisis. After being acquitted, McClintock had a brief stint as a massage therapist, prison guard, limo driver, and a merchant marine. He was recently tapped by Simon & Schuster to pen an auto-biography entitled: Meet the Meat: 29 Years of Walking the Wire. He currently resides in Panama City with his wife and eight prized stallions.

Jeff McMillan is an artist based in San Francisco.

Nicholas O'Brien is a net-based artist, curator, and writer. His work has appeared across the US and internationally,including venues in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York City, Mexico, Berlin, London, Italy. He has also been featured in several publications including ARTINFO, Art F City, Sculpture magazine, Dazed Digital, The Creators Project, DIS, ilikethisart, Frieze d/e, the Brooklyn Rail, and the New York Times. He is currently living in Brooklyn working as a visiting artist professor and gallery director for the Department of Digital Art at Pratt Institute. More info can be found at doubleunderscore.net

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Monica Westin is an arts writer and a PhD candidate in the history of rhetoric. She is currently a visiting student researcher in Berkeley's Department of Rhetoric. A regular contributor to Artforum and Bad at Sports, Monica's writing has also appeared in The Believer, The Brooklyn Rail, BOMB, 3 Quarks Daily, and Motherboard, VICE's technology blog, where she will soon be a regularly contributing writer. Thanks to her partner Daniel McCartney for invaluable help with researching, writing, and editing this piece.

WRONG'S WHAT I DO BEST
WALTER AND McBEAN GALLERIES
APRIL 24–JULY 26
Curated by Hesse McGraw and Aaron Spangler

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Ashley Bickerton
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Samara Golden
Trenton Doyle Hancock
Brad Kahlhamer
Nikki S. Lee
Jonathan Meese
Laurel Nakadate
Dana Schutz
Aaron Storck
Marianne Vitale
Kara Walker

Ashley Bickerton
MV2 (detail), 2013
Aluminum, oil, acrylic paint, hair, and cement; 83 x 28 x 25 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong

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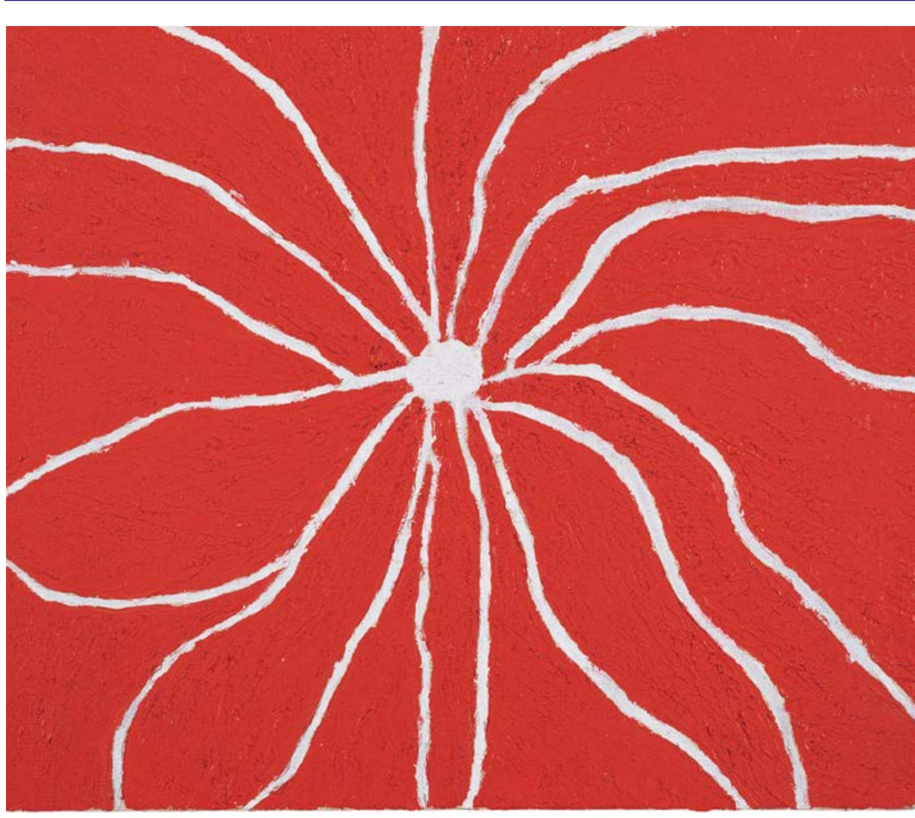

Forrest Bess

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Forrest Bess: *Untitled* (The Spider), 1970; oil on canvas, 13 ¾ × 16 ⅛ in.; collection of Christian Zachartas. Organized by the Menil Collection, Houston.

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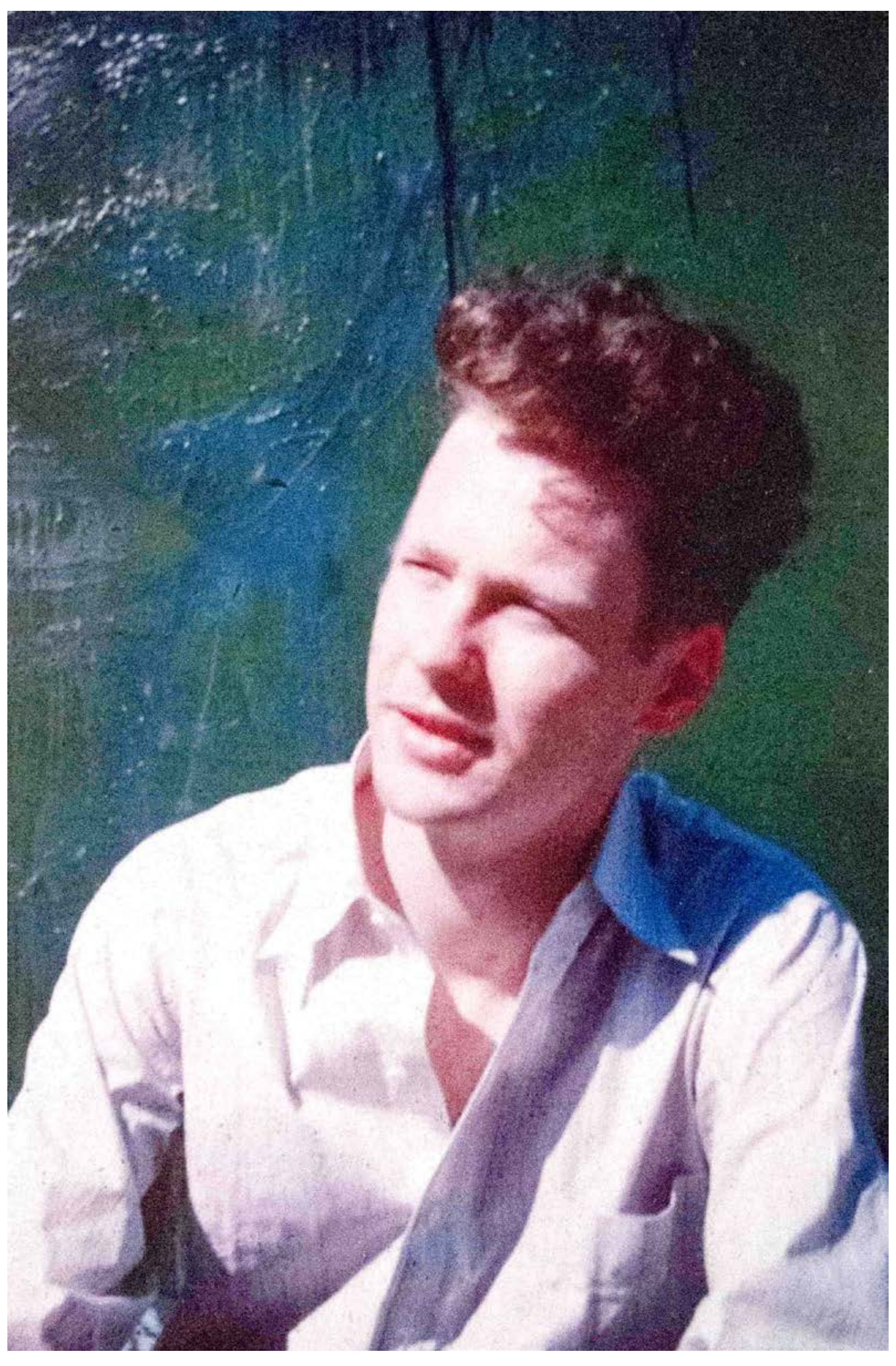
June 14 - July 18, 2014

Curated by John Held, Jr.



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Victory, Larry Robinson, 2011, Painting Fundamentals Instructor

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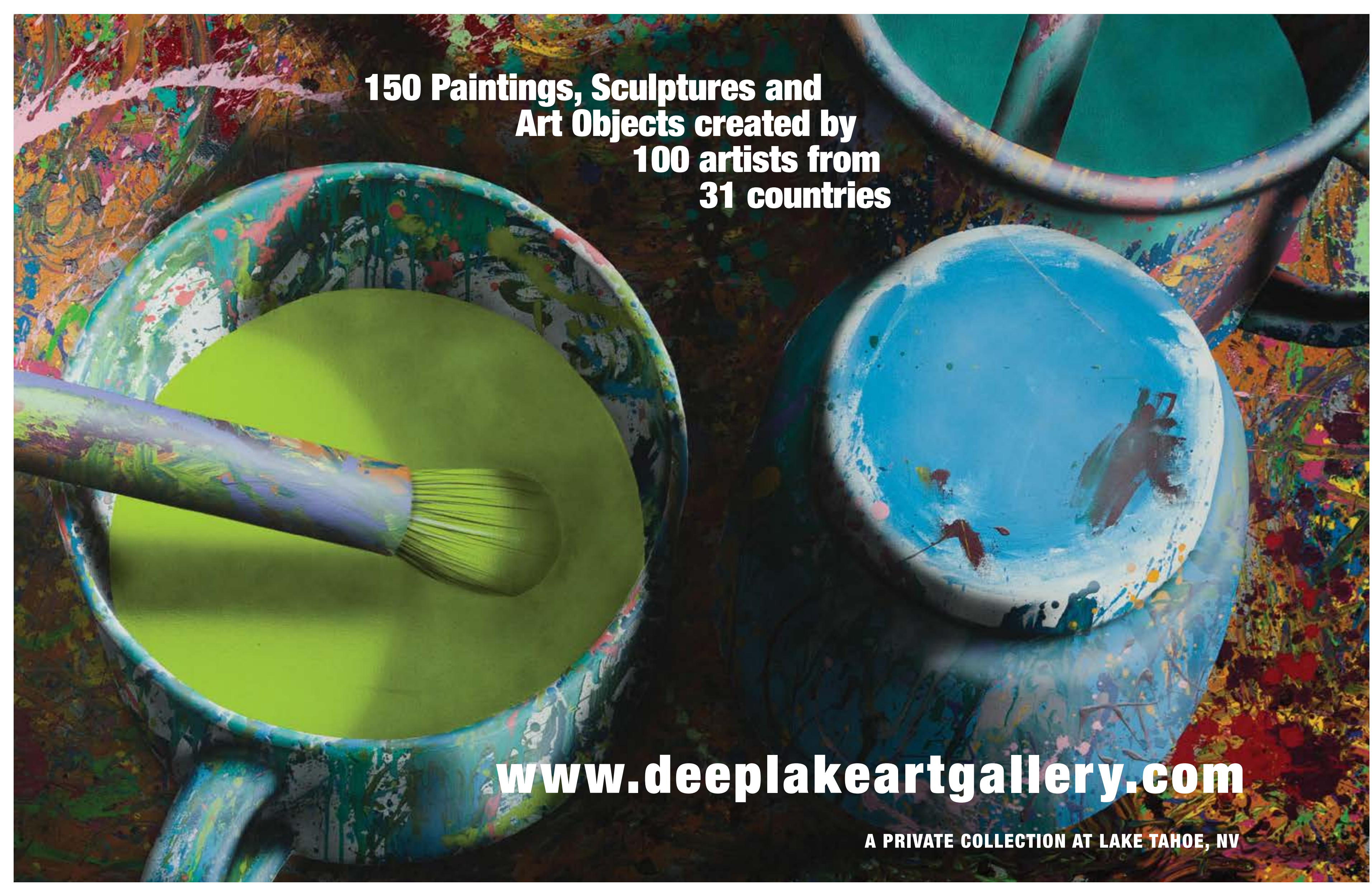

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1 - 3:00PM — **YERBA BUENA GARDENS FESTIVAL ANDRE THIERRY & ZYDECO MAGIC LIVE MUSIC**
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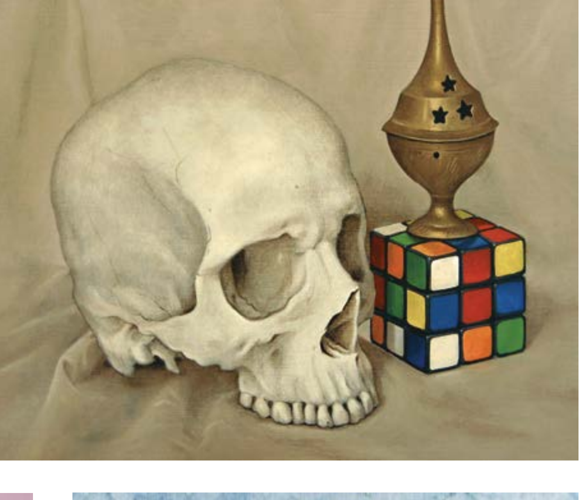

Clockwise from top left: Jim Skull, *Mr. Smith*, 2008, papier mache and polyester rope, 33" tall; Tony Bevilacqua, *Skull Study with Cube*, 2012, oil on panel, 10 x 8.25"; Ben Venom, *The Skeleton in the Closet*, 2013, handmade quilt, bleached denim, leather, fabric, batting, thread, 37 x 37"; Bill Claps, *It's All Derivative, Warhol's Skull*, mixed media, 12 x 16"

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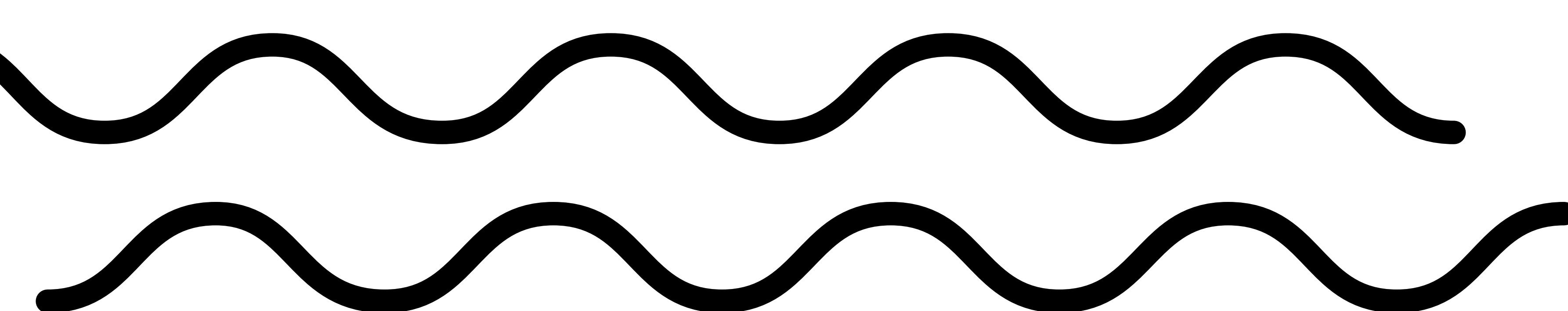

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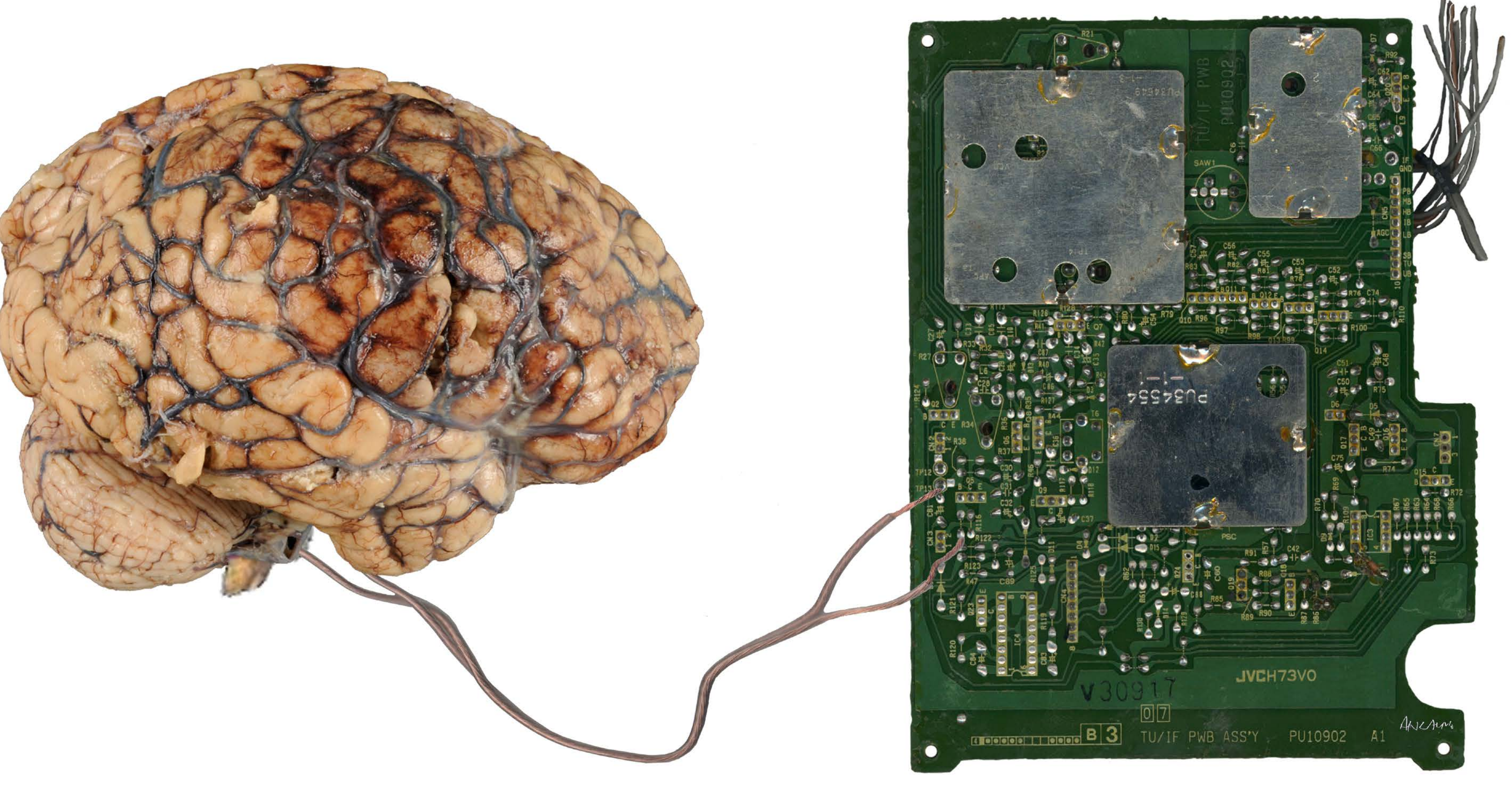


Mauricio Ancalmo
Cerebellum vs. Omnibellum, 2014
Photoshop collage
21 x 13 inches
Courtesy of the artist

WHAT IS "ART AND TECHNOLOGY"?

By PETER DOBEY

SFAQ 16 focuses on "art and technology," an indeterminate yet salient phrase that has become the catchphrase du jour for the Bay Area visual art community.

However, similar to the start-up culture that has necessitated these exchanges, the significance or meaning of art and technology remains casual, speculative, and not well known to outsiders. My essay in the previous issue of *SFAQ, Some Considerations Towards an Understanding of the Worlds of Art and Tech*, attempted to give an account of the particularities and differences between the two. The phrase "art and technology" carries the implicit suggestion that they should be one word. How the confluence between *art* and *technology* emerges in our speech, thought, and discourse should not be taken in vain. After all, words beget worlds.

Neither worlds of art *or* technology exist in a vacuum—they are part of a still larger entity. The two industries, complete with their communities and specialized jargons, continue to exist as distant planets, ready to collide. As if two distinct humanities existed on each, we risk having superficial relations with each other if we do not investigate, question, and watch where we stand in the looming horizon.

This issue of *SFAQ* is an appeal for the synthesis of these two worlds.

The digital information age is not a period of social re-organization, such as the Industrial Age, nor is it solely a cultural movement, such as the Enlightenment. Its most unique characteristic, it seems, is that the technology that engenders our time has not changed what we do, or even what we think, but *how* we do and think about the same things we have always done.

By now, it is a truism that the tech industry is the prevailing economic force in the San Francisco Bay Area. It is also the case that the use of information technology seems to be the single most transformative attribute at the dawn of the 21st century. If art takes account of the zeitgeist it inhabits, what we don't necessarily know is what our zeitgeist is, or how to make use of and live in it.

Let us parse out our moment in time, and its most germane industry, from other prevailing eras' cultural movements and industries. There are distinct differences that arise with new technologies that are not analogous to prior ones, though not necessarily diametrically opposed, either. The wheel has not been reinvented; it just doesn't spin in the same direction. It may not spin in any direction. The proliferation of new technologies (and technologists) into our lifestyles, cultures, and communities has left us simultaneously hyper-stimulated and thoroughly unimpressed. In short, we are excited by our time as it unfolds, yet confused about its meaning. We are at a loss for words.

What do we mean when we say "art and technology?"

This question may at first look as if it is merely one of semantics. But the future of art as we know it may rest on how we conceptualize and make sense of these two entities together. What do we mean when we think of our current art world and tech world together as one? What does this new world look like? Can we even put this world to words yet? What we can say for certain is that art and tech have no particular relation between them. Art and tech is an unordered pair.

In order to imagine such a world's existence, we can create a formula:

What does the relation {art, technology} mean for our time?

I posed this question to eight individuals from diverse backgrounds whom have made attempts to straddle the intersections of the worlds of art and technology, in order to facilitate further engagement and understanding between the two. Both worlds have started to speak to each other, but we at *SFAQ* hope that these two worlds can start speaking the same language.

Sheena Vaidyanathan holds degrees in computer science and a certificate in studio art. She teaches computer science to sixth graders in Los Altos and works in the STEM (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics) program developing computational thinking programs for K-5th graders.

When we can say "art and technology," I believe what we mean is our ability to imagine these two together, not as two different languages spoken by two different sets of people who do not understand each other. Art and technology are both a part of me, and I see them together. I see the algorithms behind the art, and I also see computer programming as a way to create art. I taught watercolor and clay in K-6 for 3 years and I now teach computer programming. I am teaching the same thing—a way to be creative.

Marcella Faustini works at Steven Wolf Fine Arts and has at times worked as a gallerist, curator, artist, and event organizer.

I think what echoes my perspective best is the concept of *techne*, a term in philosophy that constitutes the etymological root of the word "art" and resembles *episteme* [Ancient Greek for *knowledge*] in that it has implications of the principles of knowledge. *Techne* differs, however, in that its intent is in making and doing as opposed to knowledge or understanding in and of themselves. So, to me it's a particular way of making that is not always product oriented and embodies the intersection of both practices.

Dorothy Santos is a freelance writer and new media/digital arts researcher finishing her degree in Visual and Critical Studies at the California College of the Arts.

Intersectionality. The idea of art and technology means an in-between space that has yet to even be defined. This sounds incredibly abstract, but it's the first thing that comes to mind. Starting with the Experiments in Arts and Technology (E.A.T.) collaborative group formed in the 1960s by artists and engineers including Robert Rauschenberg and Billy Klüver, the intersection of artistic practices with engineering and technology was in its nascent stages. These individuals were discovering what the other discipline could offer and what skills they could learn from one another. Art and technology also means convergence. Historically, artists and technologists seemed like such separate disciplines. But in contemporary art practices, digital technologies and programming languages are starting to become more common tools for creative expression themselves.

Willa Köerner is an artist, writer, and creative digital strategist. As the former leader of SFMOMA's social media and digital engagement strategy, she is now working independently to bring art, the Internet, and people together in meaningful ways.

"Art and technology?" I see a natural convergence in the form of a gradient composed of the people, projects, and ideas that incorporate varying levels of the two components. I'm honestly getting tired of negotiating the divide between the two worlds of art and tech, which has become somewhat of a cliché topic here in SF. Artists use digital technologies in their work, critiquing the systems and shining light on the ways that technologies have altered the human condition. Many technologists would argue that the technologies (apps, games, platforms, etc.) they create are imbued with creative, artistic traits. Fundamentally, technologies change our culture because tools help us do new things—and art questions and critiques culture and change. Art and technology work together, and it has always been this way—it's just easier to see now due to the Internet. The Internet has created a defining environment where everything is more visible and more virile, alerting more people to cultural zeitgeists that may have otherwise gone unnoticed. In effect, the Internet has dramatically steepened the hill down which the art and technology snowball rolls, causing it to pick up momentum and give the effect that it is a dangerous bullet plummeting towards those who might stand in its way. If it rolled more slowly, fewer people would take notice, and it would roll by casually without causing alarm.

Hanna Regev, curator and art consultant with degrees in museum studies and modern European history. She works with cultural organizations in the Bay Area to produce public programs and exhibitions.

I think that art and technology are inseparable entities, but this current new brave world is very complex. My observations on these questions are based on real experiences through a number of programs and exhibitions I have curated. When I see the phrase "art and technology" I think of artists who combine technology, or technologists, software engineers, and scientists who cross over and experiment with the newest tech tools and devices to create artworks that are divorced from art history and theories. They push the limits of the very technology they create or embrace for this very purpose. By and large, it's process driven for its own sake—they don't engage in dialogues with art historical figures or certain art movements. Many creators of new media art, net art, and electronic art demonstrate a certain ignorance towards art history and its appreciation; they inhabit the world of pixels and bytes that give us digital art whose essential properties include perfect duplicability, interactivity, networkability, virtuality, multimediality, simulation, and more. The techies who dabble in art on their free time find the art world insular, intimidating to them, the outsiders, the novice. The one who is not schooled in the arts. And frankly, they don't care. That being said . . . there really is no escape [for artists] from the digital age that we live in.

Ian Aleksander Adams is an information architect at Media Z Software, a San Francisco-based consulting group, and volunteers at the Internet Archive. He has had work in over sixty-five galleries, but does not identify as an artist.

The history of the art canon is parallel with that of technology; a symbiotic relationship. As technology advances, the experiences accepted under the word *art* become broader. Art itself, if you subscribe to the word, may be a technology as a system and method of organizing the world for the purpose of creating perceptual shifts. While many seem to set the two entities at odds, I find them inseparable.

Ben Valentine is a researcher on new means of self-expression, especially online. He works for The Civic Beat, a team of researchers examining social change memes in global contexts.

Technology includes paintbrushes, canvases, film, etc. . . . but this dichotomy seems to be used as a shorthand for "art and *new* technology." On some level there is a disconnect—real or conceived—where technologists are seen as asking questions like, what can this do?, how does this work?, why do I want this? while art rarely focuses on utilitarian questions of that nature. Possibly most importantly, the technology we use is the technology that is financially self-sustaining, which is great, but rarely the most interesting. Still, I see great potential in blurring those constructed differences. Why not ask what art can do? Why not ask what technology means?

DC Spensley, contemporary artist and mythographer, creator of telepresent theatrical productions and social practice projects.

The terms *art* and *technology* are vagaries used together today to define the confluence of high-technology tools being employed by the artists of today. Seems everyone wants to date art now. Last year it was science and art, this year technology and art. What exactly art *is* has always been a circular and unproductive question. The contemporary context means the use of various forms of high technology: computers, biotech, network communications, robotics, CNC, and 2D/3D printers are being used to realize artworks. Artists have been using technology since the first tribal engineer invented the paintbrush and the first tribal artist said "gimme that" and showed them what it

was for. What's happening now that is special is that a new wave of technology has become accessible to a large number of people. Not every creative act qualifies as art because the democratization of technology does not necessarily result in the democratization of the vision, insight, and rigor necessary to produce artworks. The consequences are that the contemporary understandings of what art is and what a product is are conflating. Art has long resisted "productization." Duchamp railed against "professionalization" in the art field for similar reasons, but as our culture is further optimized by technology the baseline distinctions are shifting. The question for me is not so much how art is being changed by contemporary high-technology tools, rather how broader culture is evolving to forget why it is important for some things, like art, to remain distinctly interesting in their non-productness.

Ben Valentine Art has always struggled to compete for the public's attention, and if art, artists, and arts institutions don't become networked like the rest of our world they will struggle even more. Our attention spans are getting shorter, and multi-tasking is becoming the norm, while art has historically been about the deep and critical engagement between the viewer and the work. However, I don't see this as a concern as much as it is an opportunity—figuring out how to grab and hold our attention and demand deep engagement has always been a struggle for artists and it always will be. We are seeing more and more artists making art using new tools; making new media works, interactive works, networked art, and more. This may bring about a new appreciation of art for techies who enjoy art but don't see the ownership of it being of value in the same manner old-moneyed, more traditional collectors might. Techies are replacing the pride of personal ownership with open-source, file-sharing, crowd-funding ideologies. These disruptive, egalitarian models are great for many fields but might not be a viable model for things that don't have obvious economic value—things I believe that make us human, such as creativity, respect, personal relationships. . . . .

Hanna Regev From my observations and experiences, many tech artists do not share the worldview of the art world, which is a very structured and hierarchical system, a system that is delivered top-down from elite, self-anointed cultural guardians who hold the power to determine value. Technology has introduced innovations into art and expanded the breath and depth of creativity, but has an ironic side. As the making of art has become more mechanized, the technology sector is reaching out to artists to humanize the output and incorporate artistic sensibilities. The use of the brush, pencil, or paintbrush is now at the mercy of the computer. How much of history of art making is being taken out? Where is art and art history as we know it going? There is also a big question here about collecting and a need for building new and different patrons. How are these new forms of artwork collectible in the first place if they are not object based? I am envisioning a new type of collector who is grounded in technology and supports the art as an intersection with technology. Programs such as CODAME ART+TECH's *Adopt an Artist* may crack this nut. It is an initiative that calls for establishing artists-in-residency programs with high tech and social media companies to demonstrate value in partnering with host companies.

Willa Köerner I 100% agree that digital art has faced a challenge in its non-objectness. Technologically created artworks are not easily purchased and hung on a wall or preserved in a museum collection—interestingly, the aspect and word that defines these works, ("digital") is the same characteristic that keeps them from assimilating into the status quo of the art world. However, I believe that this situation is changing—platforms like Paddle8, Artsy, Tumblr, and Depict are showing us that collectors are interested in buying digital artwork. New systems are being created which offer sensible ways to support artists who create in the digital realm, and this mindset is even transferring over to museums. SFMOMA recently launched The Artist Initiative, a program supported by a $1.75 million grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which seeks to make the museum a pioneer in art conservation. I think that museums, collectors, and artists alike are beginning to understand that the time has come to work on solving the problems of collecting/preserving digital art. Soon these problems will be obsolete, as our ways of thinking about digital vs. object art will shift to a place where we accept the idea of "collecting" something that you may not be able to physically touch, and we will hopefully design systems that allow us to guarantee that we'll be able to view the artwork in the future.

Dorothy Santos The primary challenge I see within the arts is the historiography of works created in the digital age. Ubiquitous communication gives us such a wide array of resources, but with the incredible amount of text written on the topic of arts and technology we also have to consider modes of classification and what exactly historicizes a particular artwork. Recently, I gave a talk at the San Francisco Art Institute to a class of students taking a course titled Internet Art. We discussed the differences between types of art produced in the digital age. We also discussed why reading the history and documentation of previous works is an important practice as well. But the most illuminating moment was hearing the students express how they identify themselves. A small percentage of the class identified as artists while the rest of the students had no designation for their practices other than interdisciplinary. While they expressed having practices that run the gamut when it comes to material tools and methods, I sensed their frustration at understanding how they could affect change or add to the discipline of art in a way that is impactful and adds to the existing dialogue.
Ian Aleksander Adams I produce ephemera haphazardly and I don't have a problem with it ending up in galleries. Once I put something online I think part of the process is that I lose control over context—I'm ok with someone taking a screenshot of it and posting it on 4chan than it's also ok for someone to print it out and hang it on a wall. I want to say "ok" to any use someone decides for it. Kind of a copy/paste mentality to the dispersal of ideas.

Sheena Vaidyanathan I teach sixth graders computer programming through art. I want my students to look at code as a medium, just like paint. They learn that they can use code to do something creative. To make a static image, an animation, or today's new kind of art (for example, a video game). I believe artists today should understand code so they can use it themselves as well as understand digital tools like Instagram. A sculpture like *The Bay Lights* by Leo Villareal would not be possible without the computer program that controls the lights.

Marcella Faustini Personally, I have yet to see art come together in an interesting, thoughtful and relevant way in this area of art and technology. And in fact, the greatest challenge we face in San Francisco is the possible loss of the art community itself. Currently we are experiencing a substantial depletion of San Francisco's social and economic landscape that is in no small part due to the influx of technologists and the housing shortage. The exodus of members of the art community is not necessarily to the East Bay. Many artists are moving out of the Bay Area altogether, and if the sky-rocketing apartment prices continue the Bay Area will fail to attract artists who have the potential to do interesting things here.

Hanna Regev It is a very depressing situation we find ourselves in San Francisco. Our art scene is being transformed by a powerful political and economic force that equals a tsunami that left everyone in its wake pretty confused, discouraged, and helpless. San Francisco has an art culture that is quite disconnected from the very dynamic waves that are hitting its shores. Few artists here keep up with tech- and performance-driven events, and our main industry is largely uncultured. No wonder we have a hard time naming the leading digital artists.

Why is SF so aloof when it comes to embracing artists (digital and otherwise), and what can be done to make the two worlds work harmoniously? Is it perhaps that we don't have a museum dedicated to the "art of now?" Apparently, the definition of contemporary art is not satisfying and very confusing, to paraphrase the 2014 Whitney Biennial curators.

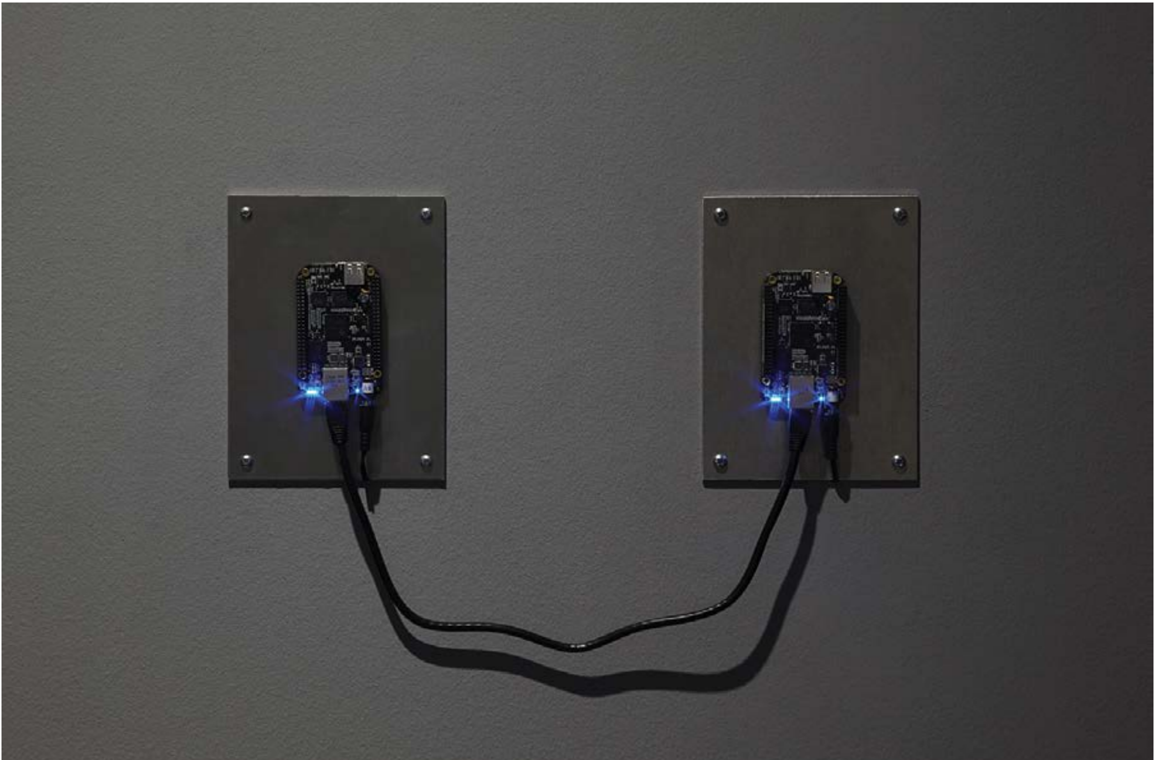
Willa Köerner Those with enough money to make an impact on SF's situation don't necessarily share the same definition of "artist" that those of us in the art world subscribe to. In my mind, the only solution is to abandon our preconceived notions of what being an artist is or isn't, and come together to work on projects collaboratively. With a few more folks out there devoted to championing the arts in our city of technocrats, I believe we can be successful in developing new ways of working together.

DC Spensley San Francisco is a testing ground for social organization right now. But the city also has a history of coping with boom and bust cycles like the forty-niners, the logging barons, and a variety of recent tech booms (and busts). San Francisco copes, absorbs what it can in terms of capital and talent and goes on with its business of progressive experimentation. What should be considered is the relationship between economic booms and this progressive social experimentation. There are those who think that the recent techno-economic disruption and displacement happening in the Bay Area is a force moving SF towards more conservative baselines (by displacing progressives for libertarian techies). I am not so sure about this. It could easily be that only in boom times we have the confidence and cash to push forward on finding out what is the next better way to organize culture. This time may be a great opportunity to influence social media technology and hack government in good ways as well as selfish ones. What would be good to see is a *real* engagement of tech capital with contemporary arts in terms of support for work that is emerging outside of the art world.

Ben Valentine Art and much of culture do not have an especially viable model of existence in a hyper-capitalistic setting, which San Francisco is rapidly becoming. These emerging, disruptive models like crowdsourcing, crowd-funding, and open-source software are making amazing products that are changing the marketplace, while also replacing unionized, secure, and established jobs with a real uncertainty. Disruption has mostly been a bad experience for the working class and poor. As exciting as this new dynamic is for a wealthy, educated white man in the Bay Area with an expertise in coding, these disruptions are leaving most people behind.

Dorothy Santos The biggest concern related to art and technology discussions would be bridging communities. The same people talking about the same topics is definitely something that has prevented people from understanding how they can help expand and be inclusive. More active engagement with a multitude of individuals from underrepresented populations and including artists working from and through the lens of social practice could certainly be an interesting point of departure. I will be most interested to see if the Bay Area can continue to be a place that is open and welcoming to creatives invested in social, cultural, and historical (radical) change. I have faith that it can be.

Adel Abidin, *Consumption*. Courtesy of the Internet.

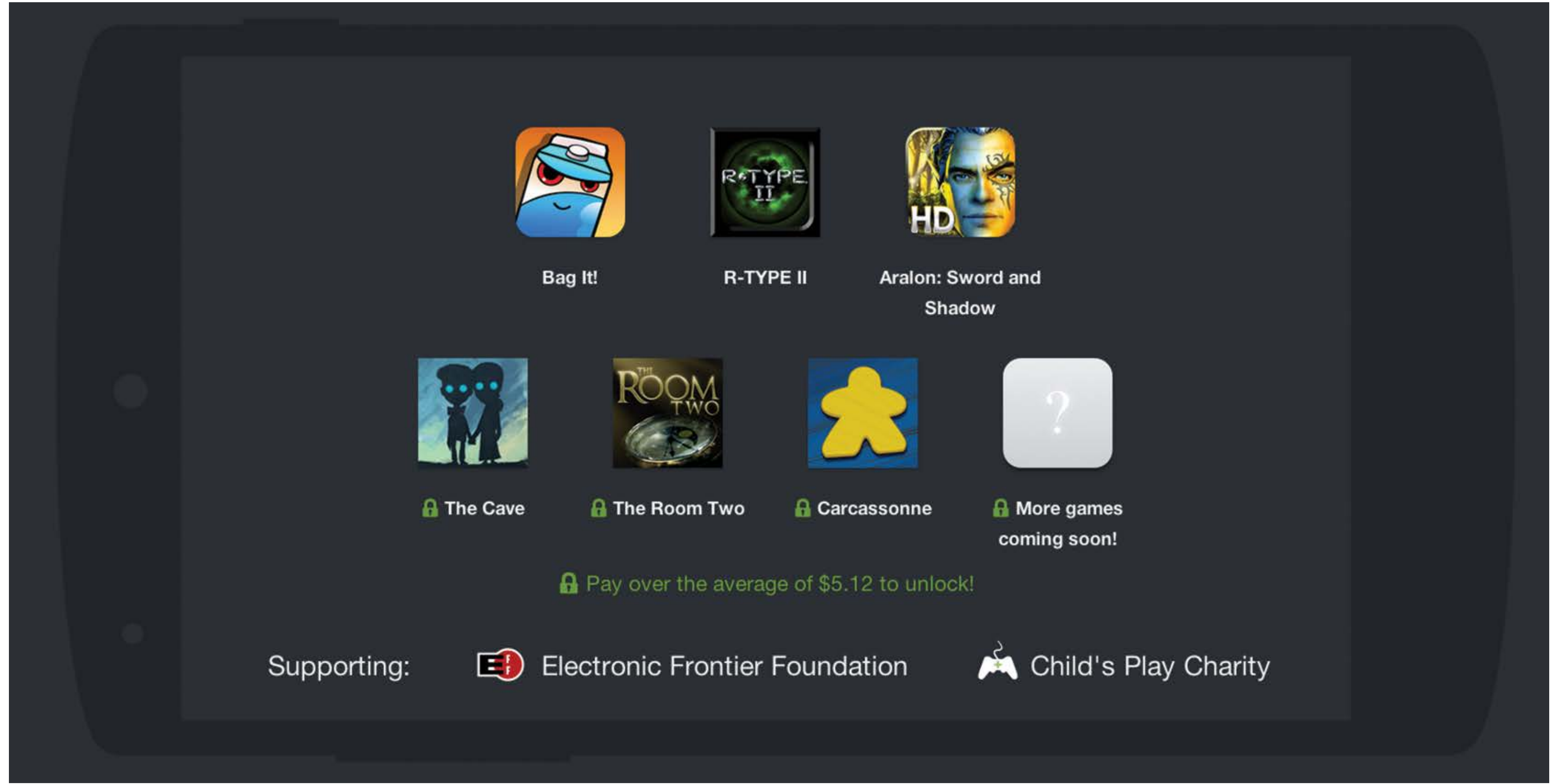

UBERMORGAN, *CF1013 0039*. Courtesy of the Internet.

Google bus protesters, the Mission District, SF.

SF Mayor, Ed Lee and BFF Ron Conway, Angel Investor.

GAMING DEVELOPMENT AS A MODEL FOR CONTEMPORARY ART PRODUCTION

By NICHOLAS O'BRIEN



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Recently, there have been a slew of conversations, debates, and editorials regarding the ways in which contemporary artists can and should employ startup strategies towards their practice. Although much has been said about the rhetorical and political implication of taking on these strategies, few have offered concrete entrepreneurial examples for the artist to apply to their practice. Moreover, suggestions and consideration on what precisely the benefits might be for adopting these practices haven't been as widely spread. Perhaps these strategies are shared amongst closed doors, or else offered within specific workshopping groups of informational sessions (or during for-profit seminars/studios). This being said, equal attention between the political implications and identifying exemplary practices should be delivered and championed simultaneously in an open and transparent way. In doing so, contemporary artists considering adopting models borrowed from entrepreneurialism could extend their ideological and tactical output beyond personal branding.

One such commercial model for self-funding and long-term research that has yet to peak significant interest within the contemporary art world can be found in indie game development. Not only does this community have a widespread distribution platform, but it is quickly becoming a medium of intense self-reflection, intellectual maturity, and aesthetic sophistication (beyond mere verisimilitude).[1] This realm of cultural production has steadily found funding, support, distribution, festivals, publication, and platforms of critical evaluation primarily through self-reliant means. This is partially due to the mass appeal that games have, but even more challenging games, or "risky" titles, from indie developers have found footholds within a larger gaming community/culture.

The ability for this medium and community to be self-sustaining is not simply due to it's inherent potential for mass distribution. An important aspect of indie development is that the popular systems of distribution and financial support often emphasize the importance of the end-user experience and community outreach. These systems often operate with charitable or community-supported aspects that bolster the cultural cache of this medium beyond the niche markets that often cloud contemporary art. Although contemporary art seeks to find ways of grabbing the attention of markets and communities outside of the gallery or museum, games are continually finding ways of becoming more pervasive within contemporary culture.[2]

Currently, contemporary art is struggling to find a way in which it can employ digital distribution systems while maintaining the exclusivity and elitism that it has engendered since aristocratic patronage. This struggle is being battled between multiple businesses and startups like Artsy, s[edition], Paddle8, DepicT!, and Electronic Objects - all of which are vying for a market that has yet to completely solidify. Most of the platforms offer exclusive or partially unique objects for purchase, bidding, collection, and distribution. Although some of these organizations are incorporating specific hardware elements for non-collector communities, most are finding that the real difficulty of maintaining these projects is convincing traditional private collectors of the market efficacy for digital objects. Where brokering of private deals in a relatively unregulated market has worked to the advantage of collectors, dealers, and galleries, contemporary digital platforms have an ingrained transparency and openness that upsets the delicate process of buying and selling contemporary art.

Where the openness of these markets and platforms has been seen as a slight disadvantage or deterrent for private collection, the indie game world has seen an opportunity to celebrate transparency and equanimity. In platforms like Steam, the popular direct downloading games distribution platform run by Valve, the exposure of sales, rankings, and community feedback are at the heart of its operation. In doing so, communities of gamers are constantly providing developers, makers, and peers with feedback about their products and titles. Steam also features on its home page a collection of discount sales and promotional content in order to incentivize new players to try games that otherwise have gone under the radar or were unaffordable on initial release. In doing so, the platform itself encourages gamers to explore a breadth of titles distributed through Steam, and not to just stick with AAA (or "blue chip") titles that have large budgets for marketing campaigns.

Steam serves not only as a location for collecting games and connecting with other players, it also provides a platform for discourse and content creation. This occurs through a forum element of Steam called the *Workshop*. Although not all games have these forums, workshops are a location for amateur and hobbyist developers, programmers, modelers, and modders to collaboratively or individually create content for games that come equipped with developer tools or source developer kits (SDKs). Each game's workshop then becomes a location for collective creativity and non-centralized inclusivity. A workshop becomes a horizontal platform for gamers to contribute to the games that they play, and in doing so bolsters the existing fandom and community for that title. As a result, participants in these communities often feel a sense of allegiance and support for future projects by that developer, creating a lasting system of feedback and camaraderie.

By supporting this inclusivity, Steam becomes more than just a platform for distribution; it provides an ideal model for artists and digital distributors to emulate. Current systems for online art distribution and collection have either faltered or neglected an important element of online communication: community. Instead of trying to wedge the openness of the internet between the exclusivity of art dealers and collectors, companies working within digital distribution should instead find ways of replicating the type of inclusivity that occurs in platforms like Steam.

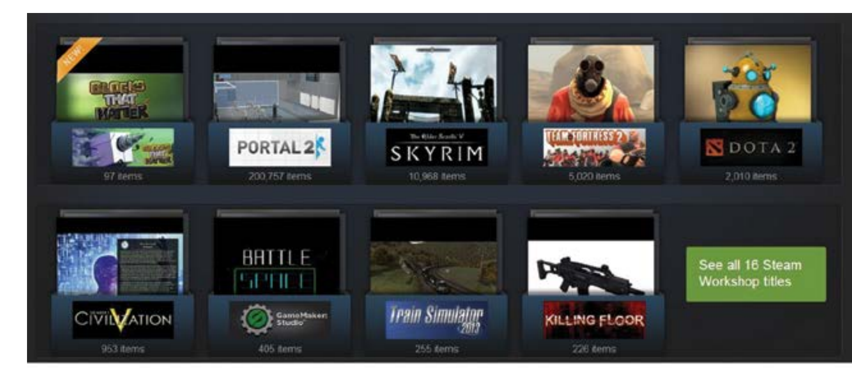
This is not to say that all artists working today are not finding ways of tackling the problem of exclusivity. Contemporary artists working in many media have been developing strategic models for cashing in on private funding opportunities to back public and/or charitable projects. This type of work - most often designated under the banner of "social practice" - has often employed existing models of entrepreneurship to work against capitalist outcomes. A significant leader on this front is artist Theaster Gates, whose work involves large-scale housing rehabilitation projects on Chicago's Southside. Working in collaboration with public funding from the Mayor's Office, academic research funding from the University of Chicago, and private funding from property re-development companies, Gates has quickly catapulted his socially engaged practice into contemporary art superstardom.

In a recent *New Yorker* profile of the artist, he describes the ways in which he has co-opted the strategies of real estate re-development companies and the contemporary art market to his advantage through a process of mutual "leveraging." In the article he says he, "realized that the people who were calling me up and asking me if they could have a deal right out of my studio - were, in fact, just thinking about the market and that I would leverage the fuck out of them as they were leveraging me." The article further quotes Gates as using this "mutually exploitative transaction" as a means to "fund [his] struggle."[3]

A problem with this process is that the levels of access and dealings that Gates has at his disposal are predicated on a career of making art objects ready for market. For artists wanting to make work of a similarly socially engaged variety, the caveat of playing the market must always be available. Likewise, the strategy of cooperative leverage benefits Gates in his re-development projects, but the equivalent method for digital artists or for those working within online media is not as tangibly rewarding. For artists working with technology and online media, real estate is a less tangible platform for co-option because property is radically decentralized and often considered more ephemeral. As a result, the artist working in this realm must look toward the equivalent to real estate in their respective field.[4] In this way, startup culture and the rhetoric surrounding entrepreneurial business presents itself as a more viable outlet. This real-estate equivalent for the artist working with online or digital media is particularly appealing, since the products, the methods of development/research, and the platform of distribution have striking similarities between both fields.

Emerging artists working within contemporary digital art have started to seek ways of employing the strategies of startups, most notably through group blogs and digital collectives. However, the leveraging that Gates describes in establishing mutually beneficial collaborations between himself (or his studio) and redevelopment firms does not exactly translate into the world of startup venture capitalism. Instead, the integration of the entrepreneurial spirit into art making and distribution has weakened the position of the artists and has left them more susceptible to being "flipped" by the market - turning an artists out and wringing them dry of their value before they have a chance to fully develop, mature, or produce meaningful work whose longevity exists beyond the tenuousness of consumer fads.

Due to the extreme fickleness that dictates the contemporary art market - which is usually consolidated to select gallerists, dealers, and brokers - the co-option of an entrepreneurial status does little to mitigate the precariousness of making art full time. The introduction of digital means of distribution was working toward developing alternatives that circumvented the exclusivity of breaching the contemporary art market by decentralizing critical voices and visions outside of the gallery. But more recently the long-term sustainability of that process has been put in jeopardy as market forces are infringing upon the openness of those established networks. As a way of maintaining autonomy, the adaptation of a VC model of partnership through partial ownership has become one of the only options that appeal to artists working within digital media. This partnership on the part of gallerists acting as dealers and not representatives often works against the intentions of the maker due to the fact that this process binds the artist's production to market trends. Although the problems of gallery representation have posed severe and problematic scenarios to artists working online - with some notable moments of artists choosing to leave their galleries after just a short time of representation - the bigger problem facing these artists is finding outlets for their work that continue to allow for the openness and collectivity that occurs in network spaces.



www.media.pcgamer.com/files/2012/10/Steam-Workshop.jpg

As a way of reintroducing the potential model of indie game-making and distribution practices within the digital art world, it should be noted that developers have continued to nurture and support one another through network environments as well as offline exchanges and festivals. The openness of distribution platforms and funding strategies for new projects shows a desire on the part of the artists and developers to contribute to an ongoing dialog with players and the gaming community. One way that this community continues to maintain its networks of support and distribution is through its radical de-centrality. The ways in which funding, feedback, and distribution occur most often through a networked environment, or else in a semi-public way. Game companies of all sizes have developmental blogs, calls for alpha/beta testers, actively participate in festivals not dedicated to gaming, and in rare instances hold dedicated and well-documented meetings with (non-shareholder) player representatives.

The fact that the network of gaming culture is not nestled into the select hands of a few funders, foundations, galleries, or other "sanctioned" guardians gives makers in the indie game community the possibility to work on projects that otherwise wouldn't interest larger commercial entities (or venture capital). This flexibility and capability for public feedback is nicely manifested in the popular distribution and charitable engine the *Humble Bundle*. This semi-regular sale of a collection of games uses a "pay what you want" (PWYW) model that has become popular with cultural producers wanting to work outside of the traditional capitalist/commercial frameworks of distribution.

The PWYW model on its own has been a breath of fresh air within the overly-commercialized landscape of blockbuster game titles and big-budget media companies. The truly inspiring aspect of the Humble Bundle, however, is that purchasers can choose to split their payment between the developers of the games, a selection of charities, and Humble Bundle, Inc. When a sale occurs, a real-time analysis of the purchasing patterns are displayed, showing the averages of purchases, the total amount of money collected from the sale, and a pie chart of the OS distribution of players. A "leader-board" is also displayed, showing the top PWYW amount, and occasionally listing the individual by their twitter handle if they didn't choose to be anonymous. As a result, the Humble Bundle creates a system that celebrates philanthropic competitiveness - a feature that directly appeals to a gamer sensibility. Notably, individuals that often contribute the most to these sales are other game developers, or else active participants within the indie game community.

The way in which this system displays its statistics explicitly addresses the need for transparency within digital distribution. In doing so, the Humble Bundle is a striking example of what is *not* occurring within the art world. A lacking transparency makes for a culture of paranoia and exclusivity, as opposed to inclusive collectivity. The Humble Bundle offers a window into the benefits of creating a platform of mass distribution and digital access. Instead of opting for strategies of private funding and opaque development, indie game developers are embracing methods of radical transparency and purposeful purchasing. As a result, purchasers of games on this platform are not only exposed to multiple indie (or underrepresented) titles simultaneously, but are also provided access to making contributions to politically progressive or charitable causes.[5]

It is in this gesture of multi-layered exposure - to communities of indie game enthusiasts and progressive politics - that the Humble Bundle shows the potential for a mutually beneficial system of "leveraging" that doesn't require partisanship or exploitation. Where Gates acknowledges his own implication within a dubious and overly inflated contemporary art market, the Humble Bundle avoids these trappings by sidestepping those in a position of power and taking their cultural products directly to a consumer/community. In doing so, the platform not only speaks the to ways in which digital distribution marketplaces can become a site for collaborative contribution (like Steam), but how it can become an agent for doing what the arts do best: inspiring a hopeful future.

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1) Especially considering that IndieCade recently hosted and co-curated a program of indie games at The Museum of Moving Image. This is also not to mention the growing academic interest and criticality around indie-game development most notably happening at NYU, Parsons, and UCLA.
2) Though academics and scholars are starting to lament the "gamification" of other aspects of cultural production and education.
3) Colapinto, John. "The Real-Estate Artist." The New Yorker. *20 Jan. 2014: 24-31*.
4) Although some might argue that the equivalent would be the ownership of domains and squatting on these sites in order to prevent companies and emerging markets to developer their online strategy. This practice, however, requires a specialized insider knowledge also not available to the typical emerging artist working online.
5) Popular charities include the Electronic Frontier Foundation, and Child's Play (which alone raised $7.5M for children in hospitals).

SECOND LIFE > REAL LIFE > SECOND LIFE

By COURTNEY MALICK

Discussing "digital" art and culture seems to be a relevant distinction to make because, though our lives are deeply intertwined with the Internet, we still maintain lives outside its ever expanding, but nonetheless, inherent frame. However, digital has a much more innate meaning to a certain community, so much so that no division between "real life," where interpersonal relationships are nurtured, and "going online" need exist.

This is Second Life, where daily activities from eating, to group meetings and lectures, concerts, personal grooming, travel, and sex, all occur digitally. Neither the first or the largest virtual community of its kind, Second Life has become by far the most popular since its inception in 2003. For many users, its existence informs/intimates a totally separated way of living for individuals who seem to prefer spending their time in a fantastical environment rather than day-to-day "reality." What may be surprising to learn, is that for the past few years real life has continued to merge with Second Life for the express betterment of institutions, colleges, universities and other pedagogically minded groups and clubs.

Today there are ten countries with official Embassies in Second Life, including the Republic of Maldives, Sweden and Israel, among others. There are close to one hundred higher education institutions, including Harvard, that have virtual campuses within the sprawling 29,000 regions that make up the Main Grid (Agni) area of Second Life, with each region approximating 256 meters squared. There, students are able to congregate, create forums and socialize in ways that are similar to those taking place on actual campuses, while allowing international students and any number of guests to participate in these usually privileged discussions. Further, classes are extended into the digital world of Second Life, and issues raised by its rules and unique abilities are introduced within real classrooms. In a study conducted in 2007 at the University of Maryland University College (UMUC) by Joanna Zhang, an Instructional Support Specialist, findings showed that not only is the practice of integrating college courses and Second Life growing, but that more and more educators are finding successful results from experimenting with teaching and learning activities within Second Life. Still other pioneers are developing interactive learning materials by taking advantage of the building, programming and scripting features in the game.

Since so many educational models seem to be thriving within Second Life, and for many art is yet another, if less conventional, educational tool, it's no surprise that contemporary artists are attracted to the kinds of characters and worlds available for manipulation within its realm. Does creating an art project within Second Life qualify one as a digital artist? Perhaps this is a question best put to Chinese artist Cao Fei, creator of an art-focused destination in Second Life called *RMB City*.

However, prior to *RMB City*, which was publicly launched in 2009, Cao worked mainly with photography, video, performance and installation, and would therefore not be considered a digital or "new media" artist by most. Though *RMB City*, as an ongoing art project, exists exclusively in Second Life, one could argue that it's more a geographical and cultural project about China than one which investigates the world of digital media. The city, which is actually an island unto itself, consists of a people's factory, a new village and a slum building. It was designed specifically to incorporate many of the most iconic architectural characteristics of various cities within China: Beijing's *Monument to the People's Heroes* (atop which rotates a large a Ferris Wheel), the Three Gorges Dam from Tiananmen Square, the Grand National Theater, the rusted Herzog & de Meuron Bird's Nest from the Olympic Stadium, Rem Koolhaas's CCTV headquarters building, Shanghai's new Oriental Pearl TV Tower and the Filial Piety Temple of Guangzhou. *RMB City* functions simultaneously as a destination for more than twenty million registered Second Life gamers, or "residents" as they are often referred to, but also as a hub for research and artistic production. Cao, whose avatar is named "China Tracy," organizes events at *RMB*, like mayoral speeches, interviews and Naked Idol, which is a popular body contest for avatars.

While *RMB City* is first and foremost a site of production and interaction for gamers, it has also become a bridge between the Second Life community and others from various galleries and museums due to Cao's status as an international exhibitor. For example, she conducted live interviews with Hans-Ulrich Obrist and other curators at the Serpentine in London, in which both online and real life viewers could participate. In this way, the project is digital in its framework and modus operandi, but its most exciting meaning has come from the ways *RMB City* parses through a certain level of abstracted mimicry, the deeply felt isolation of the vast urban development of China in the last twenty years, and the fragility and instability of that environment today. In this way, Cao's artistic commentary relates more to China and its rapidly changing landscape than to that of Second Life, which acts simply as a stage upon which she invites participants to engage.

Another artist who has utilized Second Life as setting, not for the purposes of site production, but rather pure exploration, is Israeli artist Miri Segal. In her 2007 video, *BRB*, Segal and her assistant create avatars and enter Second Life for the first time. Unlike Cao, viewers are able to relate to Segal as she appears new to the alternate world. There, Segal, whose avatar is named "Muzza" and whose face is covered with a Google search screen-skin, wanders through all kinds of strange and over-stimulating environments with glowing colorful skies. She and her assistant, whose avatar is named "Roga," pass other residents, some of whom are half-human, half-animal, dressed in extreme costumes, while others remain relatively "real life" in their aesthetic.

Interestingly, when people speak, their words appear on the screen like sub-titles and their hands simulate a typing motion. Conversations between Muzza and some of the eye-catching characters she encounters diverge from the philosophical to the practical. At one point a resident named "Bonnie" even begins to discuss her feelings about "SL" (Second Life), in contrast to "RL" (real life), and her discontentment with its "fakeness." Another replies that despite having the ability to choose one's own skin, "people are who they are," regardless of which version of life they are interacting in. To that, someone named "Sensei" adds, "Second Life is one more screen upon which we cast the shadow of our self."

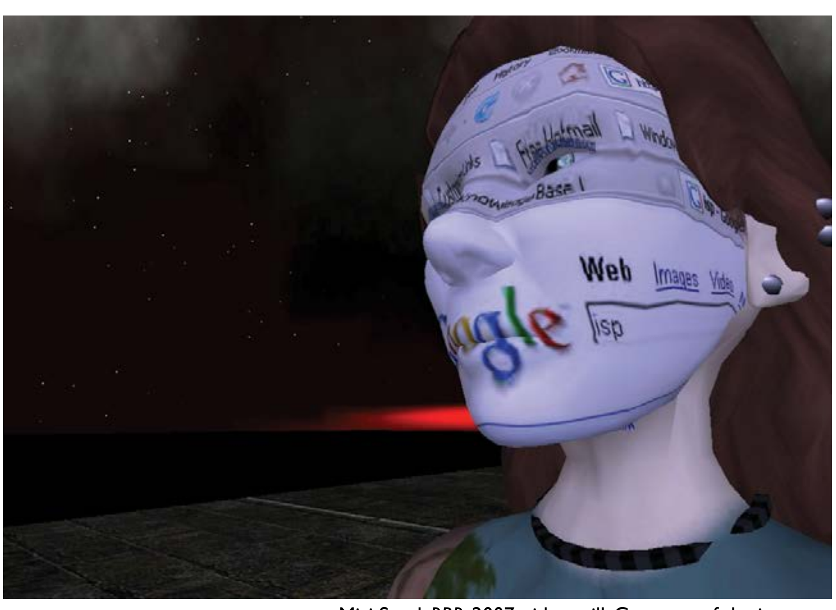
Questions of whether people are afforded a certain freedom to be more true, more themselves, or less so, continue for some time. Then, as Segal explains in her account of the experience, by using Second Life's search engine and typing in "Love," she and Roga are suddenly transported to a sex park with flowering trees and large close-up photos of women in an ecstatic state of pleasure plastered on white marble walls. Roga awkwardly and somewhat abruptly begins a flirtation with a horse-man that quickly turns into the kind of soft-core cyber sex many of us probably remember having in obscure chat rooms in the mid-1990s.

Suddenly Roga's lover disappears. She and Muzza move on to a desolate location to visit an art gallery, in the form of a translucent oblong bubble where virtual iterations of Segal's photos and installation work are on view. Muzza's camera captures two artists discussing the question of individuality and their sensation of its lacking during moments of "true creativity." One of them interestingly notes, "So, as artists, we succumb to our multiplicity." Other works in the virtual exhibition complement the particular context of Second Life in which they find themselves, including a rope noose hanging from the ceiling, a swarm of bees, a large, porous, mesh wall piece that spells out TIME, and an oversized, dirty ESC (escape) button built into the wall. Aside from Segal's photos and the noose, none of this work could possibly exist in a real gallery and it's easy to see how such an immersive space so quickly becomes truly representational and theatrical, even more so than sites for exhibition and spectacle that exist in real life.

It's not difficult to understand why Second Life would be a fruitful and compelling place for experimental artists, whether or not they identify with categorizations such as digital or new media. There is an openness and an ultra public way of interacting that residents have created to liberate themselves from conventions of daily life. It allows artists to interject art and discourse into common encounters in ways that do not often happen in people's daily lives. Interestingly, its imbrications with the real world seem to be endlessly multiplying, which may perhaps be normalizing its ulterior nature, eventually forcing residents who use Second Life as an escape to go deeper "underground" within the grid.

To those of us who do not identify as gamers, such a world already seems like it is populated and perpetuated by "outsiders," people who would prefer not to socialize within what are considered "normal" public zones. While projects such as Cao's and Segal's seem to prove this, as both engage in somewhat unconventional behavior, they also prove that gaps between real life and Second Life continue to be both pronounced and bridged. Now that real world institutions like Universities and Embassies are injecting themselves into Second Life, it seems likely that some of its liberating modes of excess and identity transformation may spill over into real life.

[Opposite] Cao Fei, *RMB City*, 2009. Courtesy of the internet.
[Above] Cao Fei, *RMB City (Naked Idol)*, 2010. Courtesy of the internet.



Miri Segal, *BRB*, 2007, video still. Courtesy of the internet.

Miri Segal, *BRB*, 2007, video still. Courtesy of the internet.

A TALE OF TWO GIFT ECONOMIES

By MONICA WESTIN

Why doesn't tech patronize the arts? The question has echoed throughout a wide range of discussions I've heard since long before moving here, from who's buying what at art fairs to discussions of projects bringing the arts into the peninsula—and, of course, tech's role in driving art out of the city via increasing real estate prices. (The first show I reviewed in San Francisco was at Rena Bransten Gallery. Soon after filing it, I received a query from my editor as to why the show's end date was suddenly much earlier than anticipated as the gallery had to abruptly leave their location at 77 Geary due to their eviction after 27 years.)

Contrary to, say, finance executives, the richest tech workers don't *seem* to be buying up high-end contemporary art or donating proportionally to art institutions and foundations. (However, it should be mentioned that there are ways of lending support to communities outside of philanthropy.) Whether or not the question is entirely accurate or fair, the fact that it's a running theme makes it worth pursuing. Issues of class, culture, and deep values are at play. At heart, I'll argue, are questions of how we understand creative work, giving, and community building.

In some ways, tech workers *already* see themselves as giving back to creative communities in their day-to-day work. Just as entities like Google's DevArt program (which is currently being aggressively pushed to engineers) try to convince tech workers that they're artists, these workers already see themselves as contributing to what might accurately be called "gift economies" through open-source models. In the seemingly endless art vs. tech debate, one of many ways to mediate the problem might involve bringing their respective models of gift economies together. And one way of thinking about how these different gift economies operate and see themselves could begin with the story of the two Hyde brothers.

In 1983, thirty-seven-year-old poet (and sometimes electrician, carpenter, and alcohol counselor) Lewis Hyde published *The Gift.* Its then-subtitle, *Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property,* captures the major distinction between "rational" market wealth and "erotic" gift wealth that underlies the book's central claim. Anthropologists like Marcel Mauss had long been studying societies founded on relationships of reciprocity and gift exchange rather than markets. Hyde freely admitted that much of his book draws from Mauss's 1950 essay, also called *The Gift.*

Hyde's radical move was to argue that the model of the gift economy applies to the work that artists do, *even in almost purely capitalistic societies.* While the myth of the starving artist is ancient, *The Gift* explicitly argues that the artist's labor has a particular social role, one that establishes a "feeling-bond" between people, that continues to "*give* increase" (his emphasis, as opposed to add value) to society as a whole over time. This relationship can preserve what he calls "true community" in a mass society.

At its best and most generous, *The Gift* defends the value of artistic labor that doesn't translate into monetary commodity; at worst, it can be interpreted (and used) as a set of excuses for not paying artists. And at its heart is the assumption that there is some kind of inherent conflict or tension between gift exchange and the market that can only occasionally be truly overcome. For Hyde's art-as-gift model to be sustainable, he himself admits that it ultimately needs influxes of patronage from the outside—or non-gift-based—world. (In the new afterword to the book, Hyde cites foundations like Creative Time, which Hyde says he was involved in founding, as one solution.)

The rest is history. *The Gift* touched a nerve. Hyde predicted and inspired the late-century shift in artistic aspersion and the Gen-X mourning of the "sell-out." As for his paean to gift culture, Lewis Hyde got a job teaching creative writing at Harvard and then Kenyon, a MacArthur Fellowship, and other accolades from the most selective corners of the culture industry.

Meanwhile, as Lewis Hyde rocketed into the MFA world, his brother Ben Hyde worked as a professor of computer science at Carnegie Mellon hacking away at a little-known web server called Apache, which was licensed in a way that became a foundation for a new mode of creative participation. The HTTP Apache Server and subsequent Apache Foundation (a code-donation foundation that now operates in part as a check on Microsoft's potential chokeholds), while now somewhat passé and thus squirm-inducing, offers another model of gift economies. Like the ideas presented by *The Gift*, this open-sourced model of creation structures the ethos of many software engineers as one endless collaboration in a community of makers. Whether or not we believe that collaborative creativity is the most salient or prominent aspect of what tech workers do, it's impossible to understand their ideological commitments without understanding this aspect of tech culture.

The story of the Hyde brothers offers up two archetypes of gift economies. One stresses the individual gift of the artist, which may or may not be valued by the market (and so, by extension, requires patrons of various forms—or grant funding offered by organizations like Creative Time—to survive). The other offers a collaborative model of making in which gift giving and capitalistic production are so fluid and interwoven as to be at times indistinguishable.

Most people outside tech have a sense that software developers are working in creative communities, but it can be surprising to hear how strong this rhetoric is and how profoundly it affects both the ideologies and daily working conditions of tech workers. A modern software developer spends most of his day socializing with other developers. Like most people, he checks his email and reads the latest chatter on mailing lists. Still more, when he's trying to solve a tricky problem, he'll search Stack Overflow—a website which lets you ask programming questions and grants you reputation points when you provide good answers—or he'll search for further examples online. Failing that, he might go straight to the code on sites like GitHub, a web-based service which houses your code and provides you with tools for sharing, commenting, requesting, and mixing. The vast majority of these interactions are reading, but sometimes writing helpful notes and answers to questions, or just sending "me too" or flagging issues to help nudge a topic along to get more attention.

A developer on a team will start work by fetching the latest code changes from his teammates. He'll read about what has changed, tweak some code, add a message about what he did, and then issue a "pull request" to GitHub. This is a formal request of the other developers to accept his changes and merge them into the shared project. This workflow (grab code, talk about it, change it, submit it for acceptance, repeat) is the basic rhythm of how modern software gets built. Many developers spend as much time reviewing the work of others for acceptance as they do actually writing code. But these all occur in decidedly *social,* collaborative, donation-based contexts.

What does this socializing "code chatter," from the world of Ben Hyde, have to do with the gift-giving theories of his brother Lewis? The communities of social coding are laced with the rhetoric of gifts. You give when you answer a question. You give by convincing your boss to share an internal tool with the public. You give by contributing fixes and enhancements to an existing open-source project. And this "giving" provides both the rhetorical framework for social engagements (please, thank you, you're welcome), as well as the operative social norms. People expect good stewardship of open-source projects. Companies acquire reputations for how they maintain their projects, for interacting with the community, for past public efforts (or failings) to integrate with other tools and communities. People are proud to participate in some, but not other, projects. When a company selects a license for their project, it reveals their stance toward the community. (Deep in the bowels of software philosophy, there's a careful distinction made between the flavors of "free software/speech" vs. "free beer." One is a person's right, the other is a person's value. Much digital ink has been spilt hashing out the ought's and how's of this stuff—it continues today.)

Beyond the explicit "giving," software communities (like most trade communities) trigger a meaning-making shift in the competing narratives of interaction. Conventionally, a market interaction is a sale of a product. The typical developer interaction is the solving of a problem. A conventional salesperson's inner dialogue might go something like, "an opportunity: crush it, bliss, swagger," which acts as feedback into the next one. A software developer's inner dialogue might look more like "grumble, grumble, breakthrough! bliss, share, swagger," feedback into the next one. This shift from selling to solving builds communities in the eyes of big tech. And, at the risk of repetition, this process is seen as a form of giving to something bigger.

But where Lewis urged pure gift giving, software's gifting communities are definitively hybrid—a roiling admixture of business markets and socializing gifts. Company executives have their own reasons for sharing their code: it offloads their maintenance costs, it demonstrates commitment to the product, it animates their employees, and it attracts stronger recruits. But software developers have their own mixed motives beyond gift giving. An open-source project makes a resume shine. It's an instance of software you can talk about with future employers (versus some obscure internal company tool). It shows the actual code you wrote—the quality of code in popular open-source tools far exceeds that in most private codebases. And it shows how you work with other people. But it's also a political tell.

Contributing to open-source software is perceived as a kind of "giving back to the community." Companies can harness this perception rhetorically and financially; increasingly, an aspect of compensation to software engineers is the feeling that they're contributing to an open-source economy. You can pay engineers less if they feel they're part of something bigger. Of course, they'll still get paid a lot more than most artists who went to graduate school and live off of their work. And software engineers are almost never asked to work for free (or "for exposure," or any of the other euphemisms that those of us in the arts live with daily.) But—crucially—to come to common ground, if we want that, it's important to see that how tech participates in community as part of the job. It also dictates the way the scene frames giving, collaborating, and making.

Tech has a mostly closed-gift system; it gives back to itself constantly both in terms of giving and, of course, in financial investments, with the understanding that what's being given eventually returns to the giver. They circle where the gift is circulating, to keep it from dissipating. As it's structured now, the art world simply can't work this way without patrons: Those who will pay for artistic production, either directly or indirectly, through foundations and grants. Those who will maintain and support cultural and educational institutions, where many artists have day jobs.

So to summarize: 1) software developers are self-understood as a fairly enclosed creative community that is thriving on a hybrid model of market motives and gift giving. 2) Wealthy software developers may feel disinclined to contribute to the conventional arts because they see their everyday work as scratching this creative itch, as well as participating in cultural gifting.

So what? Does knowing this get us anywhere? The point here isn't necessarily that artists and software engineers should come together to make a bunch of open-source art together (there are lots and lots of individual projects and collaborations for different kinds of making); it's that a start to mending the ever-widening cultural rift might be to help all of us understand the different kinds of gift economies in which we operate, and to see how they might come together.

For example: Can tech be persuaded that it needs to look outside itself to support a truly rich ecology of creative work? Can we invent practices and institutions that can explore and highlight the kinds of massive collaboration undertaken every day in the arts—and get tech involved or see itself as working in similar ways? Can these practices be folded together structurally and not just on individual levels? Should they be? I'm not sure what the right next questions to ask are, but I know other people know. And they should be talking to each other.

Finally, the gift economy as a whole might just be an outdated model from which to start thinking about this problem in the new economy. The Hyde brothers perhaps represent a bygone period in '80s and '90s America, before the hierarchies and leveling of the playing field that came when the Internet changed the topography of what creative work means and how it comes into the world. It might be useful to think of ways to define the new kinds of economic, philanthropic texturing that have emerged in the form of the new venture capitalists, the new crowdsourcing models. The fact that so much vocabulary is being produced to describe the economics of the tech industry suggests as much.

Ultimately, no work should operate primarily in a gift economy. Everyone should be paid for their work and nobody should be told that they should donate their talent and labor for free. And it is only people who are being paid well that can join gift economies in the first place. But if we begin to understand each other's ideologies on giving, it's perhaps a start.

ERIC RODENBECK & QUENTIN HARDY

In conversation with ANDREW MCCLINTOCK

ERIC RODENBECK: The place we don't want to go is bemoaning the lack of—like there's an easy conversation to have about how the net tycoons are not supporting the arts, in the way that the Bentley Foundation does. I'm Interested in thinking about how does this new generation of technologists, and how does the new sensibility in San Francisco impact what's happening in the arts?

QUENTIN HARDY: My training as a journalist should discourage me from thinking in huge apocalyptic millennial terms. Stuff usually happens in increments. But it does seem like right now technology is so strong and so pervasive that it is actually changing our sensibilities about time and space to the point of changing human consciousness. It has occasionally happened in the past, and every time the function and uses and deployment of Art changes.

ER: How do we think about it as different from previous terms, because the train did that, and the car did that, and the phone did that?

QH: None of those were trivial. In the 19th century there was industrialization, new habits of urban life, photography, mass media, and with electrification the transformation of nighttime into day for the first time in human history, there were enormous changes in life, in consciousness. You see dramatic changes in how art was made and consumed as a result.

EH: So against the backdrop of radical technological change impacting cultural sensibility, what's different this time?

QH: One thing that happens is you get the great sweeping novels of society. You get Dickens, Thackeray, Balzac, the Russians -- there are numerous novels in Europe about enormous complexities and changes in work and relations. They wrote dramas with multiple characters, and they're trying to depict a kind of travel guide, if you will, for a new kind of society and a new kind of civilization that's being created.

I think painting responded to technology as well. In some ways it reacted to the more complex society with public murals and large canvases, but the job of painting also reacts to technology itself. In part, that was because photography quickly took over the job of depicting the real. Painters started to depict the real in the sense of depicting consciousness, with Impressionism. Depicting emotion, taking an interior journey to places the camera can't go, such as perception and consciousness, which culminates in Abstract Expressionism. Even before that, visual artists reacted to mass-produced images, with everything from collage to pop art.

What doesn't change is that art is in this longer dialogue with society going back hundreds of years. The issue now becomes how artists will respond to a new technology environment, and how they will shape it. But Eric, you're trained in it, so I'm going to let you run with the ball.

ER: In our own practice I've found that it's easier to participate in the art world if you're not really participating in the art world. If that makes any sense. We've been getting into galleries and participating in art conferences without calling ourselves specifically artists or trying to sell to collectors or anything like that. So maybe this gets back to the point that you and I were talking about the other day, where in the '80s it was easier to do stuff and fun to do stuff because you never—

QH: There was no prospect of making money. That was kind of liberating. Maybe we're heading back to new ways.

ER: I've been in two gallery shows in the Museum of Modern Art and never intended to be an artist or make any money off it, and I wouldn't say that's incidental because it was very deliberate, we tried to make art that was provocative even though it was outside of the gallery model - maybe the internet is something that lets you step aside from all that, there isn't any sense that you have to get into some academy or anything, you can just make stuff.

QH: You can make stuff and you can publish stuff and you can share it openly. And there's almost a sensibility in the Internet that you should. That it should be given more love and not money. Of course, that's all been a means to what they call monetization of other businesses.

Andrew McClintock: There are a lot of artists that have been making internet specific work for over ten years who have started to shift towards making actual objects now. They are linked into a system of demand for easy monetization of their work by galleries. This is now called the post-net art movement which doesn't really mean anything but re-contextualizing of something that, in its natural state, wanted to exist outside the realm of the art world.

QH: Art, like everything, does exist inside an economic structure, which is to say also a cultural structure, and the structure we have is one largely of markets. And markets on broad bases seem to thrive on abundance, where we shift huge commodities around, but in many ways I think markets function on the basis of scarcity. What's the thing you can offer? What's the thing that's needed, that's valuable, that people want? And that really shifts as we move past the basic essentials of life, and you move up to the scarce thing. In the 19th century, with these Dickens novels, in some ways it helped people understand a new and more complex world, even point to its wrongs and to seek justice. Having it depicted for you, and he wrote to an audience very specifically, where he's telling them about this, and how there could be human happiness in that world.

If you look more recently at a lot of conceptual work or even happenings and action work—it was being caught up in trying to find human moments, to identify the human actor creating the art, and often to have it disappear: part of the art's point was that it would go away, that it wouldn't be durable, or encoded in some system.

Now, because of the Internet, there are a couple things I think that we should think about. One is, as you say, the post-Internet movement, and the making of something that very specifically isn't digital. It has finger prints on it, it smells, it's tactile, and that's a subset of what I think is a broader trend, which may or may not last, but the scarce valuable thing in a digital world is authentic human moments. It's being looked in the eye, it's feeling something, that is real, that will not seem duplicated. I think one of the strong reactions we have right now to Google Glass is it kind of makes all the world something that can be digitized, feels like, I should say, something that can make all of the world digitized and permanent and searchable. And there's a very vigorous reaction against that in some ways. We want finite human moments that are private to hold on to.

ER: My friend Kevin Slavin says that Google has facts and cities have secrets. We should all still be able to have secrets - not necessarily in a private way, but not everything dialed up. Honestly I can remember when iTunes first started up and there was this idea of access when music went digital. There was this phrase that started going around - that suddenly poseurs could have access to playlists that were neither understood nor deserved.

QH: You don't have to fight for much any more, or personally struggle to arrive at the ownership of something - I think there may already be types of art where part of the object is your struggle to create it.

ER: That's interesting, when I came here from New York, that was something that I had never heard anybody talk about before, how long they worked on a painting. It always struck me as a totally Californian. Like lazy – like *so what?*

QH: Yeah welcome to the planet. Good work takes time–news flash.

ER: Right and who cares, but you're saying, the act of the struggle of making -

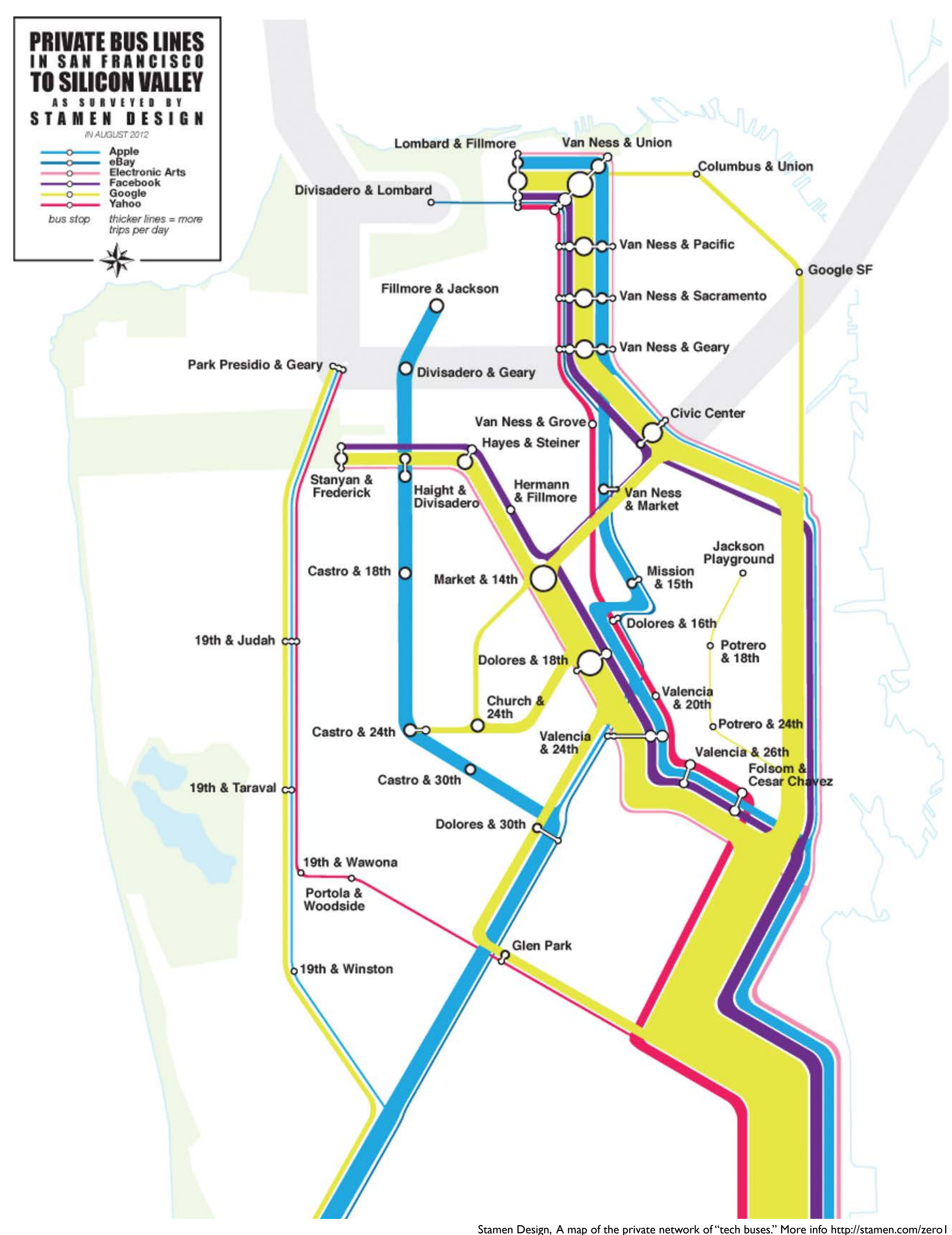
QH: The documentation of it has become part of the art object. You can see it in commercial products already. Etsy is useful because things have back-stories. And on Kickstarter things have back stories. This is who I am, this is my passion, here's why it is my passion. Please endorse it with your money.

How much is San Francisco changing? Was San Francisco ever an easy place to be an artist?

ER: Yes.

QH: It was?

ER: Well, there is this mythical moment that everyone is upset is gone, which was the early '90s, I'm upset about it. I had a three-bedroom apartment on 22nd and Folsom for $850 a month, that was great, but that was the Mission, I never could afford to live on the other side of Valencia Street.



Stamen Design, A map of the private network of "tech buses." More info http://stamen.com/zero1

"So I write about the tech sector for the New York Times *and a really interesting thing about this is that historically there has always been a very close relationship with Silicon Valley and what Eisenhower called the military industrial complex. . . . One of the weird things in the last ten years is that we don't go there anymore, now they come here . . . . We took the future out to them. Now they feel like it's so important and changing so quickly they're coming here."*

-QUENTIN HARDY

QH: But really, the stock and trade here since World War II has been displacing the locals. All these farm boys shipped out to the Pacific War, and the last thing they saw was the prettiest city they never even knew existed in America. And they thought, "If I live I'm coming back here," and that's where you got the boom building of Daly City, that's why all that stuff got thrown up and it displaced an earlier immigrant culture.

AM: And further back there was also the Gold Rush and the displacement that started -

QH: Well then you're getting sort of an American story of just displacing natives, that's inside a larger narrative. But I think in San Francisco specifically, you've got the Beats coming here because it was cheap, and then the hippies displaced the beats, and then the lawyers, and then the gays displaced the hippies, and the lawyers displaced the gays.

ER: And whom did the Beats replace?

QH: Well North Beach was a cheap Italian place, they displaced Italian immigrants. But even in terms of the Bohemian world, there have been waves of new wave bohemians replacing previous generations. It's kind of what we do. This is like America concentrated. Rip it up.

ER: Right but people feel that this time it's different.

QH: Well they feel that way because people are moving here who don't want to make art, because people are moving here who have skills we can't even begin to comprehend, because the money is just vulgar big – what's the different thing? I was speaking to an S.F. migrant in Toronto who said, "with the Beats and the Hippies and what we were doing in the mission twenty years ago – it felt like we were all on the same side." There is probably a little more of that in Oakland now.

AM: I think because the technology is so much more invasive and changing the way we are thinking about the world, thinking about ourselves, interacting with the world.

QH: That's interesting; in some ways these guys are the bearers of this strange new technological world. Their money and their ability to put up apartments in part - but it's also that they represent a kind of understanding and a command of a new reality that we can't really hope understand.

AM: I do think San Francisco is a testing ground for the future, in the sense that it's what happens *here* that will spread towards the rest of the world and change the way we go about our lives.

QH: So I write about the tech sector for the *New York Times* and a really interesting thing about this is that historically there has always been a very close relationship with Silicon Valley and what Eisenhower called the military industrial complex. They would go to Washington and the high-end stuff would sell into defense and intelligence communities and then it would drift over to Wall Street because those are information businesses and they pay top dollar to get the slightest edge they can.

One of the weird things in the last ten years is that we don't go there anymore, now they come here, like all these people from intelligence and finance and commerce and manufacturing are coming here to try and figure out what's going on. We took the future out to them. Now they feel like it's so important and changing so quickly they're coming here. These guys are the avatars of what a sociologist and management thinker named Peter Drucker called, "a new basic civilization," which began the development of the computer, and a triumph of information systems over machine power that is now working its way into all aspects of society.

ER: When you say they're coming here, you mean Rand is setting up offices in Silicon Valley?

QH: Well, think tanks have always been somewhat involved, but General Electric has completely reformulated its businesses around software and has more than 200 guys in San Ramon, and a Cisco executive is in charge of it. And Ford has a shop in Palo Alto, where they do a lot of spitballing around stuff. You're probably seeing a different quality customer than you did five years ago. Much more like what they used to call Suits.

ER: But not in San Francisco. Right, you mentioned places like San Ramon.

QH: Not in San Francisco itself. Give it time, give it time. There's already plenty of money guys here, financial people.

ER: And they're already at their desk at 6:00 in the morning watching their computer screen.

QH: Part of the element of them drifting up here is it signifies a shift in the regional bounds of power. San Francisco is a dominant city and now these propeller-heads from down in the Peninsula are claiming stake to our urban paradise.

ER: And I certainly have mixed feelings about that—I moved to San Francisco to be somewhere different—not because some asshole with Google Glass—

QH: Yeah, you didn't want to overhear conversations about some new app or code developer. Well, sorry, they're not going away. I think all the protests in the world on buses are not going to turn this away. This is a thing that's happening, so let's deal with it.

ER: It's really interesting. It's not a local gentrification issue—it's a whole urban rewiring.

QH: And there's a certain existential dimension to this. Will they want our art; will they give us spaces where we can continue create? What's your sense of that?

AM: And also, will they follow in the footsteps of other great American industry leaders and eventually support and build museums and foundations. There's a couple of them that have joined the boards at SFMOMA or the *Bay Lights* thing and this is their attempt to do that, but it's not from the ground up enough, they are more focused on the top of the cake, when the support is needed on all levels.

QH: It's pretty to think so, but I'm not so sure that's happening. I mean, these guys, they will be generous, but for them, it's different than it was for the magnates in the gilded age who had a real interest in the humanities. And there was a shared sensibility that you could elevate the common man. Carnegie libraries across America. By the way he built libraries that were empty and they had to be filled with books by the local communities - it was very much a quid pro quo. He had a Kickstarter thing of his own going on there.

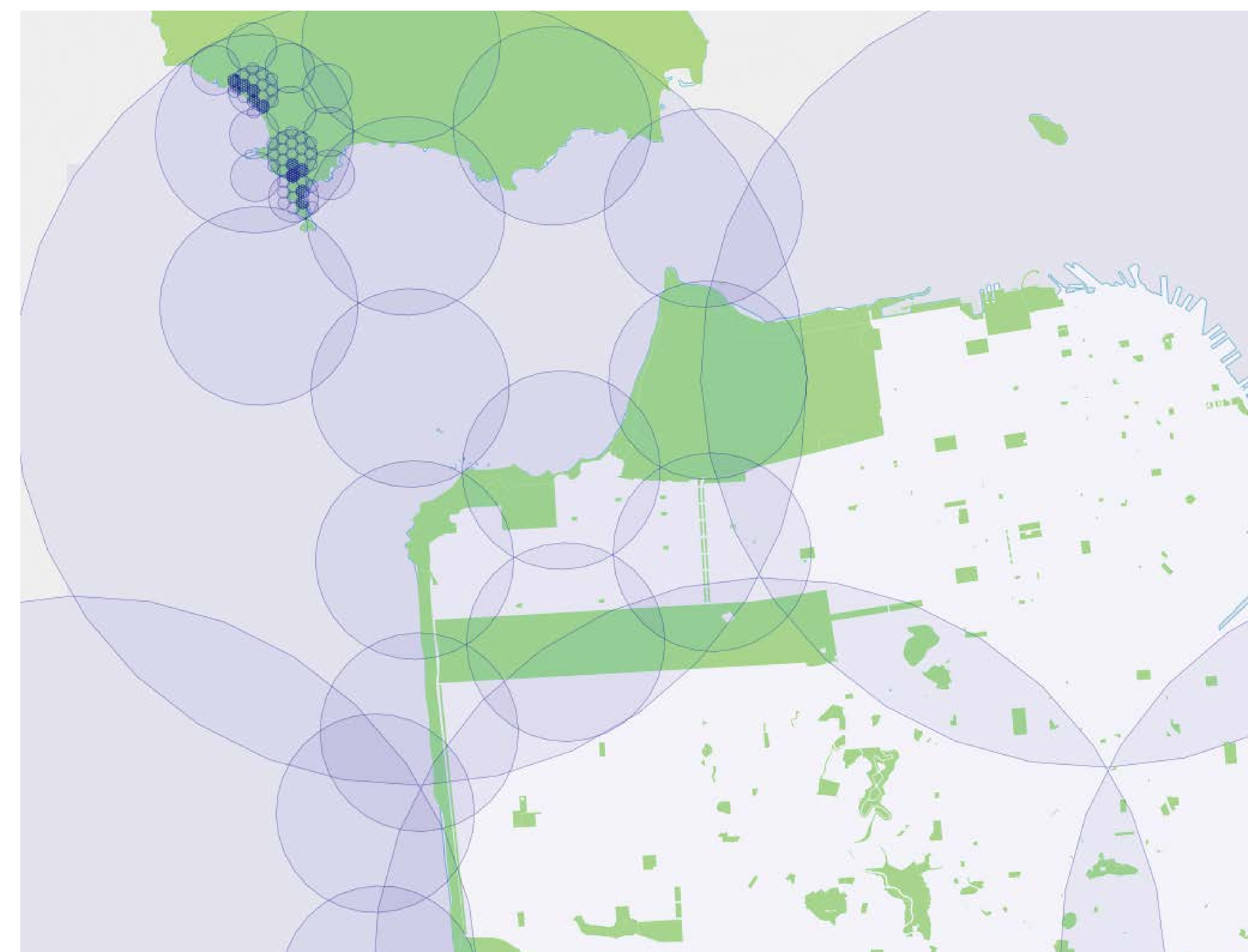
ER: Oh, that's fun! Carnegie the great crowdsourcer—and that's important to start to think about–not just the big moguls but everybody—that's where Kickstarter is the bridge—it lets everybody be a little Carnegie.

QH: Right and then there was this sense that a working man by exposure to culture and thought and ideas could be elevated, and that was good for society. For starts, people in general don't go to museums now. And when they do, they go to historic museums. They go to witness something they don't even recognize. It's hard for them to put the past into the present because change is happening so quickly, elites tend to go to art museums, let's face it, that's too bad, but you know, people now bring art to the street in murals and stuff, it's a very different process.

AM: Which is now appropriated by Tech companies to make them seem cool.

QH: Right, but the point I'm trying to make is that our elites generally don't feel like ordinary people can be elevated by public spaces such as museums, or that it's their responsibility to build these things. We can hold that up to a generalized contempt in society for high culture and learning, which, let's face it, with our national test scores and the low status of teachers, seems like a pretty ready supposition. We could also just think that was a social experiment of its time. There is also a matter of personal orientation: To a lot of the tech moguls life is like a science fair, so the money goes to building public science. It goes to brain research, the tech museum, curing malaria, wonderful, fantastic things, you know, but they do not see the function of art the way Art was seen before.

ER: And do you think that art has that same role to play now as an elevating force? For society in general?



Stamen Design, What the intersection between open space in California and Instagram use in those spaces looks like to an algorithm.

Stamen Design, San Francisco's coastline under projected 10 feet of sea level rise.

"I think it's preposterous to think that machines will change the world, that we're not human, and I think it's a common error in human history. And it extends back to spice trading. It's not just about light-bulbs, it's about humanity and technology intersecting".

-ERIC RODENBECK

QH: It does for me—but society in general… what do you think?

AM: Well let's look at how programmers or people from the back end of the tech world are making all this original stuff that's going on the internet, open source stuff, and they view that as a new creative field. I do have to say it does have a direct benefit to society, not one that you have to think about and contemplate or read theory on.

QH: It's a very different skill-set from most of the traditional art callings.

ER: Right there's a utilitarianism to that which has a directness—you directly contribute to society through open source civic hacking. So what do I think—I'm only ever as conflicted about this as I can let myself be. In other words, I've never felt comfortable with the idea that society in San Francisco should stay in stasis - but the places that I'm super interested in, like the Tenderloin, where it's going to gentrify there but the housing stock is almost completely reserved for low income people, so this vision of a neighborhood that's urban dense, walkable, safe, civilized, full of galleries, you know, that's—I feel like that's a good model. But do I want to live there? Probably not. I mean I lived there—I'm 40, right, I don't want to live there. I want to hang out in the park and play with my kids. So I guess what I'm saying is this is all very personal for me, it's hard for me to abstract if it's useful and valuable for society. I'm not buzzing with this idea that you don't use art to bring people up anymore. This whole model of trying to directly benefit society.

QH: And that shows when art and music gets cut in schools. People don't even blink anymore. I can't really ascribe that to the tech people. I can ascribe that to a kind of, to my mind, hardening in the American sensibility that took place post 1970s, really it's been going on for decades. Having to do with losing our postwar dominance and seeking to live on scarce resources, but sustain the same style of life. I'm a late stage baby boomer, that's my generation, the greedheads who thought it would last forever and didn't cope well when postwar abundance came up against the oil shock and competition from a rebuilt Germany and Japan. You younger folks, sorry for what happened, and I'm glad you're more realistic about what it's going to take. We ate the seed corn, that's just a thing, that's done, and now it's up to a younger and better generation to reassert the value of art in society.

AM: Talking about education and arts/ music programs being slashed in schools, there was an article in the *New York Times* Magazine a few weeks back about the old Silicon Valley versus the new Silicon Valley. I read another piece in the *Times* as well, a similar piece, about kids, twelve to fourteen, who are being picked up by these companies and put to work. They're not going through the traditional trajectory of a liberal arts education or understanding what that means and their parents don't mind because their kids are making more money than the average twenty-year-old.

QH: Mark Zuckerberg, actually he was pretty good on classics, even if he was a coder —I mean this is really a discussion about elites that we are having here isn't it?

AM: Right—but I don't want it to sound elitist—because when we start talking about who's educated and not—the discussion turns that way.

QH: Well, it's a reality, and if you don't address the fact that enormous swaths of the American people have a kind of contempt for education and for the humanities—

ER: Both elites and not—

QH: Oh yeah—on both sides.

ER: And I share some of that, just in the sense of having been kicked out of one of the best art schools in the country, Cooper Union, "fuck it I'm moving to San Francisco."

AM: I'm faced with that all the time—doing what I do in the art world and only having a BFA, and I always run up against this wall. "If you don't have an MFA you can't do this or that." I'm already doing it. . . . so what's your problem?

ER: Which is part of California, no one ever asks where I'm from. In New York it was always the first question, where are you from, where did your family grow up. That's key.

QH: Everybody here lives at the farthest end of America, the home of self-reinvention. And for the tech people that exemplifies what they call disruption, startup mentality, and rethinking whole industries.

AM: It's punk!

(laughter)

QH: In its own way it is very dismissive of the rules. Well, punks got rich too, so I guess—that is the downside. As I said, this is the farthest end of America, and you know, the bitch goddess of our country is making a fortune. When you get it you're changed. Then you come out the other side of it and you're unrecognizable to the kid who broke all the rules. But my point—so artists still can occupy that space in a different landscape, and what does it mean to do that? Well, for starts they are going to Oakland. Oakland is fantastic now. Oakland to me has fantastic spaces, people are making interesting stuff, and it's still vaguely affordable, so there is a kind of coexistence there.

And art is also occupying other spaces; it's percolating into technology in interesting ways on a superficial level where people want offices that look like something for a change. They don't like tilt-ups anymore. Did you see the story I wrote recently about the architecture of Facebook and Google? The design sensibilities that go into these places to convey what they embody. To bring their geek humanity into a reification. Then it's also appearing in other forms where UI starts to matter, in a way I never knew before. For better or worse, other things are being designed, being designated as art.

AM: Let's talk about collecting and using data at the scale it's on, but also about the other side of that, with the NSA and new forms of advertising.

QH: Well for starters, based on the slides that Snowden has released, the NSA can really use you, Eric. Those slides have some shitty graphics. They cut and paste logos from websites and put an eagle's claw on top of a globe. It looked like Saturday Night Live.

ER: The history of patches for secret unknown programs would be a fascinating gallery show—but the sense of—when we did "cabspotting," which was a live map of all the yellow cab taxies in San Francisco—a lot of reaction to it was invasion of privacy, Big Brother kind of stuff, and if Big Brother is watching you then this is what it looks like - so then rather than turn our backs on it, let's put it out there, let's put it on the internet and let's see what it's going to be all about. For me that's a driving factor in my practice all the time. Let's not shy away from it, let's make it visual and let's make it cool enough so it engages you. But let's have a conversation about it. Let's have a conversation about the real thing instead of having a general broad conversation about what is privacy and what isn't privacy. Let's put it on a screen.

AM: You're taking back a power that always rested with the government by collecting your own data, processing it, sharing it, and finding out things about life or society that have always been controlled by Big Brother. So I think that's a positive side to it, and obviously there's always a positive and a negative, but where the line is I'm not sure—

ER: You said earlier, based on the slides they could really use you, I thought you meant they could really use my life and do whatever they want. And so that seems, you know, you were talking about your generation, that it had eaten the seed corn and it's just a dumb thing and it seems to me like that's over, the idea that you can have a digital device around and be free from surveillance. Talking about the webcams and all that shit, and also chips inside that you can access remotely.

QH: You could, but it's something like being a hermit. Even hermits exist in society. They're making a point against people who live together. I don't need you; I'm off your community, god and nature. They're committing a social act too, so even getting off the grid becomes a kind of comment on the grid. But I think one of the things that's interesting to think about, where the NSA is concerned, what Snowden's revelation shows… Snowden's revelations are about a kind of dream in national security that you can just vacuum everything up, own it all, Jesus Christ, I've got every freaking data plan going, and that is a means to knowledge. And that really is not where the technology is going.

I think the guys who sold them that stuff, and bear in mind, this was a product of the surveillance industrial complex, the guys who sold them that, like to sell really big databases and really big storage systems and really big search methodologies, because those were big companies. Snowden was not an NSA employee. He was an employee of Booz Allen Hamilton. He was a sort of consultancy that was making money by selling the biggest, most complex systems possible. And if Google had been contracted or Amazon had been contracted their sensibility would have been like, "Why are we saving all this crap? This is just ridiculous." Save this thing and this thing and this thing and this thing, and triangulate them, and that will give you the form of truth. That's what you actually want. If you look at—Google saves your search information and it likes the location data. It doesn't want all of it - it wants relatively important things that can clearly triangulate to indicate some moment of advertising, some moment of commerce you can be led to. That's an important distinction because one is the old idea that you can control everything, there is just a single repository of truth. And what the modern technology is doing, which in some ways is more sinister, is seeing things, developing a kind of ecosystem view, where you can see things in relationship to other things that define truth.

ER: Google in particular, just with gmail and calendar and all that stuff, that's not even sinister, it's not even—it's just a harvesting of natural practice, when we shifted our calendars over to Google, I realized that they now know everything that I'm doing, and it's not even about actively surveilling, it's just more like my involvement with this infrastructure by definition means what I'm doing can be rolled up and searched an—where. Bill and I were talking, the infrastructure has been laid and it's all about the instrumentation of it. For example, one of our clients works in traffic analysis, you know, they write the software sensors that are in road networks? So those systems were just designed to do general traffic flow, *is it going fast, is it going slow, is it more congested than usual*, they write all that software. But this federal grant to the department of transportation to fine-tune the software that reads the data that's coming off of these sensors, and without any change in the hardware they're able to read the magnetic pulses that individual cars basically leave as they go over these sensors. They can tell the difference between a motorcycle and a truck, they can tell the difference between a Ford, a Prius and a Caravan. They can tell the difference between a Prius with one person in it and two people, without any hardware change. It's about the absolute finest edges of instrumentation that are starting to—

QH: This is based on magnetism.

ER: It's based on the magnetic pulse that a car leaves.

QH: And do individual cars have magnetic fingerprints?

ER: Essentially. So drunk diving, HOV lanes, they will be able to tell whose car is whose car – on any road that has this stuff. So you can do a bunch of stuff, you can do real time instrumentation, close traffic lanes, etc.

QH: Well you are surveilling people. When you describe it in terms of HOV and drunk drivers, you're surveilling people towards a positive end. But it can be used in other ways too.

ER: Right - and I was looking at a screen that said this is the traffic on I90, whatever, two miles south of Sacramento, like boom boom, they have it in their hands. That to me is the fascinating part: it was never intended as a surveillance network - but because of the absolute fine-tuning of the data that comes off the software, they can use it however they want.

Another example is round trip traffic from your cell phone. That signal to a cell tower is stored in various places, which varies depending on the weather. So what that means is you can tell from your cell phone, from the differentials in your round trip signal, what the weather is, so you've essentially overlaid a hyper-dense network of weather stations in the United States. Because you can do that, suddenly rural Mexico where there are no weather stations, you can use the information—because everybody gets cell phones as soon as they can, so in developing parts of the world there aren't the same kind of insurance structures as there are in the developed world, you can find a baseline for what the weather is and you can do micro-insurance. Just the whole thing that starts to open up, once you have instruments and sensor networks everywhere, suddenly you've got 10,000 weather stations.

QH: Let me revisit the point I was trying to make about the NSA, which was that it had a very rearview perspective on the world, which is to say that it all takes place in this communications network— viewing the internet as a fairly narrow communications network—it probably used the telephone companies with whom it had relationships to suck down all that information, and from that repository thought it had truth. A broadly defined, but single entity from which you can derive truth.

What I think is really happening is many, many entities are used in conjunction in different ways to provide a kind of truth relevant to that need. For example, in the traffic example you give, what if we took that and had a sense of where traffic was and on my calendar there's knowledge that I have a meeting in Sacramento, so my meeting is going to be pushed back half an hour because of the traffic, and those two data points can work together to make my life more convenient. But of course, the owner of the calendar has awareness of my time and space in a way the NSA can only dream of, you know? The authentic surveillance state will be made up of many, many, many data repositories used to triangulate any number of things.

ER: It's not so much that just because the NSA has access, they're using it in a way that's going to affect us.

QH: I don't think they understood the future. I think the NSA was conned by a bunch of '70s and '80s level technology companies. Scary as it is, it's also just a terrible way to stay on top of terrorism.

ER: I guess that's the thing - seems to me that they had no idea what they were doing.

QH: Exactly. Booz Allen got paid a commission on sales. Bear in mind, this all happened in a capitalist context. They looked at total information awareness and said cut me a piece of that, we'll sell a hell of a lot of databases, and that's not really where things are going. They're going to lightweight, portable, cloud-based applications that have permission to look into different things, and deliver some third level of insight. My calendar isn't really about my commuting time; it's about working my time for this meeting. This road isn't really about my meeting, but you can join the two together and create this personal information that's very useful to me. And of course, as we say, it's convenience surveillance, but the flipside is dangerous, disruptive surveillance. I think it was Sinclair Lewis who said, "When fascism comes to America, it will be wrapped in a flag and carrying a cross." But really, when fascism comes to America it will be wrapped in an application.

ER: Scary stuff—so what does art do then in that—

QH: How does art assert humanity and human moments—or whatever you want to call the function of art? Well the internet has been wonderful for political art. When you have people protesting on an absurd fascist state by all going to the square and eating ice-cream and photographing each other, you know, it gets published and the publication is an art product about the absurdity of the state.

ER: But that's the internet as a transmission medium.

QH: It's poster art essentially but also on another level it's an amazing comment on the marriage of intimacy and publicity. People are willing to expose all of that. Because we are reorienting our relationship with the crowd with this technology.

There is emerging sensibility caused by this much more ecological view of the world. Many data points, many participants, a greater sense of connection, which is to step beyond the nation state and reorient ourselves as a kind of global culture. Tahrir Square fell in part because of brave protesters, but in part because everybody comes to run and disapprove of the government from the outside. We just kind of gave it an unlike, a thumbs-down. It did bad on Rotten Tomatoes, or something, and the US, pulled out the money because it didn't poll well, and they fell. There's been a coup in Egypt, and we're not disapproving of that, like the world is voting on various elections and various political developments, and if you look—it seems lateral, but if you look at the rise of things like Bitcoin or even international campaigns on Indiegogo, Bitcoin is very interesting because it is a currency without a central bank, but instead a kind of proxy to an algorithm, to a protocol, to a software protocol, that people in various countries choose to believe in. It's a transnational currency that has no central bank. It is a post-nation state currency.

What I'm pointing to here is incredible photo sharing from all sorts of language cultural groups, transnational currency, political change caused from the outside. We're stepping into a kind of post-nation state world that has a shared sensibility. That isn't necessarily to say there will be a single world culture, but there is on the world a single sensibility that is comfortable with people in other geographies. How well that stitches into every last man inside the country and every last woman and child inside the country remains to be seen, but there is this new broader culture that is global, that is post-language if you will. And has a certain shared humanity and caring for each other, and that will generate new art. It has to.

AM: Putting the future in the context of that, it sounds like an amazing, very positive thing.

QH: And it will have its capitals. With San Francisco having a strong chance of being one.

ER: Have you seen this photograph of Somali workers holding their cell phones high to try and catch cell phone traffic off of Djibouti—it was like an incredibly provocative image of them holding up their glowing phones—their lifeline essentially. Then there are other stories of people in places in Cameroon where there's a guy whose business it is to take everybody's cell phone to the place where there is wifi, turn it on and sync it on facebook, turn it off and then bring it back to them in their rural village. These clusters of little networks.

ER: I think it's preposterous to think that machines will change the world, that we're not human, and I think it's a common error in human history. And it extends back to spice trading. It's not just about light-bulbs, it's about humanity and technology intersecting.

QH: And the flipside of that is this strange nostalgia for a time when we were supposedly more human, and more in touch with ourselves and our culture, or in touch with being human. I don't think the savagery of nature really afforded a lot of human moments. Or if it did, they were extremely desperate.

ER: Technology exists is something invented after you're thirty. . . Hey, it's not a bad line. Technology that exists when you're born is part of the natural world. Technology that arises between twenty and forty is an essential and good thing, and technology that arises after forty must be stopped because it's tearing apart our humanity.

RUDOLF FRIELING

Interviewed by BEN VALENTINE

Rudolf Frieling is the Curator of Media Arts at SFMOMA. Frieling came to SFMOMA in 2006 from the ZKM Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe, Germany and most recently organized Stage Presence: Theatricality in Art and Media *in 2012. Frieling's deep investigation into media history and theory, makes him uniquely equipped to talk about how new media artists are responding to important issues today.*

Given the revelations around massive surveillance in this country and abroad, surveillance has been at the top of our collective consciousness. Talking with Frieling uncovered how art might tackle this complex issue that we, as a society, are scrambling to try and understand. I was honored to talk with Frieling over the phone and learn more about the roles artists, curators, and collecting institutions can or should fill in this debate.

You worked on* Exposed: Voyeurism, Surveillance and the Camera Since 1870*, I wasn't living in the Bay Area to see it, but it looks like a phenomenal exhibition. Can you talk about how that show depicted and understood surveillance?

First of all, it is correct that I worked on it, but I didn't curate the show. It was really the brainchild of our senior curator of photography, Sandra Phillips, who had been working on that for many, many years. When she proposed the subject of surveillance and voyeurism, I thought that would be an ideal opportunity to collaborate, and to try to take the show a little further than photography exclusively. So I added a few media works, mostly video, to that show, but the overall concept was really based on Sandy's curation and her historic vision of the inherent voyeuristic and surveillance aspect of photography as a medium.

Our initial conversation involved the question of what is surveillance in the 21st century? We were wondering how could we bridge that gap between a historic narrative around photography and a more data driven, media driven look at surveillance as of 2009/2010, when we were organizing the show. Just to be clear, this was pre-NSA, but the topic was obvious even then, just not to that extent. However, it turned out to be a really, really difficult argument to coherently stage in an exhibition where you have almost more than a hundred years of photographic practice with a few data projects at the end. So we actually decided to focus on the camera, which is why it was eventually added to the title. I think that was a wise choice.

It was not easy to install, specifically when you think of the difference of formats. Most historic photographs are smaller in scale, while a lot of media-driven artwork is rather large-scale in format. With that in mind I would still make the argument today that we didn't fundamentally miss out on new approaches, although tools really have changed. Tools like camera surveillance, as opposed to data surveillance today, are fundamentally different in scale and in impact, but the drive and the politics of exposing something or spying on someone haven't changed substantially. I would still say the show was an excellent survey of the last hundred years.

What role do you see art playing in examining, confronting, and maybe revealing surveillance tactics and methods? What role do these artists serve in the larger political or public discourse?

Art very often deals with pictures, not exclusively, but predominantly. Visualizing surveillance processes is quite difficult while visualizing data information is easy in comparison. So there's the difference that artists are trying to tackle the impossibility of visualizing the politics of surveillance, rather than simply visualizing data.

For example, if we take Trevor Paglen, one of those important artists today who was actually part of the show, his work is as much about uncovering what we are not used to seeing, as it is about the implication and hinting at what that might mean, what that infers. So if you picture military satellites that cross over the sky, it still looks like a night sky. The important part is that you know that you are also looking at a military practice that is global. So that is much more of a mental picture, sort of a knowledge-base associated with a picture of something you can actually see.

Something quite different is Paglen's series *Symbology*, where he discovered and collected patches from top-secret military units. I find that an extremely interesting component where he points the viewer or visitor towards a desire, almost an unconscious desire to still be seen and create a visual identity, a desire to get out of that box that these military units are in, which is one where you must not be seen, you must not speak about what you do. We are confronted with the return of the repressed through those patches and insignia, which then can be collected and exhibited. So one can find traces of what's going on in disguise and yet out in the open, and in that sense it is at times an investigative journalistic side that artists take on or an active practice against censorship, for example.

Paglen has a very similar practice as an investigative journalist, almost identical, but then his reports, his investigations, end in the visual, whereas most investigative journalists produce texts and facts. Can you expand on that difference?

Let's just say the hope of every artist is that the picture says more than a thousand words. It doesn't always do that, but that's the hope. The important aspect, the important difference is that the picture doesn't have a clear message. The work includes ambiguities that are not necessarily part of the investigative message, where you uncover something and communicate it as clearly as possible. So maybe you would want to compare a visual arts practice as being in relationship to those, let's say, activist kind of practices. So to move and to stay in the realm of the arts is a decision to link a whole history of visual discourses and art or media historical discourses to what you're doing, in the hopes that there is a much broader resonance with every single picture or video produced.

It can get ethically murky at times when artists use photography or documentation as a way of surveilling themselves. Making instances where the audience becomes surveilled. Can you talk about that power dynamic?

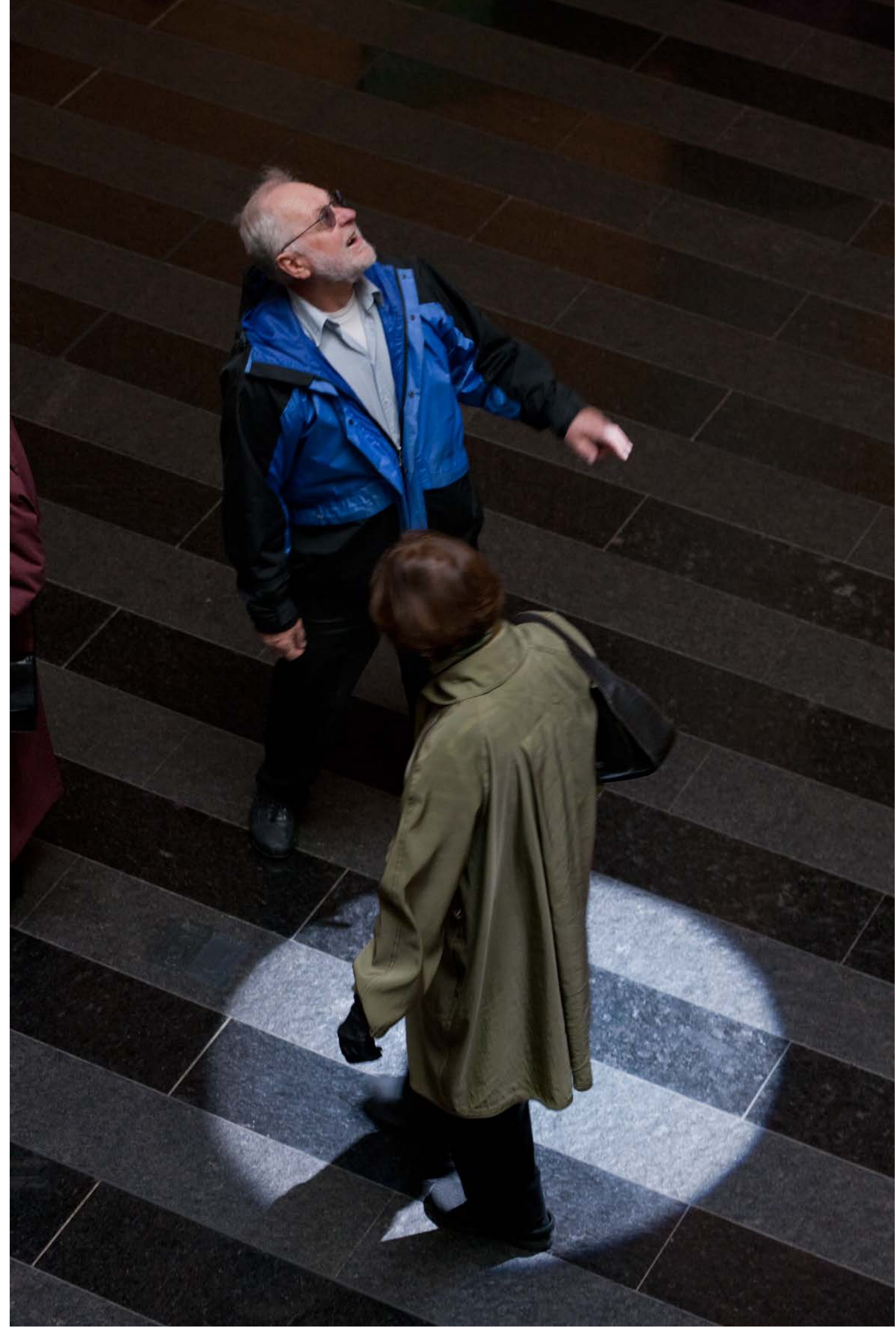
This would certainly be within my understanding of what the arts could do or what an art institution should do. The gallery provides a space and a moment to actually address that relationship. Let me give you one example that is also about our history here at SFMOMA. We are currently working on the new building and the display of our collection. One way of doing that is to actually review works in the collection that have a specific relationship to who you are and to the spaces that we have. One of these prime examples is work by the American artist Julia Scher called *Predictive Engineering*. Julia is the most important artist of an older generation coming out of the 1980s working within the realm of surveillance. *Predictive Engineering* was a site-specific installation in SFMOMA's first building on Van Ness Avenue in the Memorial building, and it had a specific relationship to two corridors in that site when it was premiered in 1993.

Let me say it's a complex installation, but the basic is that there is an aesthetic of surveillance on monitors and that aesthetic is enhanced by not only real time feeds, but also by pre-recorded, fictitious footage. So you get a mix of fiction and reality and it's quite unsettling, because you never know what the reality of a picture is. That was expanded in 1998 in the new building on 3rd Street and was called *Predictive Engineering II*. It incorporated parts of the first version but it also featured voices of people who could speak into a microphone, and then these voices of visitors would be cycling through the installation. Now that is a work from the 1990s, and initially I thought that this should be something that we should include in *Exposed* in 2010, and it turned out that the way it was programmed was obsolete and didn't function any more. We included simply a related website as an extension of the 1998 installation.

That experience put the work back onto our radar and ultimately back onto our agenda. Having time now to look more closely at the changes throughout those last twenty years, one thing immediately came up in my conversation with the artist: In the 1990s, the shadow of and the fears related to Big Brother were very much at the topical forefront of the project. Today, with our practice of constantly disseminating pictures that we take, pictures that are our own, it is her claim that something has fundamentally changed and that now it is as much about the way that we are seen and surveilled, as it is about the desire to be seen and to disseminate information. So what effect this will have on the reconfigured installation in the expanded building once we're open in 2016, I don't know. We just started that process, but I think the opportunity to rethink and reinstall histories of surveillance, at the same time reflecting on what surveillance might mean today through an artwork, is a wonderful opportunity.

That leads nicely into my last question, which is about our increasingly networked experience of culture right now, where we're all surveilling each other and ourselves, a type of sousveillance. Many younger artists are joining in a kind of a networked culture production and many new works exist solely online and on social platforms. Please talk more about how issues of surveillance are complicated by that new paradigm?

I don't think I have a good answer for that today since there is so much happening as we speak. If one thing has become clear, it's the speed of changes within our networked existence, which is just mind-boggling. Specifically, as someone who is working in an institution that is preoccupied with the way this relates to histories and narratives in the arts, it is really hard to stay on top of things, and so it's helpful to identify some artists with whom you can work, and with whom you can at least tackle such a problem without necessarily finding an answer.



Marie Sester, *Access*, 2003 (2010 SFMOMA installation detail); Online project (www.accessproject.net), custom software and electronics, robotic spotlight and acoustic beam, and cameras; dimensions variable; Project supported by Eyebeam, New York and by the Creative Capital Foundation, New York; Courtesy the artist; photo: Ian Reeves, courtesy SFMOMA; © Marie Sester

Trevor Paglen. Aerial photograph of the National Security Agency .Commissioned by Creative Time Reports, 2013. Courtesy of the artist.

Julia Scher, *Predictive Engineering 2*, 1998 (1998 SFMOMA installation view); multi-channel video installation with sound; dimensions variable; Collection SFMOMA, Accessions Committee Fund purchase; photo courtesy SFMOMA; © Julia Scher

I will just say in general, there are two approaches, which make it at times challenging to work as a curator of media arts in an institution. One is that either for political reasons or other reasons, some artists refrain and stay away from an active engagement with the media and take great pains to not be associated with the discourse around media, but rather only with the discourse around art. That's been an ongoing problem for media artists ever since that field emerged. The second thing is that being in San Francisco we are much identified with our proximity to Silicon Valley, and to the innovation of future technologies, and it is expected from us that we find artists that showcase these new developments. That very often tends to be an affirmative position and to highlight the new software as a new creative tool without allowing for a more critical, nuanced and deeper engagement with histories and narratives. So if you think about, as just one example, Creators Project featuring interactive and fun installations that are software driven within an event context, it doesn't really do more than what we already know about interaction and participation, which is that you can have fun with that.

This typically doesn't address the specific limitations and conditions of participation, and I mention that because I curated a show in 2008 called *The Art of Participation*, and that was one of the criticisms that we received, that we weren't participatory enough. My counter-argument was always that that was fine, that it was actually not our job to turn the museum into a fun-house and to enhance creativity around participation, but rather to find and identify different ways of understanding the opportunities but also limits of participation. So from non-participation to excessive over-the-top participation, there's a whole range of different approaches, and on that note I would also say that the topic of surveillance should produce art or artworks that actually have a longer shelf-life than the current technology of the day.

If you fast-forward ten years from now and look back at something that might seem very pertinent and urgent today, just imagine how that is still something that goes beyond the use of a particular technology. It addresses more fundamental concerns. So that's something we're trying to do, and I very often find myself in that position that I need to make a decision on how to stay contemporary in what we collect, how to identify works that really keep us engaged in a much longer conversation than just addressing the NSA and the Snowden dynamics today.

Do you have anything else that you would like to add or talk about?

You brought up an interesting project in your email which is a much more recent example of censorship and institutional policy around legal practice, which was the project *PRISM: The Beacon Frame* by Julian Oliver and Danja Vasiliev. I was not there in Berlin at the festival, so I didn't experience it, I've just been reading about it. First of all, it's a fascinating project, I'm not sure that it will remain an interesting project in the long run, but it certainly seems very contemporary and very urgent right now. The way that it unfolded at Transmediale, which as a full disclaimer I helped found in the late 1980s, was that someone felt responsible and acted out a kind of policing of that work in response to some criticism that was voiced on the opening night. The festival took the very legal position saying here's something going on that might be considered a breach of privacy laws. Now Transmediale is funded by government agencies, so they felt they can't be complicit with that. I respect that, I understand the position, but I also think at the same time it's the wrong attitude and the wrong approach.

Let me backtrack a little bit and point to an older practice in which artists, through video recording technology, have recorded and appropriated films. Christian Marclay being the most widely recognized example, but the practice is much older. It's been an issue for some museums to then say to the artist, "Can you guarantee that you cleared all copyrights for that?" Obviously, an appropriated collage of Hollywood movies can never, ever be in clearance of copyright laws, because artists wouldn't have the financial means to do that. Yet at the same time this appropriation is an important cultural reflection of our times, and I think that's a key to our mission, that we reflect what artists do and how they specifically react to our culture. Today, museums don't necessarily request any more that all the copyrights have been cleared, but they act on the trust that—if it ever becomes an issue—this will be discussed as a part of what museums do and what artists do and that this will be discussed as part of a fair use policy. One way of embracing that is to say, "well, we'll see if this becomes a problem." If it becomes a problem we'll then address it. So what the festival in Berlin did was a kind of self-censorship and to shut down the project - as opposed to an approach where one keeps it running to have these conversations, legally, politically, artistically, that it might trigger.

What's more, it felt like that was the desire of the work, and presumably of exhibiting it, to have that conversation.

Yes. You cannot embrace conflict and foster debate around an ongoing practice only from a legal point of view. Alternatively, where would you have that sort of experience and discussion if not within the arts? So I think we have a special obligation to address these issues.

Oliver Lutz, *The Lynching of Leo Frank*, 2009 (2010 SFMOMA installation view); Acrylic on canvas, CCTV system; painting: 60 x 87 in. (152.4 x 221 cm) overall dimensions variable; Courtesy the artist; photo: Ian Reeves, courtesy SFMOMA; © Oliver Lutz

LINDSAY HOWARD & CECI MOSS

In conversation with ANDREW MCCLINTOCK

Andrew McClintock: Can each of you start by giving a brief background on how you became involved with curating digital art, or exploring technology in and around art?

Lindsay Howard: I started using the Internet in the late '90s at first to meet strangers in AOL chat rooms and later to download music and hang out on LiveJournal. In 2004, I saw a net art piece by John Michael Boling and it blew my mind—that's when I first experienced the web as an artistic platform. When I graduated college, I started a Tumblr where I posted my writing on net art, images, animations, and audio, either sourced from friend's studios or from an international group of young artists I started to identify who were making and sharing work online. As a result of my Tumblr, I was invited to curate exhibitions in gallery spaces and my first was a group show called *DUMP.FM IRL* at 319 Scholes, where I subsequently became the Curatorial Director. 319 Scholes is a physical meeting place for an international community of artists working online. We hosted the JstChillin.org retrospective after their two-year run as a browser-based gallery and commissioning platform, and worked with a number of guest curators, including Brian Droitcour, Francesca Gavin, Gene McHugh, Nicholas O'Brien, Christina Latina, Daniel Leyva, and Domenico Quaranta, who explored topics such as the relationship between landscape and screen-based practices, artists as archivists, fantasy and play in networked culture, and the influence of rave and electronic music on contemporary art. In three years, we exhibited over three hundred artists working at the intersection of art and technology. Since then, I've become interested in helping artists develop long-term, sustainable practices by exploring alternative monetization models for digital art.

Ceci Moss: I graduated UC Berkeley in 2005 and during my last year there I took a media theory course with Dr. Todd Presner, who has done a lot of work with media theory and European intellectual history. Up to that point I was mainly interested in intellectual history and the 20th century, especially in France, but through that class I got into media theory and that progressed into an interest in media art. I graduated and I moved to New York and the first job I got out there was the position of Special Projects Manager at the New Museum and Rhizome, which is a non-profit affiliated with the New Museum that supports emerging art practices engaged with technology through the new media art archive Artbase, commissions, publications, public programs, and more. I was a catch-all person for all these different things that they were doing, primarily fundraisers for the New Museum and for Rhizome. The project I was working on for the New Museum was a box set of video art called *Point of View*, so I spent about a year and a half working on that, then I was also involved in developing the membership program at Rhizome. Through this role, I got deeper into not only new media art but video art as well. I fully immersed myself. I started writing for Rhizome at this time, and when Marisa Olson left her role, I applied and I was hired as the senior editor of Rhizome. That was really fun and rewarding, Rhizome has such an incredible history and there are so many wonderful, smart people involved in the organization. I had the opportunity to write about and work with a number of incredibly talented artists as well. I learned a lot through that, and I was heavily involved with the media art community in New York. In 2008, I started a Ph.D program at NYU in comparative literature while working at Rhizome, and my research project examined Internet art practices in the last ten years. In 2012, I taught for a year at NYU and in fall 2013, I decided I wanted to move back to the Bay Area and I got a job here as a the Assistant Curator of Visual Arts at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. I'm continuing my interest in art and technology through this new exhibition series *Control*, which explores the role of technology in culture through solo exhibitions by emerging and established artists interested in thinking critically about technology's influence on our contemporary world. For the first *Control* exhibition, I'm working with Jacqueline Kiyomi Gordon, who is interested in the technological design of sound and architecture, especially how it relates to the body and perception.

AM: Let's go back to when artists started using the Internet as a medium—about twenty years ago.

CM: Artists were also using BBS services in the '80s, so it's a pretty long history. In the '90s The Thing was a major hub for people who were interested in experimenting with art online. Rhizome, which began as an email list in 1996, was a way for people to share information and experiment with the web. I think what's interesting about that history is that a lot of those artists weren't necessarily coming from the mainstream contemporary art world, nor were they coming from the mainstream technology world, so you have a community that is really vibrant, critical, experimental—it was a fertile time for a lot of artists who were working outside a lot of the larger structures between them; there's a lot of great work that was produced at that moment.

LH: There's also Eyebeam, a New York-based non-profit that was founded in 1997. Originally, they paired established and emerging artists in an R&D style environment to co-produce major works—early alumni include Tony Oursler, Mariko Mori, Alexander Galloway, Cory Arcangel, Golan Levin, and Zach Lieberman—and then it developed into more of an artist residency program.

AM: You were the Curatorial Fellow at Eyebeam in 2012 and 2013, correct?

LH: Yeah, it was an incredible experience. I spent the first few months going through their archives, reviewing nearly two decades worth of media art history. I became fascinated by the period of time around 2005/2006 when Jonah Peretti (who went on to cofound Huffington Post and Buzzfeed) was the Director of the R&D Open Lab, working with senior fellows Evan Roth and James Powderly. It was around this time that they started the Free Art & Technology (F.A.T.) Lab and Graffiti Research Lab. This crew was, and still is, a powerhouse. They produce groundbreaking work related to social communication, viral media, and creative technologies for the public domain. I pitched Eyebeam to curate a five-year retrospective of F.A.T. Lab's work. The exhibition opened in April 2013, and brought together F.A.T. Lab's network of artists, hackers, musicians, lawyers, and graffiti writers, to showcase past work, collaborate on new projects, and host a series of workshops and discussions.

AM: I remember you saying that F.A.T. Lab were artists operating as hackers. What did you mean by that?

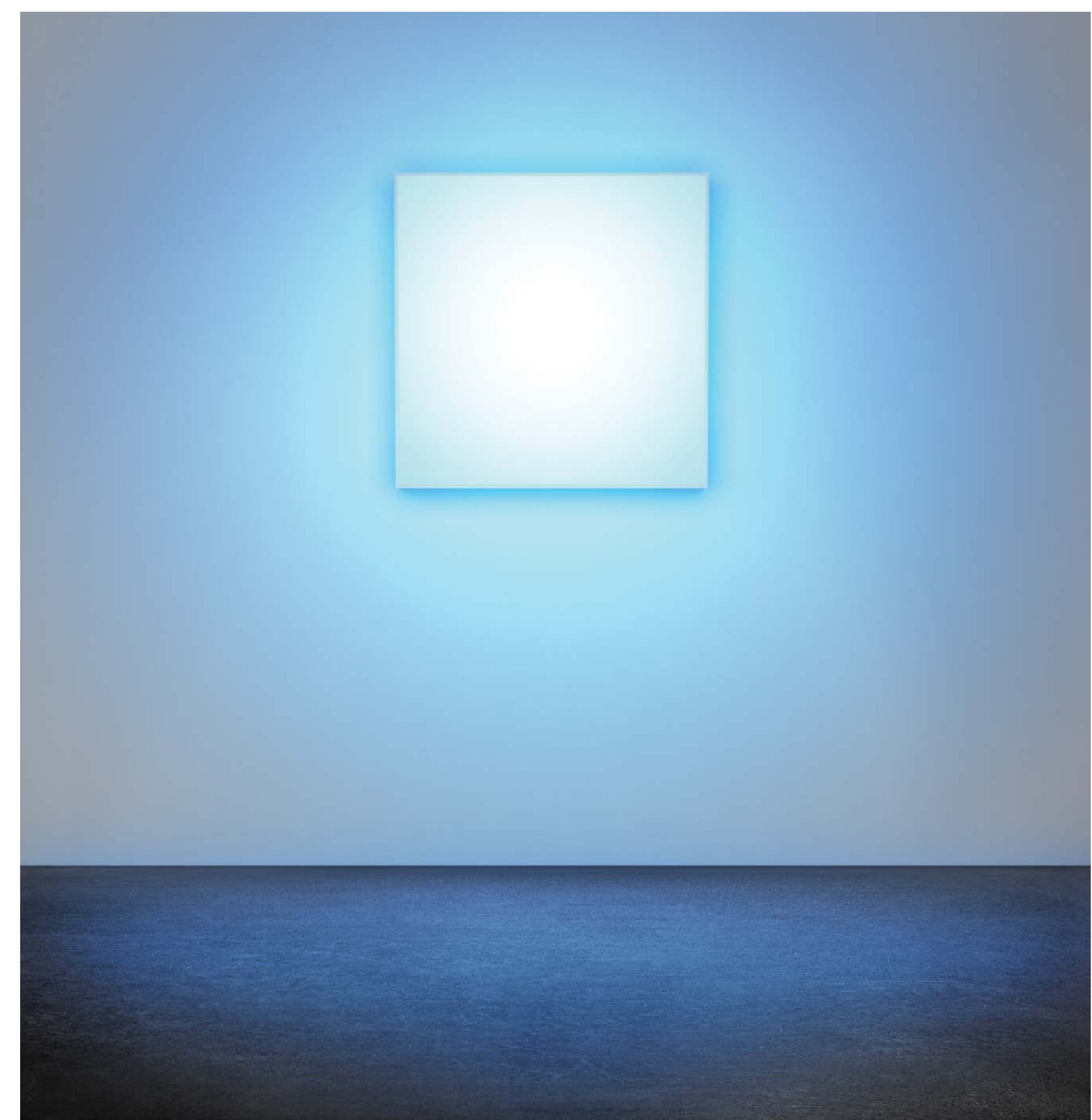
LH: There are many ways to define a "hack" but it's typically used to describe a clever, maybe playful, intervention into an existing system. So, for example, one of the pieces in the F.A.T. Lab retrospective was Evan Roth's *Ideas Worth Spreading*, a full-scale replica of a TED stage. The installation was equipped so that anyone could go on set, record herself giving a talk, and quickly upload it online. It was about opening up a closed system—one that's usually reserved for people who have a certain degree of recognition, influence, or wealth—and welcoming anyone with an idea to participate.

AM: So would you say then that art in this medium is inherently political just because it's going out of the system to create a voice? As I've been learning more about this it seems close to conceptual art, perhaps a way of looking at art.

CM: There are a lot of people who have made that connection, for sure. For one, I think of the Sol LeWitt quote where he says, "the idea is the machine that makes the art." His statement reveals how conceptual art adopted systems theory in various ways. When you read that work and the writing coming out of that period in the 1960s, there is some shared territory in terms of trying to rethink what an artwork is and where and how it functions. One aspect of conceptual art that parallels Internet art is that it doesn't have a medium the way painting has a medium, the way sculpture has a medium. In the 20th century you see especially with Clement Greenberg and Rosalind Krauss, this focus on medium specificity and that being a lens with which one would read and interpret a piece of work. A really compelling aspect of artists working with digital technology, especially working with the Internet in particular, is that they are doing something that isn't easily interpreted under that kind of structure. And so, especially in the last ten years, you see a lot of critics writing about the post-media condition or post-media. The conversation around post-Internet is very much related to that, where people are just trying to think through where this art work is occurring, what it is.

LH: It's been interesting to see post-Internet art through the eyes of the contemporary art market. People don't even know what it is. Gallerists know they want post-Internet art in their galleries. Collectors know they need post-Internet art in their collection. Artists are trying to make work that fits with the post-Internet art aesthetic. But, honestly, even the people who invented the term struggle to define it. My theory is that Post-Internet Art is the result of a persistent fear of technology. It's an excuse to ignore Internet Art and go back to talking about and thinking about objects. *post*-Internet art ends up resembling *pre*-Internet art, in its mode of production, materials, and the conversation around it.

CM: Why do we need pre and post? I would love to see more conversation exactly about what you're talking about, people really deeply reflecting on network culture and what that means. In David Joselit's book *After Art*, he says that in the last ten years we've seen this move away from medium, and he asks that we consider how we qualify art within the 21st century. He suggests that we look at images as creating these intensities, as entities that can spark something within our culture. He also understands the art



Jamie Zigelbaum, *Pixel*, 2013. Courtesy of the artist.

"Gallerists know they want post-Internet art in their galleries. Collectors know they need post-Internet art in their collection. Artists are trying to make work that fits with the post-Internet art aesthetic. But, honestly, even the people who invented the term struggle to define it. My theory is that post-Internet art is the result of a persistent fear of technology. It's an excuse to ignore Internet art and go back to talking about and thinking about objects."

-Lindsay Howard

world is it is self unique in that it navigates in between all of these different worlds; between finance, between popular culture, between an underground too. You see all these convergence points, and then art itself can be this, it can propel a thoughtful critical reflection on all these things coming together in a way. His argument makes a really interesting point. You're right, there's probably an impulse to totally forget the last twenty years of artists experimenting online or a consideration of the larger infrastructures that support web-based work. So I think that making sure that it's part of the conversation and inviting people to really think about what it means to inhabit a network culture and what that network will look like, is important.

AM: Lindsay, let's talk about this in the context of the digital art auction you curated at Phillips in October 2013. It sounds like you guys are saying that post-Internet art is a way to package something that's not easily understood. However, people are now buying YouTube videos, websites, and animated GIFs. It seems exciting to buy a piece of art that exists only online.

LH: Of course, and the Phillips auction was a great way to introduce collectors to digital art before it inevitably becomes a mainstay in contemporary art collections. There was a lot of excitement around Petra Cortright's YouTube video, Rafaël Rozendaal's website, and Nicolas Sassoon's animated GIF, all of which sold to wonderful collectors.

One of our goals with the Phillips auction was to engage the technology community since they have such a natural connection to the work. I also noticed that the live auction had a certain appeal because it provided an attractive mix of social engagement, transparency, and urgency for collecting digital work. Overall, the auction sold 92% by value and 80% by lot, with 80% of successful bidders being first-time buyers at Phillips, which made it not only a valuable educational experience but also a highly successful first-time auction for digital art.

AM: Yeah, definitely. Ceci, maybe you can chime in on this too. Lindsay, when we first started speaking last year, something hit me: The San Francisco Bay Area is the tech capital of the world and will probably be a testing ground for a model of new society, and I don't want to get into the bigger cultural issues of New York and San Francisco, but I find it funny that of course the appreciation of Digital Art had to start in New York and go through that process to perhaps legitimize it, even though the technology was mostly invented in the Bay Area.

CM: I agree with you, I think we are basically ground zero for all things tech. I mean, I see people walking around with Google glasses in downtown San Francisco every single day! This is definitely not the case in most metropolitan cities. YBCA is right in the center of downtown San Francisco, close to all of this activity, whether it's the numerous corporate tech events that happen throughout the year, for companies like Oracle and Salesforce, or the offices of Yelp, Wikimedia Foundation, Google, etc. which are a short walk from our building. San Francisco—and the larger Bay Area—is the center of this industry, and you feel that when you're in downtown. The Bay Area also has a rich history in terms of artists working with technology, I think of Ant Farm, Survival Research Labs, Lynn Hershman Leeson, the list goes on . . . . Given that context, I'm hoping through the *Control* exhibition program we can have a thoughtful, critical conversation about the deep impact of technology on our world and to use this series to take a moment to reflect on how technology is affecting our lives by exhibiting artists who are examining technology's influence on a number of subjects, such as labor practices, the military, psychology, perception, etc. These conversations seems particularly urgent given what's going on right now in our own backyard.

LH: It's worth saying that all of these efforts—exhibitions, public programs, auctions, etc.—come together to create a textured ecosystem. They create value for each other in different ways.

AM: So what does it mean when institutions like the MOMA, who bought fourteen video games last year for their collection, start purchasing these kinds of works? Are we going to be seeing more of that? I know video games are considered a contemporary art practice, and it's kind of the root of a lot of what people are working now, but do you think we're going to see institutions buying up older technology, because people bought code as well too, right?

CM: There's an interesting history to that. In New York there was this project in the early 2000s called the *Variable Media Initiative* and institutions like the Guggenheim, Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archive, Rhizome, and Electronic Arts Intermix came together to think through the issues around collecting and preserving new media, and the role of the institution in that process. They discussed the role of the archive in the face of new technologies, and strategized around best practices for safeguarding these works, which rely on platforms that are changing and are rapidly going out of date. How does a web-based work exist over time, when Netscape Navigator goes out of date, when you have faster bandwidth? One of the suggestions was that, instead of having museums maintain warehouses full of old computers, which is very costly, and employ technicians to operate them, was to instead ask artists to reimagine their works for different platforms. So it was a totally radical way of thinking about art work. In a sense, artists had to distill the concept of their artwork into something that could be realized in a future scenario, into a concept that could be realized on different platforms.

LH: It was important with the auction that we remained true to the artist's intention for how the work should be purchased, displayed, and preserved over time. The pieces were delivered to collectors with a certificate of authenticity, as well as a statement from the artist on how to maintain it. As Ceci said, it's about the artist identifying the essential part of the work, whether that's the hardware, software, browser, or whatever it might be, and providing instructions so that the piece can have as long of a life as possible.

AM: So like Rafaël Rozendaal's website, right? The collector is supposed to renew the site every year or the domain name, that's along the lines of what you're talking about?

LH: Exactly. It's important to Rafaël that the work remains online and viewable to the public, so that's something the collector agrees to before he or she buys a website. In exchange, the collector's name is listed in the title bar above the URL, for instance: Collection of Benjamin Palmer and Elizabeth Valleau, ifnoyes.com by Rafaël Rozendaal 2013. It's similar to a collector loaning a work to a museum, except that in this case it's accessible to millions of people all over the world with a click of a button. There are a handful of visionary collectors who already recognize the web as public space, so it's natural for them to collect and share art in this context. We're entering the next generation of contemporary art.

Tumblr founder David Karp, curator Lindsay Howard, and artist Rafaël Rozendaal

[*Above*] The Phillips, Tumblr and Paddles ON! Digital Art Auction, October 10th, 2013.
[*Below*] Jacqueline Kiyomi Gordon, *It Only Happens All of the Time* and *Love Seat*, 2014 (Installation shot) Images courtesy Phocasso/J.W. White and YBCA

Harm van den Dorpel, *Assemblage ('About' press and reviews)*, 2012, and Artie Vierkant, *Image Object Monday 26 March 2012 10:45AM*, 2012. Installation shot, manipulated by artist Artie Vierkant

[*Above*] Clement Valla , *Postcards from Google Earth*, 2010- (ongoing). Courtesy of the artist. [*Right*] Alexandra Gorczynski, *PLUR Piece*, 2013. Courtesy of the artist.

RAFAËL ROZENDAAL www.newrafael.com

Interviewed by AUSTIN LEE www.austinlee.net

Self portrait with tattoo, 2006, Los Angeles. Courtesy of the artist.

Your artwork has strong ties to both painting and animation. How do you think about time in both mediums and how does it function in your work?
I'm interested in movement, and I'm interested in staring. That means I want to make moving images that don't have a beginning or ending, no specific duration. The computer makes it possible to create images that run infinitely, always a bit different but also kind of the same. Think of a fountain: it's in motion, it's moving, but it's not going anywhere.

I love that paintings are immediate, opposed to video art. To see a large number of video art-works, you'd have to spend five to ten minutes with each piece. Paintings are different, you scan the works quickly, and stop wherever you want and dive into that work. Once a painting catches your eye, there is a heightened connection between you and the work, a special focus. I'm always looking for that kind of concentration. The concentration of painting, the liveliness of animation.

The Internet has its own pace. When we surf the web, we forget about time. You might see a hundred websites in five minutes, or stare at a single page for an hour. You're in a state of trance. The best way to experience time is to ignore it. You know that feeling when you're excited and concentrated and before you know it hours have passed? That's what I want to present in my work. I hope that people feel that way when they browse my websites.

What amazes me is that time is absolute, but the perception of time varies so much. Some days fly by and some days drag on forever. It's our personal perception of time that we have to live with.

How many people visit your websites each year? How do you interpret this information? Do you use data to understand how people are looking at your work?
In the last twelve months all my websites combined had 34,746,414 unique visits. Isn't that insane? I don't know what to think of it. It's pretty abstract. That's a lot more visits than most museums get per year. And I'm just one artist. Having a website, for me, is like having a continuous solo exhibition, in the whole world at the same time. It blows my mind that that's possible.

If anything, it makes me feel independent. I created Internet art over the years and more and more people shared that content, because they enjoyed it, because they felt it was worth sharing. That's very moving to me. It's very moving because it's shared by people who decide they want to share it, not because an art consultant told them it's a good investment.

The average viewer spends thirty-four seconds on each page. That's quite long! Some people told me they will have my work up on a second monitor or TV and just leave it on all day, as a companion, as a permanent work. Some people just flip through them quickly. I do the same when I visit a museum, I walk through the rooms quickly, and if something catches my eye, I'll spend more time observing and learning.

FlyingFrying.com can be projected as big as a wall or as small as a cellphone. Are you interested in these variables or is it just part of the medium that must be dealt with?
I always thought websites should behave like gas, they should fill any available space. It's interesting to make a work that deals with different screen sizes. . . . How do you deal with composition? How big is a website? It's different every time.

Think of music, you can listen to it on headphones while you jog, or in a packed stadium. It's the same song, different experience. Both experiences are important. I feel the same way about websites. There is no ideal way to view the work, each way is important. You might see my work on your phone, or on a screen the size of a skyscraper, for the whole city to see. I hope that my work is robust enough to stand on its own in any context. That's what I'm trying. I love seeing the work in different places, it's different every time.

Is there a story behind your newrafael.com domain?
I started with the domain whitetrash.nl. My very first domain name, 2001. I have no idea why . . . . I was surprised it was available. But after a while it didn't feel right, it's a funny name, but not a name for my homepage, for my base. I registered rafaelrozendaal.com with a very cheap webhost who later went bankrupt, so I lost that domain. Rafaelrozendaal.com is too long anyways, and I thought I need some kind of short "rafael" domain name. Most options were taken. . . .

Fill This Up .com, 2014. Website, duration infinite. Collection of Rattan Chadha.

"It makes a lot of sense, we all love computers, why not have them integrated into ourselves? I'm not sure if the future will be 'any surface is a screen' or 'Internet directly in my brain.' I usually wait for a technology to become mainstream, I don't want to figure out the bugs. I'm really waiting for magic screen paint, so your entire home can behave like a screen."

Mai Ueda is great at finding domain names and she came up with newrafael.com. I loved it right away and was surprised it was available. Since then I've used newrafael as my handle for all my social media.

If there's any interpretation the obvious one is that my first name is Rafaël, just like the Italian Renaissance painter. I was born a few centuries later so I'm new. My parents are artists so they must have known what it means to name your child Rafaël. I remember my drawing teachers in art school always had high expectations because of my first name. I'm not that good at live drawing but I enjoyed it. If anything, I had a nice line, a lively hand, but I don't have a natural talent for drawing people.

I've always been drawn to mechanical drawing, using drawing in a mathematical, diagrammatic way. Converting perceptions and ideas into formulas, equations, and diagrams.

Mathematics is really quite beautiful and mysterious. The basic idea of an infinite line that stretches farther than you can imagine. What a beautiful mental image! Anything you imagine…. it stretches farther than that. Much farther. I love that infinity, by definition, is incomprehensible. If you could comprehend it, it wouldn't be infinite.

I love looking at Rafael's drawings, or any other Italian renaissance painting. But that work is very photographic to me. It's amazing, but also quite far from me. Perhaps too complex to comprehend.

I feel much closer to earlier works, when things are still a bit clumsy. Primitive works, medieval works, I enjoy moments in art history where the artist is not comprehending everything yet. Maybe comprehension is not the right word, but a certain distance from perfect depiction. I like it when things are exaggerated, abstracted, simplified, summarized, distorted, squeezed into a form that does not try to be perfect.

Yet I love Vermeer and Jan van Eyck. So never mind. Vermeer might be my favorite artist of all time.

I love that your parents named you after Raphael. Another great artist I keep coming back to when I look at your work is Sol LeWitt. Can you talk about his influence?
It's interesting, the connection is very obvious, but only recently did I really look at his work. I knew it before, but I was always more interested in early abstraction, Mondrian, Malevich….

What is really interesting to me is that LeWitt was making algorithmic images without a computer. That is visionary. I wonder how aware he was of the visual possibilities of the computer when he was making his first instruction pieces. I was always suspicious of minimal art, I felt like it was just a bigger, more polished version of what happened in abstract art forty to fifty years earlier. I still feel that way about a lot of minimal art, but LeWitt is really genuine and innovative.

Your domain names are important since they function as the titles of the work. Does finding an available domain become a challenge? What do you think about the recent addition of new domain extensions such as .boats or .fish?
Finding domain names has always been a challenge. I love it! Obviously names like clouds.com or blood.com were taken. Had I started buying domains in 1985 I might've had a chance. But I was only five years old. I should've been buying domain names instead of playing with Lego. I'd be so rich now! Just like operating systems and browser technology influence my work, so do the availability of certain domain names.

It's quite a puzzle when I want to find a domain. I use a website called bustaname.com. You enter a number of words and it will show you possible combinations of those words that are available as a .com, .org, .net, etc. I'll enter words that somehow have something to do with what I'm working on, or how I'm feeling. If I belong to any movement it's probably emotional abstract art, if that category exists. I always wanted .com domain names. I have a few others, .org, .us, .biz, but I'm always excited to find a good .com.

I'm curious how the domain name system will evolve. There will be lots of new top-level domains but I think .com will be around for a long time, just like 1-800 phone numbers.

You started posting your own haikus online recently. Have you noticed a constant thread in your work that is always present regardless of medium?
I feel very close to Japanese culture. I love being there. I love their interest in simplified imagery throughout the centuries, minimal living, gentleness, incredible food, attention to detail, and an obsession with technology.

I found this classic poem by Basho from the 17th century:
"old pond / frog jumps in / splash"

The frog poem! It really is an amazing piece. What is most incredible is that it doesn't require any material other than human memory. It's so simple, anyone can remember it. And every time you recite it, it generates this powerful mental image. It will never deteriorate. It will evolve with us.

This inspired me to start writing haiku. I might be a bit clumsy, but I hope to improve over time. I love that I can make them anywhere, you really don't need any tools to make a haiku. It just appears in your mind. If there is any constant thread in my work, you call that the artist's vision, right? That always intrigued me: through art we can experience someone else's perceptions, thoughts, feelings. We can see through someone else's eyes.

I hope that there is a constant in my work, regardless of medium. I hope my personality is present in my work. Then again the work forms my personality. I don't think about it too much, I want to make things without analyzing myself, I don't see any reason for that. I actually see a danger in self-analysis, it makes an artist too reserved and strategic, as opposed to free and spontaneous.

It sounds obvious, but I really just try to do whatever interests me, and try not to think of the potential reward. Because if I'm doing what I love, I'm spending my time the way I want to. And that *is* the reward.

What do you think of Google Glass or Oculus Rift? Do you think these wearable devices will catch on? How do you feel about computers becoming more integrated with our bodies?
It makes a lot of sense, we all love computers, why not have them integrated into ourselves? I'm not sure if the future will be "any surface is a screen" or "Internet directly in my brain." I usually wait for a technology to become mainstream, I don't want to figure out the bugs. I'm really waiting for magic screen paint, so your entire home can behave like a screen.

One of my favorite things you have done is your BYOB project. I love how an idea can become huge and still maintain its simplicity. Are you surprised with how it has grown? Have you noticed a difference in how people share ideas online vs. in person?
Yes I was and am very surprised!

Let me tell you a bit about how it started: I was living in Berlin, and I noticed that most of my friends own projectors. So I thought, let's find a space and invite everyone and we can set up a one-night exhibition…. Easy.

Exhibitions are usually very serious and heavy, I wanted to create one that was more spontaneous. I told Anne de Vries and he loved the idea, so we organized the first edition together. We did not know it was the first edition of a series, we just tried it. The night went very well. It was very easy to set up because everyone brought their own gear. BYOB is very much about individual responsibility, and spontaneity. Everyone was surprised to see so many projections in one space! It looked like the Internet exploded onto the walls.

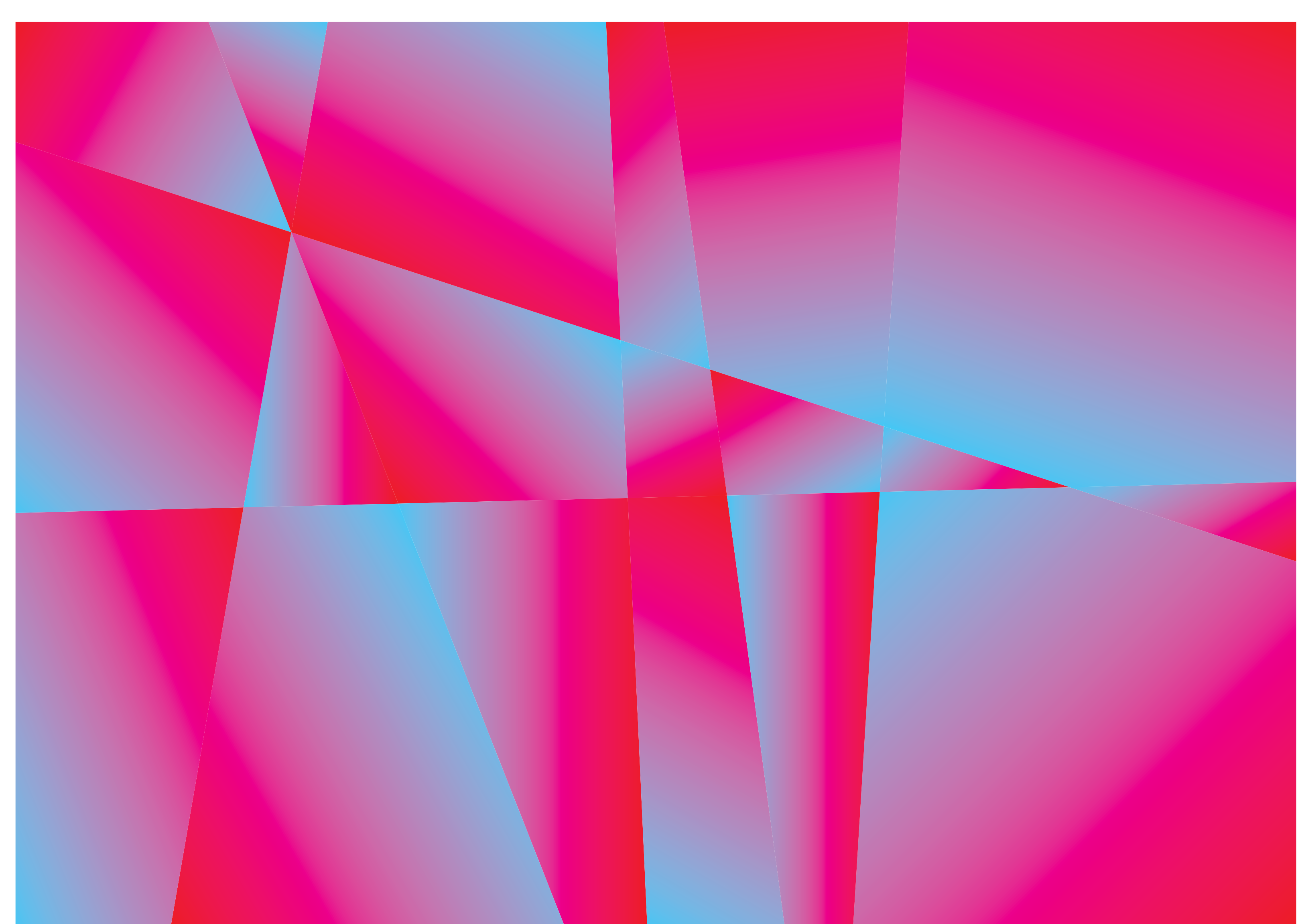
Projections are very flexible, you can rearrange them, change scale, change what you're showing, and this made the exhibition very interesting. The artists would respond to each other, changing what they showed according to what was around them.

After that I decided BYOB should be an open format. I posted the manual online:

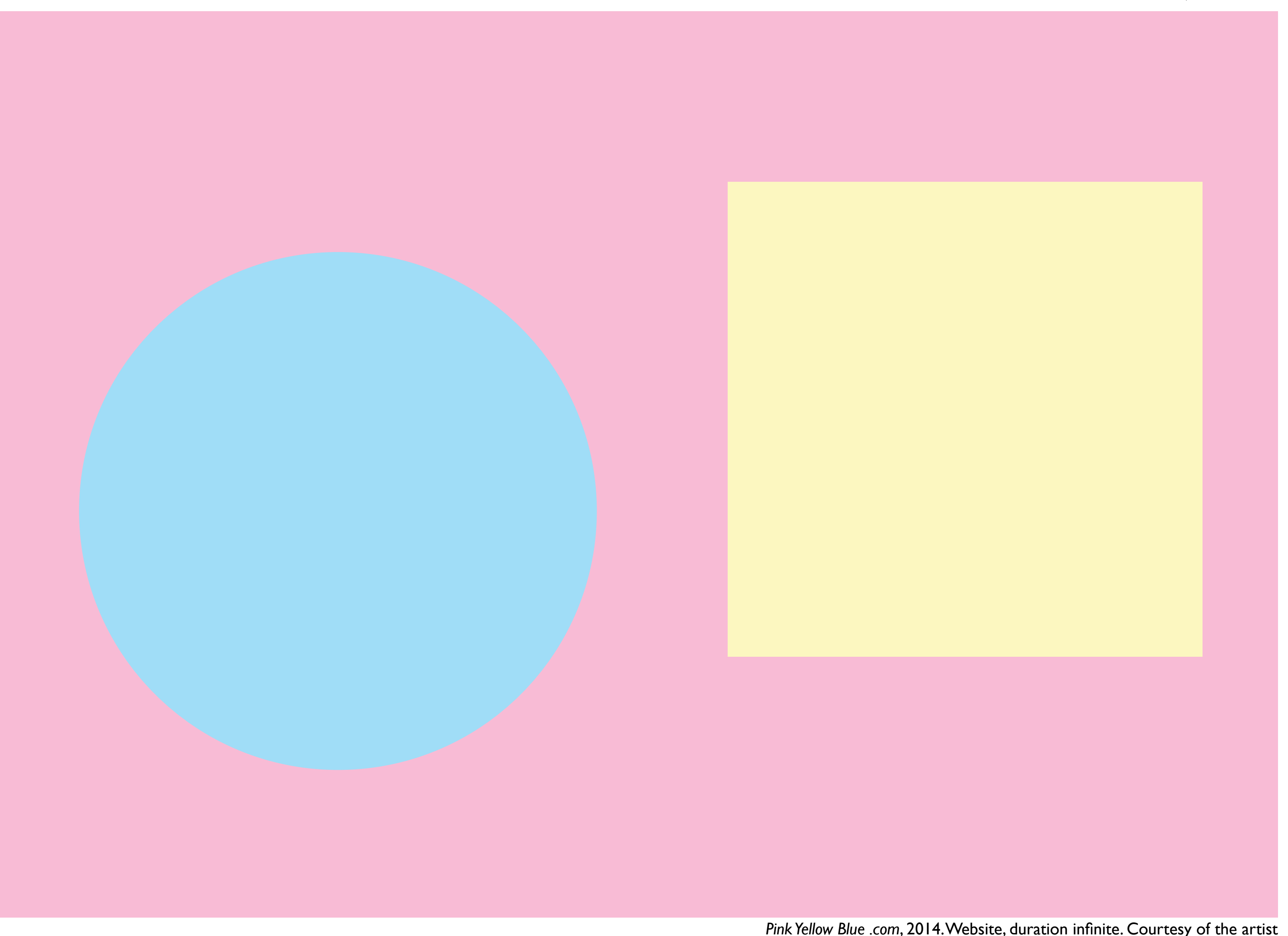
"Find a space, invite many artists, ask them to bring their projector."

That's it. It's a social algorithm.

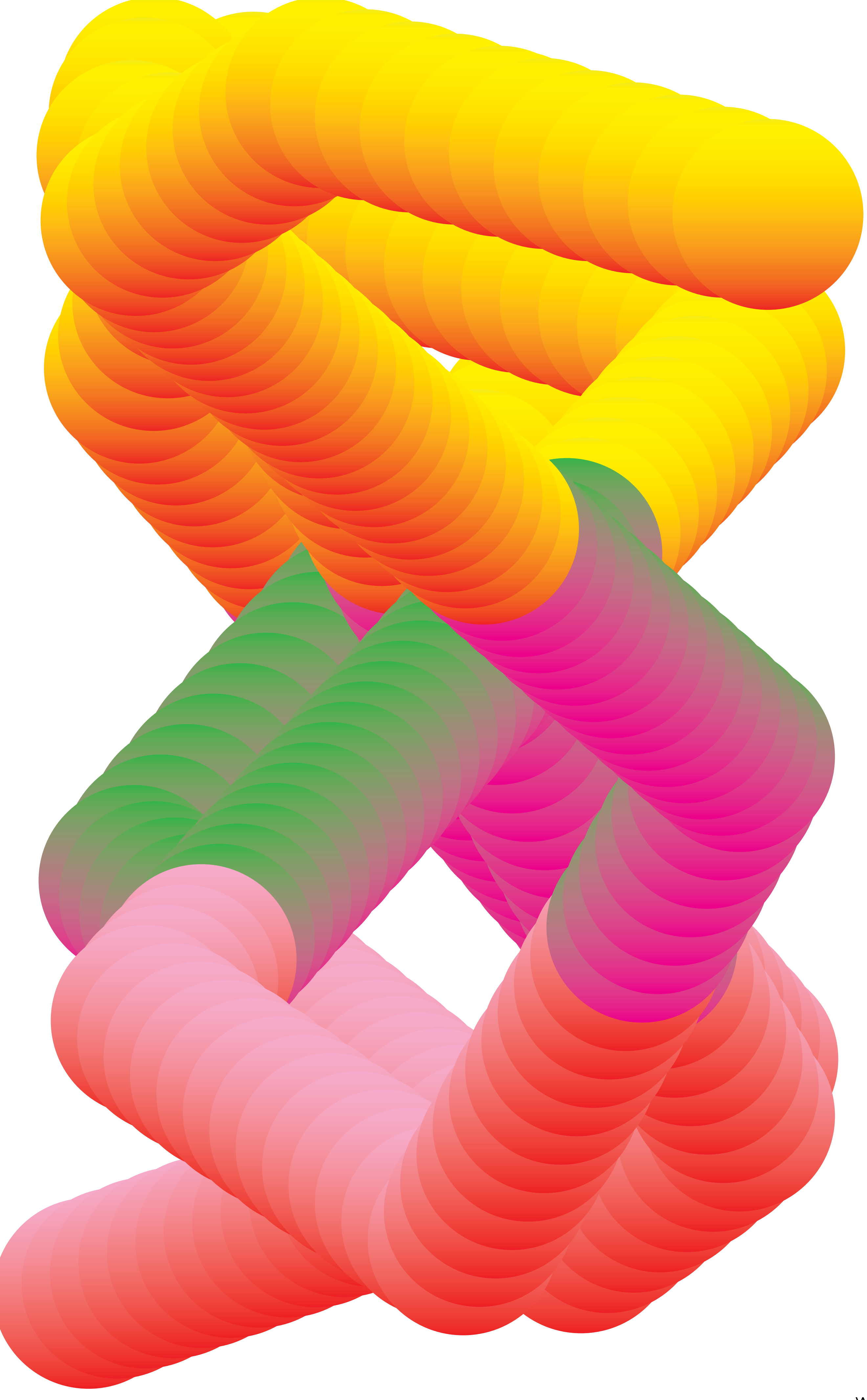
Since then, there've been 162 BYOB's around the world, in places like New York and London, but also Cuba and Myanmar. Each city has its own character and that reflects



If No Yes .com, 2013. Website, duration infinite. Collection of Benjamin Palmer.



Pink Yellow Blue .com, 2014. Website, duration infinite. Courtesy of the artist



Slick Quick .com, 2014.
Website, duration infinite.
Courtesy of the artist.

in the events and the work shown. It's a great feeling, seeing so many people happy to exhibit their work. I created this idea to empower people.

The art world is very intimidating, and many talented people are too shy to find a place for their art. I'm hoping BYOB helps those people, so they can find each other and build something together. It's important to note that BYOB is not a critique of institutions, it's an alternative.

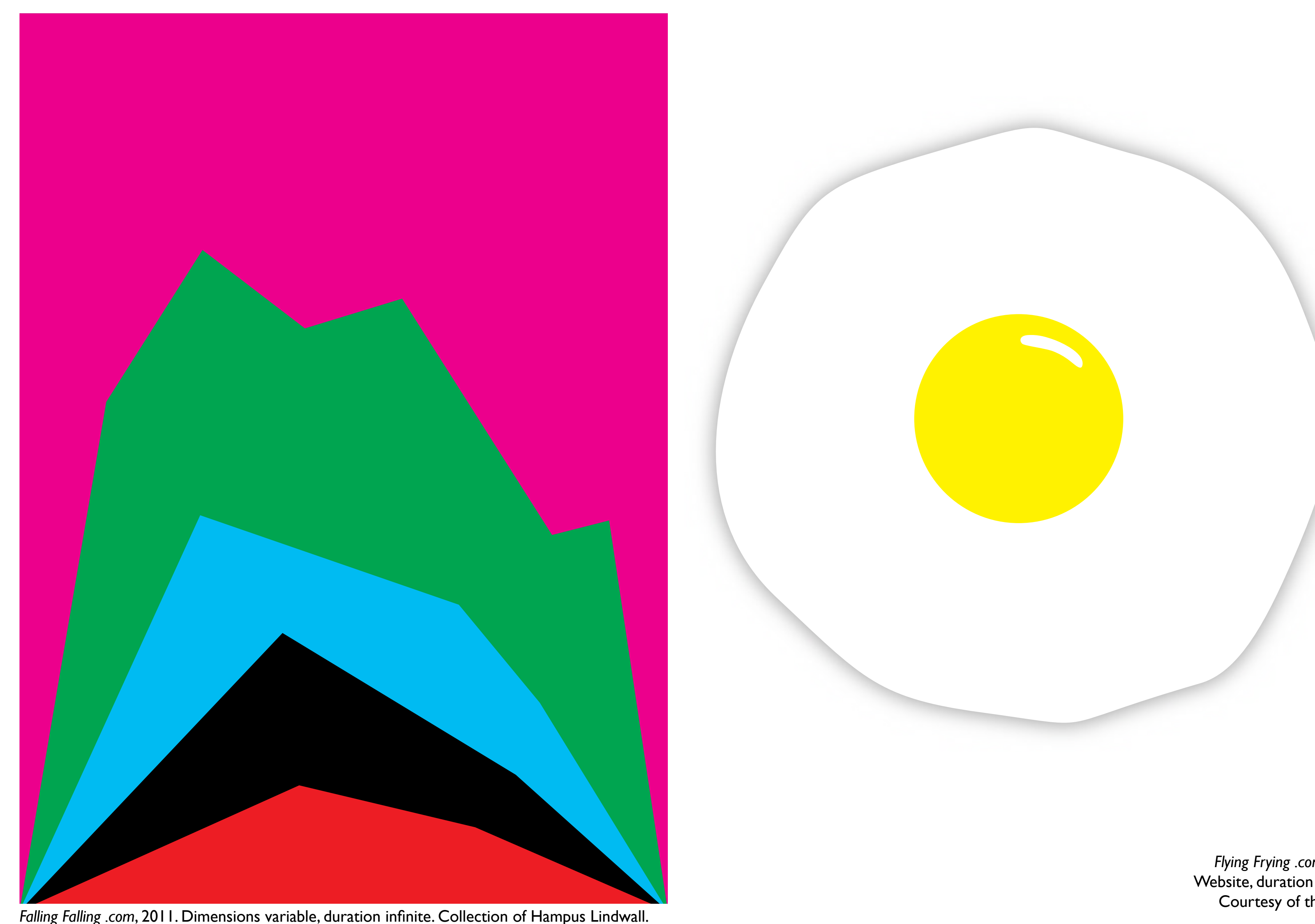
When do you know a work is finished?
It's a feeling. Some works are done right away. They don't need any fiddling. Some pieces are more difficult. I'll try different versions, and if it's not happening, I'll leave the piece alone for a while. I might leave it for a few days, or even a few years. I'll look at it every now and then and wait for the final work to present itself. At some moment it unfolds. That's one of the luxuries of making art, there is no deadline. One thing is for sure, when the work is done, it's done. It's very clear to me. I never change a work once it's done.

What is something you have learned from your mother and father?
They taught me everything. I love my parents, I think I'm very lucky. I'm a product of their interests. They're both artists and they love to travel. They also taught me a lot about food; your health is mostly what you eat. What also helps to live a good life is doing what you want. When you do what you love, every day is a holiday. Man, it must suck when you don't like your parents, or they don't like you. . . .

Hexattack.com ***made me think of an article I read years ago about strobing images posted on an epilepsy forum. It was the first time I had heard of someone suffering physical harm through the Internet. Your site seems to acknowledge the power, danger, and beauty of color. It is difficult, but the longer I look the more mesmerized I become. Can you talk about how you think about color?***
Color is one of those very intuitive things. Words are not very helpful, words are inadequate, I do not have much to say about color. I will say this: words are going to be less dominant in human conversation. Now we carry a smartphone with us, so in any conversation we can show what we're thinking, instead of saying it. We might show an image or a video, or scribble something, the mobile screen is an alternative to our vocal chords.

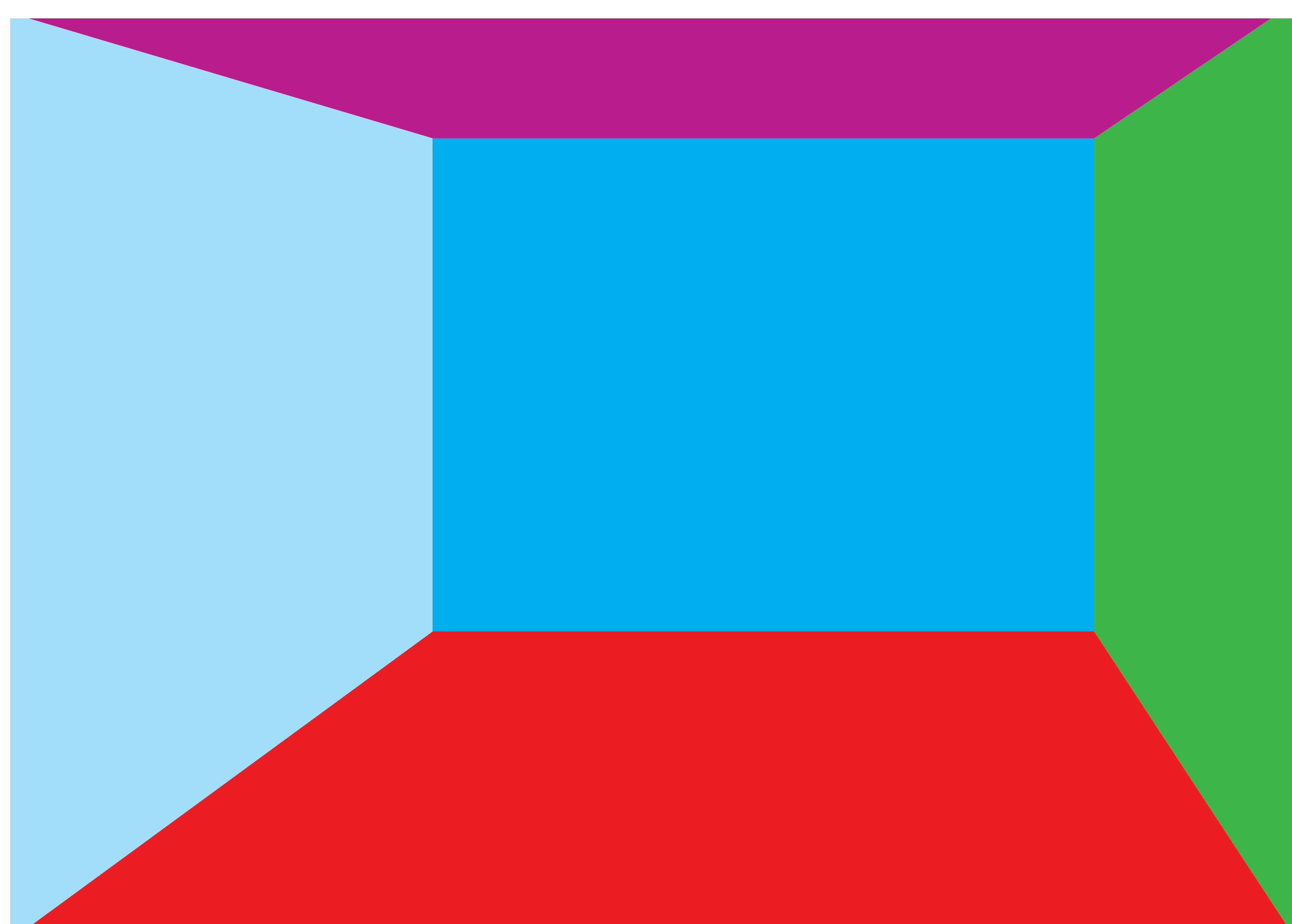
My problem with words is that it they are based on the idea of categories, and it creates separations/boundaries that don't exist. We cannot separate color from rhythm, composition, movement, surface, sound, smell, mood—it's all one. Words help us to survive, but they also force us to see things a certain way. I think the way we experience reality is heavily manipulated by words, for better or worse.

Seoul Art Square, *The biggest kiss in the world*, 2012. Courtesy of the artist.



Falling Falling .com, 2011. Dimensions variable, duration infinite. Collection of Hampus Lindwall.

Flying Frying .com, 2013.
Website, duration infinite.
Courtesy of the artist



Room Warp .com, 2014. Website, duration infinite. Courtesy of the artist

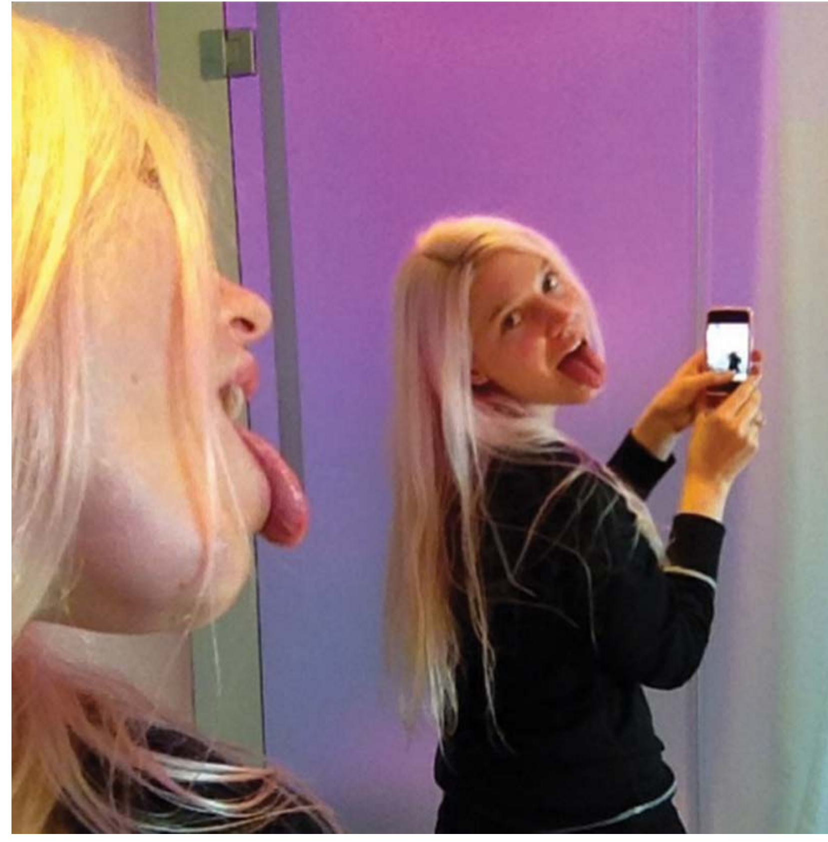
Into Time, with mirrors, at Museu Imagem E Som, Sao Paulo, 2010. Dimensions variable, duration infinite. Collection of Nur Abbas. Courtesy of the artist.

Really Really Big, exhibition at NP3, Groningen, 2009. Courtesy of the artist.

PETRA CORTRIGHT

Interviewed by COURTNEY MALICK

Selfie @petracortright. Courtesy of the artist.



Selfie @petracortright. Courtesy of the artist.

Petra Cortright, born in 1986, is a Los Angeles-based artist whose work initially became popular on the Internet a few years ago when she began interacting with audiences/users through her performative YouTube, webcam videos. In these solos, which, perhaps unconsciously double as self-portraits, Cortright who often sports sunglasses and bright lipstick, uses her movements to convey a vibe of sorts. Without any dialog, but often incorporating electronic tracks laid over the video, she addresses her audience by looking directly into the camera, while at other times wanders seemingly aimlessly as if deep in thought and unaware of her self-documenting process. Humor also often comes into play as Cortright uses programs such as Photoshop, Photo Booth, Magic Camera, Flash, After Effects and Maya to manipulate and skew her own image.

Over the past few years, as her work has gradually transitioned more and more into the three-dimensional, real space of the white cube with group and solo exhibitions of her video along with other works like a series of flags and "paintings" on aluminum, Cortright has also continued to become more and more infamous within Internet communities of artists and other visually-minded, new media thinkers who are utilizing the unique terrain of the Internet to modify how art can be made, disseminated and even bought and sold. The melding of the online and in person quality of her work proves that regardless of the realm in which she experiments, her gestures and the tones that she subtly yet specifically sets through her body language and digital morphing resonate with an emerging group of artists who work fluidly between media and presentation platforms.

In an interview with Jeppe Ugelvig for DIS Magazine, you mentioned that you didn't fully understand the discussions and debates around selling digital art, even though you're a part of it and have even produced work that directly references the issue (with Video Catalog). I have to say, I'm kind of in the same boat. For me digital art seems like just another way of making art. In that sense, it is also confusing that artists such as yourself are usually noted as "digital" or "Internet" artists—though we don't always specify 'this person is a painter, a sculptor, etc.'—probably because more and more often people are working in different ways that defy categorization. You mentioned that your video work is an interactive, social media project, in that viewers leave comments and the videos can be easily shared, while at the same time they are also documentation of performances. With all this in mind, I suppose my question is simply: do you think of yourself as a digital artist or as an artist who utilizes digital tools in order to produce a desired effect?

If anything I'm actually starting to think of myself as a painter really. Even the videos that I make come from an obsession with composition, color, lines, movement—a very simple idea of beauty. I'm interested in very classical subjects like landscapes, portraits, still life. These interests apply to all my work and the work happens to be digital. I grew up around computers, so working with them is what is most natural to me.

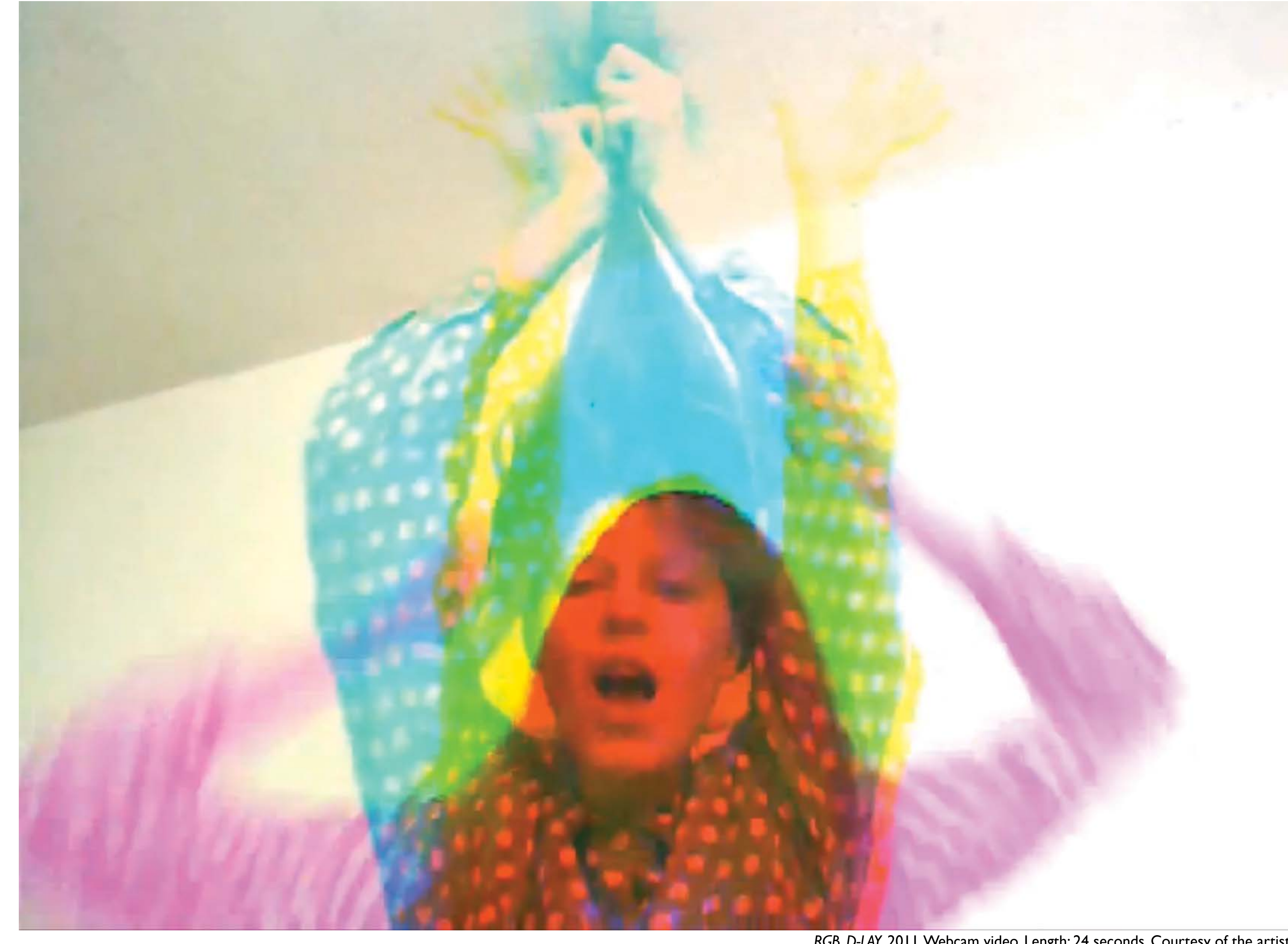
It seems obvious to me that the definition of nature is what you know and you can't change that. Growing up, my dad had [one of the] first Macs, not the Apple II, but one of the pretty early versions. I remember a time before Internet, but that was when I was like ten years old. My dad was an artist, master printmaker and sculptor, and my mom has a Masters in painting from Berkeley. They did everything with their hands, that's what was natural for them at that time.

I asked my mom once if she could give me oil painting lessons but she said I'd hate it. So I got all the materials myself and tried to learn and I only lasted an hour. It was very difficult to not be able to copy and paste or to be able to change and delete things. People our age get very impatient; everything has to be instant gratification. For example, now with everyone using Instagram, you just post one photo at a time, as opposed to when Facebook was more popular and it was all about waiting until you had a set of photos and then posting a whole album at a time.

I certainly see something that could be interpreted as painterly in the way that movement and the subtlety of affect or tone that is achieved therein, plays into your videos. Can you tell me how you approach the relationship (or discord) between the bodily movements that you conjure in your webcam performance-videos and the technical implementations that are then added in with other programs? Does the movement come first and set the tone or is it a bit more arbitrary?

I'm a bad liar so the tone is very real in all the work, and I think that's the start of it every video. If I'm feeling blue, that is going to show through in what I make. I don't try to fight against that because that seems counter intuitive - why fight reality? The tone dictates everything.

I like that you are an emerging artist based in LA and that that environment tends to come through in the tone of your work. However, I imagine you also spend a lot of time online as well. Can you tell me about your online environment? Sites that you enjoy visiting, certain networks that have been resourceful or inspiring?



RGB, D-LAY, 2011. Webcam video. Length: 24 seconds. Courtesy of the artist.

I get really jacked up on Pinterest before I paint. I used to do that with Google images but now I'm more into Pinterest, because the images are really curated. It's really generic dreamy, like dream house boards, flowers people would like to have at their wedding, exotic travel landscapes and cityscapes. The format of the site is great because it's just a sea of images. I also like the mood it puts me in, it's very tranquil.

With a site like Pinterest I will see something like someone's dream house board and I'll [bring that into whatever I am working] on and sample a certain color. That's just the reality of how I can work and what's possible when you are able to use the Internet as a resource. I mean, there is no reason why I wouldn't do that. It reminds me of something that Jeanette Hayes said, I think it was in her TMI video for VFiles. She said, "When you put something on the Internet, it's mine." I really love that quote. It just sums up that the Internet is forever, you don't know who saved what, when, it's kind of this communal thing. Of course there's a fine line between stealing and re-using, but that can get pretty blurry.

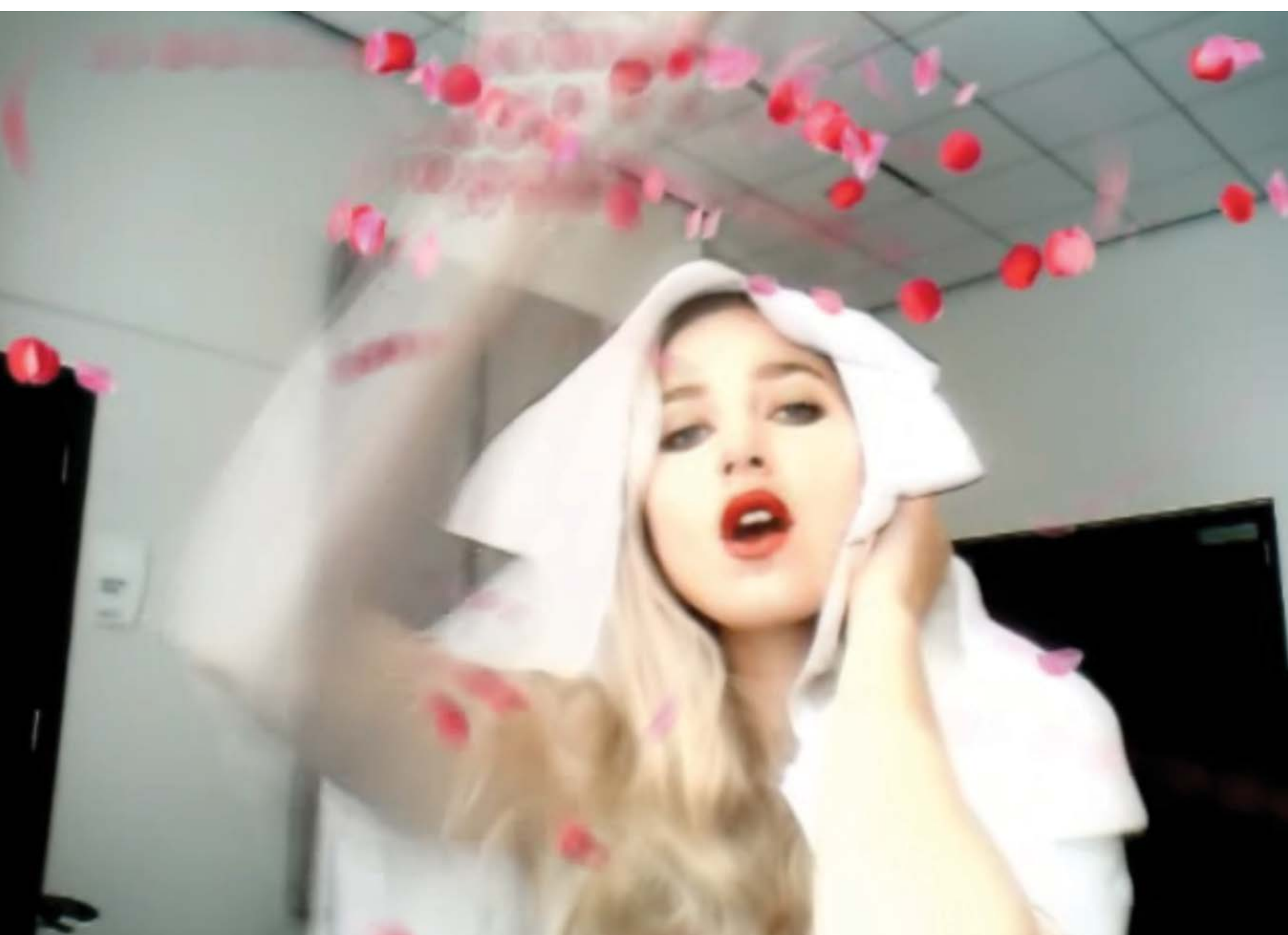
Yes, the Internet is clearly the most obvious and available resource for everyone. Whether you identify as a "digital artist" or not, I think it would be difficult to find any artist who is not utilizing it in ways that are fundamental to their research and even processes of production in many cases. You are now working both online and off. Can you tell me about any differences or surprising similarities/parallels, that you have encountered while exhibiting in these two different modes and types of spaces?

I want to start posting more files of the paintings before they are printed because they look very different online vs. in print. But in general there haven't really been a lot of surprises. I think the differences are in the communities. When you make things that hang on walls it's a different community. Probably those people don't know how to use computers.... Just kidding, of course they do, but still, it seems like the differences are the usual suspects. It's a question that confuses me when I think about it. Or maybe it feels taboo to talk about in a way. I don't want to outright say some of the things I want to say....

The online environment is more democratic, whereas the gallery system not so much. For someone like me, who is used to doing everything on my own because it was more convenient, having to give control over to this other system, a system that seems a little outdated, is weird. I'm really not advocating against galleries, but I think artists really needed them before the Internet. I've come so far on my own even though there is a whole other system to navigate, but the Internet is just as much involved with gallerists and curators and all those people and traditional systems.

I think they need to use the Internet more effectively. I think the gallery system could get its shit together a little more and start being smarter about the Internet. I'm used to making every thought into a tweet. It's even more than that—I mean, ever since Twitter came out I think my thoughts have become shaped into 140 characters. So I'm from this generation that just adapts by default and everything is out in the open. So it's weird to come into this system that isn't used to operating like that. If anything I sometimes feel slowed down by it. But there is something so beautiful about having an event in a certain space and time. It's *classic*. LOL

Night Heat 24, 2011. Digital painting on satin, 72 1/2 x 51 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



Bridal Shower, 2013. Webcam video, 2 minutes. Courtesy of the artist.

The biggest difference is the hush hush attitude that seems so traditional and kind of. . . . slow? Like holding off on posting a picture of the show at least until the opening —I think most galleries would prefer that, but I feel like it's a little strange that they don't want people to see the rawness of the install. It kind of slows me down mentally, because I'm from a generation that makes every thought known to the world, a few seconds after it occurs.

Yes, it definitely comes through that that continues to be important to you. I think that Video Catalog shows your commitment to a free and open-source online environment.

Yes, with *Video Catalog* I didn't really plan it beforehand as an aspect of my work, but it was my first two-person show, my first non-group show and the gallerist was asking me about how I wanted to price my videos and the whole question of it made me uncomfortable. I had no reference for what a webcam video should cost, so I just jokingly suggested that we charge ten cents per YouTube view—so we wouldn't have to think about it. And he was like, "Wow, good idea, let's do that!"

Artists aren't really in charge of the monetary value of their work, so I don't even want to pretend that I am, but the art world doesn't really decide either, so this way, it depends solely on how many people are looking at the work, which hopefully reflects something about their interest in it as well. When coming up with this catalog system, I took into account the rare case that a video would go viral, and end up getting millions of views, then the price would actually start to go down instead of continuing to go up. I think that is also important because obviously you can buy views and there is a lot of trolling and stuff like that. So that is a rule that I use for all my videos now. I find it de-motivating to think too much about systems overall or working within them. I do well within certain sets of circumstances, but it is more about comfort than pressure for me.

This kind of reminds me of a curatorial way of working, in that, for example, when I curate a show I want the curatorial structure that I employ to emulate as closely as possible the modes through which the artists produce their work, so, with Video Catalog, you have made the structure or the sort of "rule that your work follows," reflect the ways that your primary audience (YouTube) functions. Do you think of it that way at all?

Well, I can see that in a sense. I think that things are very fragmented and I don't like making precious things or the idea or myth of an artist making this golden, secret shining thing. . . . That is why I like to make things available to as many people as possible.

People, audiences, expect to be part of the process now. I feel weird if I don't post anything online during the process of making a new video or body or work. Now I am always engaged on some level even before a show opens or a new video is up online. . . . because that's the way living online is: constant.

I think this also relates to your choice to often use default settings when manipulating or enhancing your images. Can you tell me about your interest in default settings, especially as they seem to be evolving more and more these days? Does default connote familiarity to you, or is it something else?

It's a structure that is nice to work within. At some point you have to set up some rules or structure so that you can have creative freedom. I find that having infinite options is oppressive. At some point you have to start making decisions and I love trying to push tools that other people have already created and used.

When I was ten I was really into Sim City. Before you play, you begin adding what you want to the city. That was my favorite part. I really liked creating environments because I knew I wouldn't be able to draw that. That definitely has to do with my interest in default. I feel most creative when there are some limitations and the answers get real oppressive, customizing things can be really tiring. For example, I was talking to my hair dresser, because I'm engaged, so we were talking about dresses and I realized that I don't want to find "the perfect dress." That's how you get caught up in the idea of perfection and everything being specifically customized to you, and the truth is that it will never really be exactly the way you see it in your head. This mentality relates to my work and especially the way that it is displayed, like how they are so different depending on whether they are digital vs. printed, and they are both nice.

It seems to make sense that working with pre-fixed settings would be particularly appealing to someone who works through the Internet because even just the idea of a computer screen as a space to occupy and work from is nothing like a blank canvas in that there are already pre-imposed limits that exist. Again, in that sense, I feel like there is something a bit curatorial about your mode of working with defaults and trying to make something out of that which is already available.
Yeah, I hate when people say "you can do whatever!" On Instagram there are a set number of filters, so I know I have these certain options. Similarly, when I start working with software like Photo Booth, Magic Camera, Maya, I usually gravitate towards the shittiest, most notoriously ugly settings and filters.

Then you have a structure within the parameters with which you can be creative. That's why I like defaults so much. Also I would never come up with those filters in a million years, so it's nice to open yourself up to other options that you wouldn't think of on your own. It's like if you don't already know something you can't search for it.

That makes me think of a parasitic, or perhaps referential is a better word, way of working, that is dependent on other systems or structures that are already in place within a certain cultural context. Does that relate to the way that you approach a new project?
Yes, in that the structure of my work is resting on this foundation of other things that already exist. It makes me think of genetics and the fact that genes are stronger when they are not inbred.

Right, I suppose having a setting of sorts already in place allows you to fit yourself into it and focus more on yourself?
Yes. I hate to see people watching me, but it has to be me in videos. I'm alone making videos and I can see myself so if I start over-thinking things I can see it right away in what I'm doing.

But since it is you, they do take on the self-portrait, did you think of that at the onset?
No, I realized that recently. I think actually I'm interested in the most traditional aspects of art, like landscape and portraiture—the basics. People have always found these things to be beautiful. They are not broken. So as an artist, you don't need to fix them.

Since you are the performer and the director, in a sense, would you say that there is an element of 'the rehearsal' in these videos?
Yeah. I also realized that the webcam videos never have my voice in them. It's not about talking or dialog, it's really visual. [Staying silent] helps to remove me from it, I don't want to give my image and my voice.

Even though there is no dialog—do you feel as though there's a language that's built through your movements?
A lot of the movements I do, I do because they're the best way to enhance the effects that I use [in post]. I use my hands and my hair a lot because you can get a lot of movement out of them.

So hands and gestures act like prompts or an impetus for the tools and effects that you choose to use?
In a way. I have this respect for them because they give me the structure I need to feel the freedom to be creative and make work.

Are you physically reacting to and interacting with these effects as opposed to the ways that they are most often used, which is utilitarian?
Yeah, definitely. I observe the effects and then my physical movements are a reaction to what I'm seeing. It's not thought out, the more I think the less I move—the goal is not to think.

It brings to mind this series I did with melting things using a basic smudge tool in Photoshop. More so than the effects, the light really changes the way the movements seem to naturally happen. For example, there is a difference between the light in Berlin, which is kind of blue, as opposed to the light in LA where it's very orange and beautiful. It really looks like a movie.

Is it important that your works are beautiful?
Yes, I mean I don't care about making things beautiful for everyone, but I make things that I think are beautiful. I definitely just want to be an artist, I don't want to be a curator or a writer or a gallerist. If I can be a good artist and make beautiful work that's all that I want.

I know that you are preparing for a new show in Europe, [without giving it all away] can you tell me something about what you've been working on? Any new terrain, new challenges, discoveries?
I'm making some huge aluminums for the show in Stockholm at Carl Kostyal. I've never made work on that scale before so I'm really excited. That is another great thing about digital work, is that the size is a variable and it's really fun to be able to fill a space. For the show at MAMA [Media and Moving Art, Rotterdam], we're building these colored structures for viewing the videos, I think it's very Dutch, this idea of a bright, colored structure, and it's a perfect accent to the video work which is very playful and colorful. The show at MAMA opens on the 28th of March, and the show at Carl Kostyal opens April 10th.

giggles124@hotmail.com, 2013. Digital painting on polyester, 36 x 60 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

twisted metal2 codes, 2013. Digital painting on aluminum 48 x 64 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

[*Above*] *warez+XXX+passwords*, 2013. Digital painting on aluminum, 48 x 64 inches. Courtesy of the artist. [*Right*] *+valerie +night +.mp3*, 2013. Digital painting on aluminum, 48 x 64 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

MOLLY SODA

By TRAVIS MERRIMAN

---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: **Travis Merriman** <@gmail.com>
Date: Fri, Apr 11, 2014 at 4:07 PM
Subject: SFAQ Article
To: molly soda <@gmail.com>

Beneath a towering display of girly knickknacks, an army of My Little Ponies, and an assortment of strange but necessary VHS cassettes, my friend sits across from me drinking a wine spritzer and debating our options for the evening. The walls are painted bright orange and pink, some of the ceiling tiles left peeling from a recent pipe burst (thanks to the harrowing winter vortex), and the fading sunlight sweeps over all of it like a pastel dream. Her pet rats, Cute Loop and Butt Loaf, coast her futon and stop every few moments to catch a scent of the new spring breeze. Everything is beatific and charming, but by no means average.

This is the apartment of Molly Soda. Most commonly known as a princess of the web, a budding multimedia artist, and a zany net-girl amongst other digital darlings—Molly is much more than a quirky neighbor. Beyond her ever-changing neon hair and an archive of selfies that cascades higher than a stack of '90s teen gossip magazines, she is a pioneer alongside many other Internet artists/performers who are changing the aesthetics of the art world as it turns beneath our high-tops.

To me, Molly is just a good friend. Some sort of enchanted creature who landed on my couch a year ago when she and her (now ex) boyfriend needed a place to stay in Detroit when visiting for a monster truck rally. It should come as no surprise that a couple seasons later, she re-grounded herself here.

"I'm a flighty person, this is both negative and positive," she tells me, "I get bored and the idea of living in one place for too long sort of freaks me out."

Feeling the itch, Molly decided late last summer it was time to move again.

"I was living in Chicago, had just broken up with my boyfriend (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fBhR0p_m4Y0), didn't have a job, and my lease was almost up." She reflects, "So I packed up and left almost overnight and my first stop was Detroit. It's a bit of a fish bowl, everybody knows each other, but it's a welcome change from living in bigger cities like New York and Chicago. I felt super welcomed and supported here upon arrival."

Despite a string of drastic changes in living situations, Molly has not been resting idly. Her recent endeavors include weekly contributions to NewHive (http://newhive.com/mollysoda/profile), a crowdsourcing project involving re-creations of the infamous Kate Bush video for Wuthering Heights (http://mollysoda.biz/wutheringheights.html), and a series of interactive karaoke videos aimed to be shown in a gallery setting.

She was also recently part of a digital art auction in New York, "Paddles On!" (http://paddle8.com/auctions/paddleson). For the auction, she shared an eight-hour long endurance piece in which she read aloud Tumblr inbox messages from strangers.

"It was pretty wild," she claims, "I had never sold a piece before, let alone a digital piece. I honestly think the auction pushed me and the digital art world in a super positive direction." The auction took place digitally via Paddle8 and IRL at Phillips in New York in October 2013.

"I've learned a lot since then about pricing my work and the value of the work I make in general," she admits. "When I first started making the work I had a hard time figuring out how to monetize my pieces. I was putting everything out on the internet for free and didn't want to stop doing that but also wanted to find a way to make money off of the videos/websites/GIFs I was making."

And now, as I sip a beer in her living room and watch her paint realistic glitter graphics onto canvas, we linger on the fact that she is preparing for a long trip to Baltimore. She is going to perform alongside other net-girl friends of ours at The Isis Green Rabbit Party. (https://www.facebook.com/events/707029199319593/). She and some of the other female artists in the show were recently immortalized in trading card format (https://www.etsy.com/listing/182502333/2014-netart-girls-trading-cards) by an unknown artist, furthering the obvious obsession that we as a culture have with the digital social scene.

There is no denying that Molly and other net-artists are growing quickly in a creative world that is already in a constant flux. She was recently commissioned to make a series of dancing girl GIFs for the new EMA *So Blonde* music video that premiered on Matador.

"That video was so much fun!" she declares. "I had always dreamed of making GIFs for a living, that's the coolest job to be honest. The future is bright for digital art, there's not really a way to escape it. It's EVERYWHERE. We are everywhere :)."

And it's true. In a time when art and art discussion is everywhere, inspiration is tumbling down from the mountaintops. Though you may need thick skin to immerse yourself within the art world—you also need an open mind. The divine thing about Molly is her realistic process in a sometimes unrealistic environment.

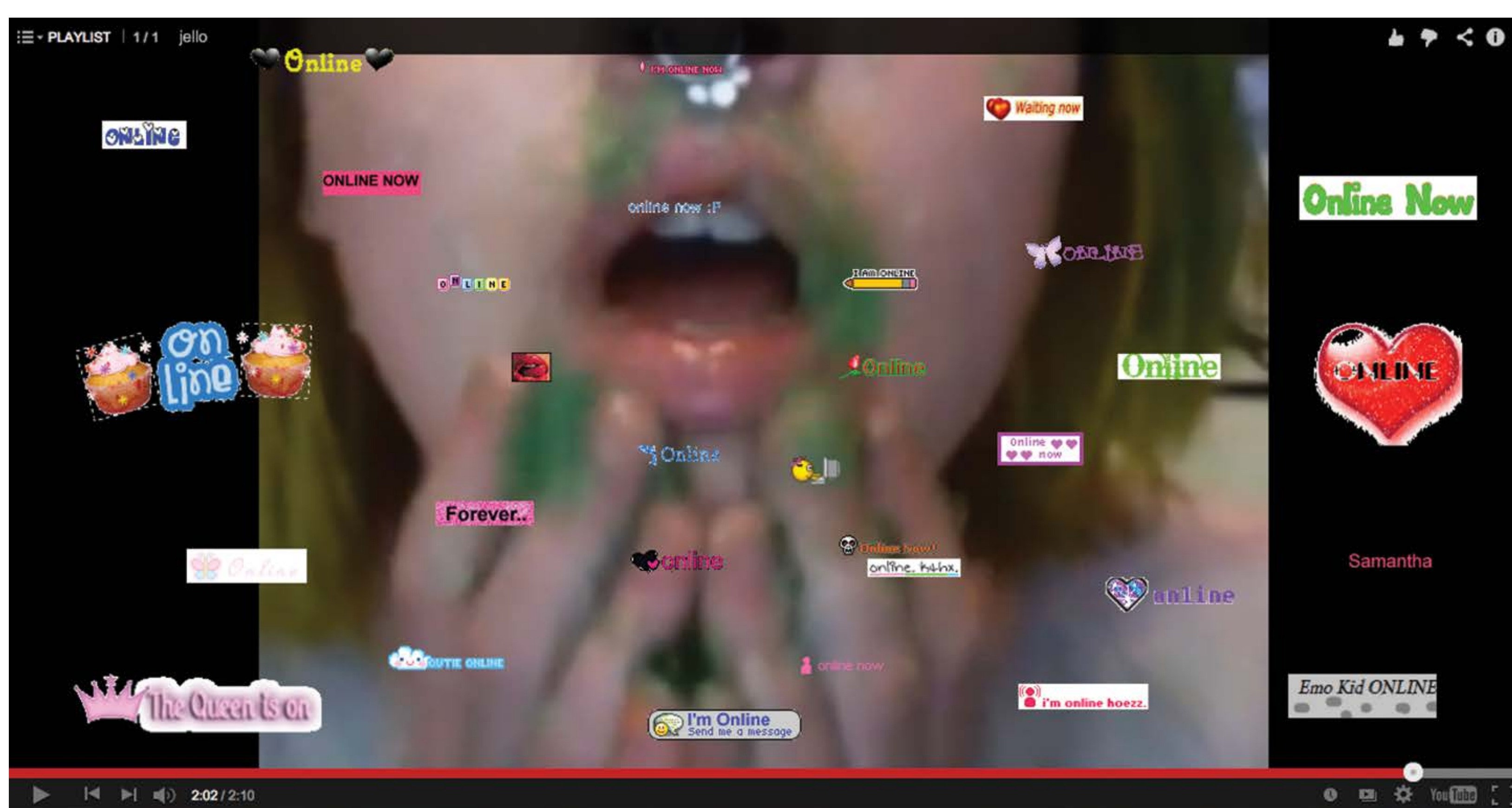
"I don't think there's a magical on/off switch," she responds when I gracelessly bring up the defeated philosophy of *what is art?* and *who are the artists?*

"I don't think labels necessarily have to hold anyone back if you are in charge of labeling yourself. . . . right?"

At the end of the day, underneath the glittery layers of text and blinking fairy graphics, Molly Soda is just a genuine human being, sharing inspiration through her art, kindness, and a lot of strong mixed drinks between the two of us.

Molly Soda, 2014. Photograph by Anna Bloda. Courtesy of the artist.

Online Now, 2014. Courtesy of the artist. http://newhive.com/mollysoda/profile



Online Now, 2014. Courtesy of the artist. http://newhive.com/mollysoda/profile

Tween Dreams 2, 2013. Courtesy of the artist. https://vimeo.com/79155581

Tween Dreams 2, 2013. Courtesy of the artist. https://vimeo.com/79155581

TAKESHI MURATA

Interviewed by PETER COCHRANE

There is a language created by Takeshi Murata that surfaces in the breakdown between analog and digital media. Artifacts, distortions between transfers, and erratic colors appear, which he uses and manipulates to create a totally new vision. Working between animation, photography, and video, he is invested in the interchange between media. There is also a consistent subtextual critique of American culture and consumerism that is the perfect companion to his dystopian vision. Think '80s horror flicks that stem from monsters growing out of sewage or mallrat teenagers who fall under governmental control through drinking too much of an experimental new soda. Or The Price is Right.

I asked Takeshi to guide me through some of his mind-bending artworks.

THE VIDEOS

Monster Movie

Both the subject matter of many of the films used for source material and the presentation through the breakdown of imagery—expanded artifacts, interlacing ripped apart, repetition, and alteration of speed—seem to reference dystopia. We are given something recognizable that is then exploded into swirling formlessness. And as soon as we lose ourselves in a mass of color, you launch a monster back into reality. How do you relate to this rapid teetering between seductive abstraction and abrupt horror?

It is about levels of perception. The habits formed looking at things are evolutionary necessities to parse the amounts of visual information coming at us every day. My eyes are all business all day, while my ears get to hang out and chill. It shows. When not working, I can enjoy and understand abstract sound more deeply and immediately. This is much more of a challenge with abstract images. With sound, there is no looking for representation that isn't there. It can just get absorbed. Unless it's like a bus honking or bullet firing. With visual art, it's almost like the brain needs to be fooled. Or extremely relaxed.

With *Monster Movie*, I wanted to connect these two ways of perceiving things into a single shot. I think there's a fear of losing the connection and comfort with all the things we see every day. Madness can be defined by this. And I guess the horror comes from the knowledge that all our understandings of things are made up, or just arbitrary. Or is this just an American horror? Maybe somewhere else an arbitrary existence wouldn't be horrific. I don't know. I should try meditating again.

I was amazed to realize that as you pull apart each repeated clip by the seams, it's the idea of abstraction that becomes the constant we grow to rely on. Either the colors are maintained (though constantly moving) or the method of change seems to follow an algorithmic pattern. But as the object moves—a monster writhes; a hand cuts through the melting; eyes snap into view and brush away again—it creates a post-clarity wake in this abstract field. I feel like our natural inclination is to think of the figure as a constant, but we can't grasp it for long enough to create a narrative. As soon as the loop loses all distinction, you switch scenes or bring back a moment of narrative reality, leaving us to start our process of understanding again. Is there importance in seeing the same image over and over until we can no longer recognize it?

Haha! I'm answering these right after reading without reading ahead. You do a better job describing what I'm going for with that video. Looping is another way of breaking down familiar representation. Like repeating a word out loud until only the sound remains.

Silver

Have you seen the film Decasia (2002) by Bill Morrison? I couldn't help but think of it when I saw Silver. In his movie, we bear witness to the decay of digitally scanned cellulose nitrate film—abandoned by production houses in the 1950s due to its unstable nature and possibility for combustion—as haunting disintegrating memories. Actors melt away into grotesque figures and buildings alight in flame, all created by the physical decomposition of film. But in Silver, you are controlling the fracturing of a benign (what appears to be) Hollywood black-and-white scene. A woman taps on a piano key, stretches, and then puts on a necklace. Or so I'm guessing. By the time the camera has panned down to her, you've manipulated her gestures to such a degree that she's become a stream of gray waves atop a synthetic, gurgling soundtrack that matches her languorous movements. What opportunities do you think are provided in digital manipulation that weren't before the creation of digital technologies, and how does it relate to film?

The similarity is the loss of code. But the interesting thing to me with manipulating the video data was the organic result. Usually digital glitch had very little direct connection to the natural world. At least the old world. And being able to control it added a level of human hand, and intent. More narrative. More warmth.

Untitled (Pink Dot)

For me, this piece combined many of the concepts I think you're working with throughout your films. Constancy and change flow simultaneously. We start with a perfect circle, a vibrating hot-pink dot in the middle of a blue field. Each color alternates with black every microsecond. A soundtrack using left/right stereo sound to the fullest pulsates back and forth creating something consistent we come to expect. What looks like the introduction to a trancelike meditation is ripped through by Rambo sliding over a desk before continuing on his rampage of death and destruction. As he, his villains, and his flamethrower all streak into the frame and melt away in paint-like streams, the pink dot continues to flash in the background (except once, when it too dances with Rambo's inferno). I feel like you are toying with expectation and calamity with a hint of pop culture.

It's an interest, and angst, stemming from an informed age. Information age? It makes satire one of the best, or the best ways of reconciling this, for me. Otherwise I'm just trying to not think about it. Escapism is an effective route too. How else do people deal with the knowledge of all the shit that's going on? Rambo is one way.

Homestead Grays

Homestead Grays holds the most direct audio/visual relationship you have created. Can you talk a bit about your relationship to sound? How do you decide what direction to go with music, and do you co-collaborate? Some works are very ambient and harmonious while others are full of discord. What prompts each?

There is usually a year between most of these, so a lot of it is just the time, and what was going on for me. With *Homestead Grays* I remember wanting to impose limits, or define a rigid structure, in which the work would need to exist. I chose to work in black and white with only hand-drawn looping animation and minimal compositing. The feeling of the work was airy, with a building of action. I asked my friend Ross Goldstein to make the soundtrack because his previous work with field recordings seemed like a good fit. Then I tend to stay out of it. I like seeing what other people will bring to the work. And from video to video, it changes how much direct relationship there is with the visual and sound. Robert Beatty made the sound for a lot of my videos. And Devin Flynn with Plate Tectonics made the sound for *Monster Movie*.

Infinite Doors

If I had been guessing at your criticism of American consumerist culture up until watching* Infinite Doors*, it was solidified after I heard the announcer from* The Price is Right *squawk prizes one after the next. In the two minutes of the film's runtime, I counted the word "new" used twenty-eight times, and "car," the holy grail of prizes on that show, used eight times. The bodacious women introduce free prizes, the doors slide open repeatedly, and the crowd cheers with an insatiable appetite. (As for my favorite unexpected moment, a Nazi enthusiast from the ending of* Indiana Jones: Raiders of the Lost Ark *melts on one of the new, free flat-screen TVs!) If this is a clear signal of numbing overconsumption, can you talk a bit about how these ideas work into other projects? Do you think that they are heightened in the digital age?

As a child of the '80s (mostly), I was one of the targets for commercial marketing on steroids. I didn't know why I loved Star Wars action figures so much, but George Lucas sure did! The '80s-era marketing is comical now, and easy to make look ridiculous. With *Infinite Doors*, I wanted to show my affinity for it, for better and worse, and understand how it shaped my aesthetic development. With the digital age, it's harder to see the humor because it's harder to see. It's definitely heightened, or maybe honed is a better word. How else are Facebook and Google worth billions, right?

Cone Eater (still), 2003, 4:26. Courtesy of Takeshi Murata and Ratio 3, San Francisco.

I, Popeye

This is a seriously bleak take on an American cultural icon in your first fully 3D-animated video. Here we see a man who has lost it all: Popeye now works at a "spinach" factory (or rather, green goo slopped into labeled spinach cans), he is delivered an eviction notice by Wimpy within the first few seconds, Brutus is on a ventilator in the hospital, Olive Oyl and Swee'pea are dead and buried, and after a spinach-fueled fit of destructive rage at his home, Popeye hangs himself. But this is where his fun begins, as he drives into a trippy postmortem world of bending colors and stimulation overload. We saw him dream of a similar space when he fell asleep earlier at the factory. Is digital art a kind of freedom from the mundane? While I do think of it as an infinite playground, how does it relate to our physical and emotional realities for you?

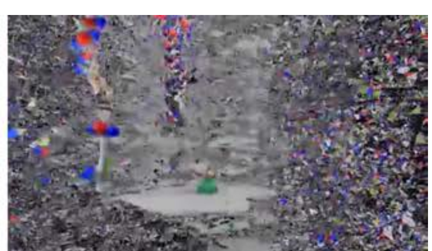
Art has always had that freedom for me. Including technology in the process makes it even more exciting. With *I, Popeye*, I had been watching all these videos of people at home using CG applications, like I myself was. I wanted to achieve the same directness I saw in these videos. I felt being a novice with the tool could take some of the shine off. You know what I mean? There was no hiding. It felt revealing.

Night Moves

Process is something I can't stop thinking about with your videos, and the creation of* Night Moves *is totally beyond me. It's this hybrid of studio recordings, sculptural objects, and kaleidoscopic refractions. Shots are mirrored and overlaid one atop the next: moving, distorting, consuming, destroying then creating. We get a thousand little views of one object, which then refracts infinitely into total static. As if to mock my turning, trying brain, something starts laughing maniacally halfway through. Takeshi, help! What is going on here?

Haha, thanks! This was a really fun video to make. I had about a month before a show at Salon 94, and had been wanting to collaborate with my friend Billy Grant for years. He happened to be free for what we thought would be a week of intense work at my upstate New York studio. It turned into four weeks, and we finished the video days before the opening. We had realized early on that we needed to set up a framework in which to work if we were going to be able to get anything done, though forgot to multiply that by four to be realistic. The framework had to be for both the real and digital world. In the real, we used only the studio as stage, and objects and trash within to make characters. In the digital space, only photogrammetric scanning of all the objects and space,

OM Rider, 2013. 11:39. Courtesy Takeshi Murata and Ratio 3, San Francisco.



Night Moves, 2012. 6:04. Courtesy Takeshi Murata and Ratio 3, San Francisco.

I, Popeye, 2010, 6:05. Courtesy Takeshi Murata and Ratio 3, San Francisco.

Untitled (Pink Dot), 2007, 5:00. Courtesy Takeshi Murata and Ratio 3, San Francisco.

and 100% mirrored planes. We ended up building everything in the day and shooting and animating at night. We worked every day without much sleep at the end, but it was a great experience. There was an immediacy that I like looking back at this one.

Oneohtrix Point Never - Problem Areas

Here we have this great interaction between the still image and your videos. This film gives us prolonged looks into your highly refined installations and the narratives found within each. I'd like to ask you some about your photography later on, but what was the impetus to create this piece?
I'm a huge fan of Dan's music, so I jumped at the opportunity to be part of his latest release. The other artists involved were great, and many were friends. The images I used were also produced as prints. I had really wanted to release them back on the screen as well, where they had been made. I like the idea of a still life—a minimally moving music video—and the song was a perfect fit.

OM Rider

Flipping between a synth-playing werewolf in a desert and an old, stringy man sitting in a chair silently sipping coffee from a to-go cup, OM Rider presents a strong story. The werewolf eats a fish and vomits, the man throws dice and repeatedly lands snake-eyes. The werewolf jumps on a motorcycle and speeds off into the night, the man stares at a knife lodged in his table. The werewolf gets high. Then, like some long-take Dario Argento shot in Suspiria, the camera follows the man up a spiral staircase with only a hint of red light illuminating the scene. The old man cuts a banana, hears the werewolf growl, and gets one look at him in the reflection of his knife before having his head snapped. Slumped over the table, the army's bugle cry, "Taps," begins to play. Between OM Rider and your photography works in Synthesizers, I feel like you're treading a very different path. The elements are present in each—American pop culture, elements of '80s camp and masterpieces, a digital reality created from our own—but now we have tight narratives and 3D animation without artifacts or manipulations. How would you describe OM Rider within your previous pieces? Does it represent any major change for you?
A couple years ago I decided I had to teach myself 3D. It's allowed me to consider much more. Even just adding a 3rd dimension, and thinking in terms of sculpture, film and painting, was a big change. I'm still only beginning to understand the possibilities. The other reason I've been interested in the process is that it's used everywhere in the culture. By using it myself, I feel like I can address things more from the inside. *OM Rider* is my first video going this way. Inside out.

Infinite Doors, 2010. 2:04. Courtesy Takeshi Murata and Ratio 3, San Francisco.

Monster Movie, 2005. 3:55. Courtesy Takeshi Murata and Ratio 3, San Francisco.

Silver, 2006. 11:00. Courtesy Takeshi Murata and Ratio 3, San Francisco.

THE PHOTOGRAPHY

Synthesizers

The photographs of this series are so elegantly constructed that their fabrication eludes me entirely. The focus on color arrangement and the materiality of the objects is puzzling in an exciting way—are they porcelain or digitally crafted? Is a camera even involved? Oddly, it isn't until a video from Synthesizers, titled Street Trash, that I am able to convince myself that these are digital renderings and not physical fabrications; something in the way a light source warps and briefly moves across a beer can shows the man behind the curtain. Speaking of, Street Trash is a sensational video. It is hypnotic. As soon as I lose myself to watching a yellow highlight wrap around a perfect cone to fade into a purple shadow, over and over, this concentrated study of geometry and color, my eye darts back to the lighter, then the Coors Light, and always again to the VHS of Street Trash, like some memento of '80s despair. How have the films of the '80s influenced you?
I'm a huge fan of '70s and '80s movies. Your earlier reference to Argento was right on, too. And the '80s were the Renaissance of shlocky trash horror. They were lawless, lowbrow and cartoonish, and often reflected one human nature perfectly without talking down to the viewer. One of my latest interests has been re-examining these in my own life, and in a different era. I try to avoid nostalgia, but who knows.

I feel like your intentionality with photography is altogether different from that of your films. There is a distinct layering of symbols that can be almost systematically connected to varying histories. Objects link to each other tightly both spatially and ideologically to create a concentrated narrative. How does the still differ from film in potentiality for you?
The narrative of a still image can be less rigid than in moving images. I like that still images can leave the flow of the narrative up to the view. In linear film, you are always guiding the viewer. The smaller area of the movie screen, or lower resolution, makes visual detail much more difficult. So with the still life, I wanted to concentrate on detail and non-linear, non-paced narrative. I found and modeled all kinds of objects that had connections for me, then composed them all at once in several different spaces.

How do you envision the future of digital art? For me it feels limitless, as if artists have just opened Pandora's Box, even though we are decades in now. Do you think you would be creating work if you had to operate outside of the digital realm?
I think the "digital" distinction in terms of production is almost gone. In many fields—photography, film, and print especially—it's getting nearly impossible to produce work non-digitally. And, obviously, it is almost impossible to escape culturally. It does feel limitless, for better or worse!

SHARON GRACE

By TERRI COHN

When did you begin working with video?

In the late 1960s I was studying psychology at Sonoma State and film and photography at the College of Marin. The film department at College of Marin acquired a Sony CV (Consumer Video) Portapak. This was the first portable video recording deck and camera. It was huge; it weighed seventy pounds. Initially no one at the College of Marin was interested in working with the seventy-pound video deck and camera. I checked it out and began taping everything including the social behaviors of people. At night I would play back the recordings from the day; studying the interactions between people. It was revealing to observe the correlation between body language, facial expressions, and speech. I was looking for deeper truths. I was in search of deeper insights into human behavior. I thought that deep truths could be found in the behaviors.

I read about a psychologist at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), who was working with film studying non-verbal behavior. I contacted him to see if he was interested in the portable video tape recording device. It was dynamic as it could record and play back images and sound instantaneously (this was 1970). Video was faster than film. The researcher was Paul Ekman, author of *Telling Lies* fame. He invited me over to his lab, where he shared some of his early research papers with me and I loaned him the video recorder and camera to explore.

How did you meet Nam June Paik and begin working with him?

I was working with a group of sound and performance artists. We created performances and staged elaborate events, complete with acoustic and electronic music which I documented with video and Super 8 film. We called ourselves Thedra Mater and then Crypilt Destiny. The name of the group changed often. I had been performing since childhood as a singer, and playing violin. Music has always been, and continues to be, a source of inspiration for me.

When CalArts opened at Villa Cabrini in Burbank, our performance group traveled south to study with Allan Kaprow. I had also heard that an artist who worked with video would be joining the faculty; his name was Nam June Paik. When I first met Nam June Paik I was carrying my Video Portapak and—was video recording him as I walked into the room. He looked up, smiled at me, and said, "you're a genius." FYI Nam June referred to a number of people as geniuses; he was very generous. For the next two years I traveled with Nam June and his engineer/collaborator, Shuya Abe, helping to build Paik/Abe Video Synthesizers (including one of my own) and demonstrating how to use this innovative video instrument.

We traveled across the country to public broadcasting stations including WNET in New York, WGBH in Boston, and the Experimental Television Center in upstate New York, among others. We presented demonstrations and performances. It was collaborative, with Nam June, Shuya Abe, and many artists. Those years were also filled with stuffing and soldering circuit boards, and meeting many wonderful artists and engineers.

When I returned to San Francisco, I set up my studio on Shotwell Street in the building where Lloyd Cross and Jerry Pethick had established the School of Holography. It was a very dynamic location and exciting time. We were all engaged with techno-invention, and art.

I began traveling the West Coast to Oregon, Washington, and Canada; conducting workshops with artists. I introduced these artists to video and live video imaging processing with my Synthesizer. At that time I was also working with electronic musicians creating live video synthesized images in performances as they played their instruments. The irony is, I never liked electronic music, and because I was trained in melodic music, electronic music always sounded dissonant to me. I was always waiting for the melody, which would never come. But in the processing some of the sound through the system that I built, you could visually display these wonderful patterns that were basically the inherent geometry of the electronics of these systems. The visual display of these sounds was quite beautiful.

You would display them on a screen?

Yes, in color. Using black-and-white cameras the system would introduce color. It would take the black-and-white signal and add color burst to it. That was some of my earliest work.

In the late '70s I made a video piece using my synthesizer titled *Metaphors* that later won an NEA award. It is a meditative piece; I created the soundtrack by playing a Buddhist Meditation Bowl. My Paik/Abe Synthesizer is now in the Nam June Paik Art Center in Seoul, South Korea, on permanent display. Happily, it is in working condition.

At that time I was also on the founding board of the Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC). We wanted to make the tools of video media production available to the community—both artists and community activists. BAVC was initially funded with a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. Its mission was to provide artists with access to these tools.

I began working with children using my video equipment. I set up elaborate installations in public spaces and public schools. In the SF Civic Center I created an installation so children could see their own self-image in real time on a stack of TV monitors. The children I was working with were mainly from lower income families and I wanted to teach them that they could be active participants in the world of form. It was wonderful to see them recognize their own image reiterated on multiple video monitors. I heard a constant chorus of "it's me," "it's me." Their behavior changed as they interacted with their own image. From my studies in psychology I realized that this was a method of consolidating the self for these children. I continued this practice when I taught at several other schools.

How did you become involved with the conceptual artists working in the Bay Area during the 1970s?

I moved from the Mission district to a studio in SOMA. I was aware of the conceptual artists, but hadn't really connected with them yet. Tom Marioni's studio was on Third Street at the time. I met him and Alan Scarritt, who created an artist's space called Site, Cite, Sight. I already knew Carl Loeffler from his alternative space La Mamelle. Terry Fox would sometimes participate in our telecommunications events.

How do you make decisions regarding the form your work will take?

I conduct an investigation, and out of that investigation comes the concept. The concept Defines the appropriate media for the realization of the piece.

How did you start working with telecommunications as a medium?

In 1977, I was contacted by New York filmmaker and publisher/editor of *Avalanche* magazine, Liza Bear, who invited me to be the West Coast coordinator for *Send/Receive*, which was to be the first coast to coast live artist satellite broadcast. It was a three day event with Liza and her group who were in New York, on the banks of the Hudson River. Artists at the Manhattan site included Keith Sonnier, Willoughby Sharp, Nancy Lewis, and Diego Cortez. The San Francisco group included me, Alan Scarritt, Margaret Fisher, Terry Fox, Carl Loeffler, and Richard Lowenberg. Our group was at NASA/Ames Research Center in Mountain View. The first day of the event was September 11, 1977. *Send/Receive* was distributed on Manhattan Cable TV in New York. We sent our signal up from NASA/Ames into the lecture hall at the San Francisco Art Institute on Chestnut Street.

It seems that this was one of the many firsts you created during your early career. Do you think being in San Francisco supported you in that?

The Bay Area has always been about experimentation and flamboyance. The proximity to Silicon Valley provided access to technical innovations, which facilitated our efforts.

Can you talk about this some more?

We collaborated with sound and images in real time with artists, musicians and poets around the world. We demonstrated the potential of the form, and the projects were great. I was motivated by the possibilities for great things to happen.

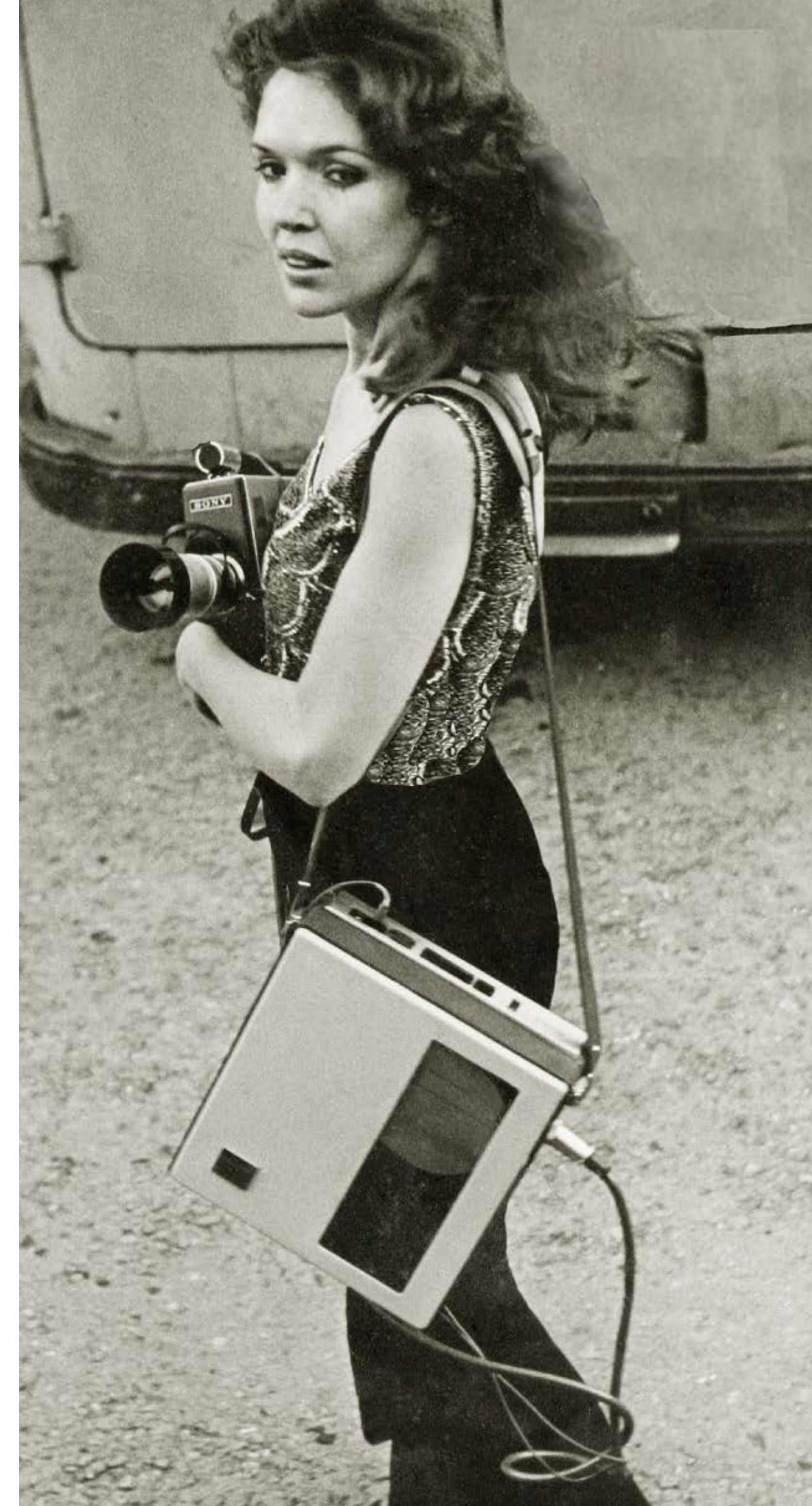
What did you do after Send/Receive?

In the late 1970s I began teaching at the San Francisco Art Institute, in what, at the time, was called the Performance Video Department. It later evolved to become the New Genres Department. During this time I produced *Other Unsung Songs*, c. 1978. This is an installation work made with cast stone, a military microwave dish and barbed wire. The piece expressed my concern for those who might possibly be left out of the emerging Internet.

Several of us who had worked on *Send/Receive* located compression video systems that worked over voice grade telephone lines. So we acquired a bunch of them, and sent them around to artists in the US and other countries. We created what was really the first artists' telecommunication network. Initially the images were black and white because at that point there wasn't enough bandwidth for color. The network was global, and we began day and night transmissions between artists, poets and performers. We called the initial group the Artists' Prototype Network, because we knew it was a prototype and would lead to an ever-expanding network, which, in-fact, it did.

Send/ Receive, NYC Uplink Site: September 11, 1977. Photograph by Keith Sonnier. Courtesy of the artist.

Send/Receive, September 11, 1977. Split-screen image New York/San Francisco. Nancy Lewis (NYC) & Margaret Fisher (SF) Photograph by Gwenn Thomas. Courtesy of the artist.


Sharon Grace, c.1970, with her Sony CV Porta Pack. Courtesy of the artist.

We literally created hundreds of these events. I had the system set up in the garage of my studio in the South of Market, and other artists would come over and we would participate in live events over our global network. It was 1978; the phone would ring. I'd plug the whole thing in with alligator clip leads on the telephone handset, and then suddenly whoever came by or just myself would be sitting in my garage trying to keep something going with artists presenting performances and text pieces from around the world. This was all going on before the Internet was everywhere, before smartphones, and very few people owned a personal computer (which at that time were basically glorified typewriters).

That sounds amazing.
It was, at times, it was also wonderfully overwhelming. Sometimes the events were very orchestrated and well-organized, and other times they were just chaotic and wild. We had both audio and video, and it was still the 1970s. We continued with this on into the 1980s and would sometimes hold conferences and demonstrations in public venues.

The work that we produced with *Send/Receive* and the Artists' Prototype Network shaped the form and the language of the technological paradigm that has resulted in the global connectivity model we are living in. Our desire was to connect the planet in a global dynamic conversation; we wanted everyone's voice to become part of it.

Balls to the Wall, 2008. Installation video projection, marbles, drawings and wood. Still from video projection. Courtesy of the artist.

In 1990 I made an interactive video laserdisc installation that was inspired by my studies of the gaze in historical figure painting. In looking through a book on the history of figure painting, it was clear that most of the subjects were women. I wanted to reverse the gaze, and began experimenting.

What did you do?
At first I worked with both male and female subjects, but the gaze I was interested in was really about the female, and figuring out how to help her re-circulate her gaze to the renderer. Historically, she often had no control over the meaning of the whole experience, even though the meaning is her. So I set up an installation where I reversed the equation, so she is free to look, but the viewer can't see her face, only her back. You see yourself looking, you see your own face deeply recessed in the screen, looking back at you, but the orientation is really to her face, and she's really gazing back at the viewer. So you can understand that equation. It's rendered in a very visible way; it's visual geometry.

What did you call this piece?
I called the first iteration of it *Inversion*, until I discovered that it didn't convey the intended meaning. So I changed the title to *Millennium Venus*, because I thought it needed a date marker. It was 1990. The work incorporates an interactive laserdisc programmed to respond to the viewer's speech. The viewer/participant communicates with the program through a telephone on a desk that rings when the participant enters the room. When the phone is answered the large video display comes alive with the image of a woman who begins to talk to the participant through the phone. This work premiered at Cyberthon, a three-day event showcasing experimental work, held in San Francisco in the early 1990s. *Millennium Venus* later traveled to Madrid for an event at the Metro Opera Arts Virtual event, where she (the virtual she) learned to speak Spanish.

Do you consider that work an extension of what you were doing in the 1970s?
Yes, it (*Millennium Venus*) involves the telephone, it is about communication, but in this piece I wanted "her" (*Millennium Venus)* to talk to the viewer/participant through the technology of the interactive laserdisc. In the 1970s we had an artists' world-wide network, we had sound, we had text, we had image, we had everything! When people ask me about that work I always refer to it as "social sculpture," because that's really what it was.

What are you working on now?
I have always been fascinated with the physics of gravity. Gravity is texture; the magnetic pull that we feel on this mud ball is texture. In 2008 I made a video installation working with the physics of marbles succumbing to gravity, titled *Balls to the Wall.* The gravitational traces of the marbles as they fall through space reveal the resistance of gravity and the air currents; how the marbles bounce against certain surfaces are what these drawings reveal. Once you become aware of the deep structure of forms and forces, it changes the way you think about everything. Sometimes a box is not just a box.

Millenium Venus, 1990. Interactive laserdisc installation. Courtesy of the artist.

[*Left to right*] Bill Bartlett, Sharon Grace, Carl Loeffler, Brendan O'Reagan, and Art Kleiner. Artists' Use of Telecommunications Conference at SFMOMA, February 16, 1980.

ALEX CHOWANIEC

Interviewed by JARRETT EARNEST

It all comes down to dpi and polygons:

Alex Chowaniec's drawings, paintings, and media projects engage intertwined questions of technology and the body; a gendered body as a social technology, and a national body as enviro-political mythology.

A Canadian artist living in New York, she was a producer on Lynn Hershman Leeson's ! Women Art Revolution *(2010) and a collaborator on the new media installation* RAW/WAR *(2011) (rawwar.org) an interactive community-curated archive of the history of women's art.*

Chowaniec met with Jarrett Earnest in the midst of her epic Gloria Patria *project, to discuss her exploration of 3D printing technologies.*

Your work has become subtly but increasingly an exploration of cultural identities—you've recently gotten attention for your* Non-Traditional Matryoshka Dolls *(2014). Can we start by talking about those?

That was my most focused political project, quite specifically in response to the Russian anti-gay law. There was a lot of misinformation surrounding it and when I looked at the specifics of the law, which was a ban on "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations," I felt that I really needed to raise awareness by opening up the question, "what is traditional?" What does "traditional" mean both in Russia's own historical context and in the formation of cultural histories?

I started doing research about LGBT Russians throughout history. Obviously, when you go back to Ivan the Terrible people have various views on what LGBT means. But the point was to look at the formation of that history and to speak to the idea that homosexuality is in fact traditional in Russian history. I had in my studio raw, milled Matryoshka dolls that my sister had brought back from Sochi nearly a decade ago when she was traveling in Central Asia. I looked over and thought they were exactly the vehicle I wanted to use to talk about this. When I started researching Matryoshka dolls themselves, I learned that they were inspired by a doll from Honshu, the main island of Japan. A craftsman had exchanged them with two Russians and they were then displayed at a world's fair in 1900. Matryoshka dolls were an official souvenir of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. The implications of that started snowballing.

Could you explain the origins of your current* Gloria Patria *project, and how it brought you into the world of 3D printing?

The project started the way all my art projects start: by collecting objects (and memories) from my shared landscape, things that are close to me, that I connect with. A couple years ago when I was up at my family's cottage in the Rideau Lakes in Canada, where I spent summers as a kid, I was collecting fungus and bark from fallen trees. One particular piece struck me and I had it with me for some time until it took on a life of its own. When I finished a recent series of large-scale drawings of fungus called *Growth*, I returned to this bark—a second skin.

Over the years I've spent in the U.S., my identity as a Canadian has come up quite frequently and I started thinking about that in really concrete terms. I think that we, as Canadians, always struggle with what our cultural identity is, but it is almost always understood as intimately connected to our landscape. That often gets misconstrued as being connected to our natural resources and how we manage them. Specifically, at this moment in time, the Tar Sands are a huge issue that a lot of Canadians are struggling with, that is creating massive opportunity and wealth and extremely dangerous environmental and health effects. A generation of people are in dialog, some unconsciously, with these questions and concerns.

(Non-Traditional) Matryoshka Dolls, 2014. Oil on panel, various dimensions. Courtesy of the artist.

I realized that the bark spoke to that physical connection to the landscape and to natural resources. The form it took on was very crest-like, it was a body to me. I approached it as I had the fungus, I physically held the bark, drew it, ripped it open, unpacked it in these large charcoal drawings. There were half a dozen in the end—four are in an exhibition in Ottawa called *Inspiring Change*. The idea of the crest—my own family lineage, intertwining with a national cultural identity—became a critical form. What would the family crest of this new generation look like, one that must enact a shift from a natural resource based economy to an economy of ideas? At first, I thought of casting the bark pieces in bronze, but then wanted to find a different way of creating these crests that embodies their stakes more clearly. 3D printing had been in my consciousness for a long time and it became clear to me that it was the right step. It speaks to that shift to an economy of ideas (and the implications in manufacturing). That is the value of 3D printing for me. I'm sure in the fine art world it is very easy to stigmatize 3D printed objects and yet I think in doing so one would miss the opportunity—the enormous potential that this kind of object making has. As artists, we absolutely have to be mindful and engaged with the socio-political, economic, and cultural implications.

So, I started going to 3D print fairs, which were hilarious (I mean that with a simultaneous profound respect)—the first one I went to was at the Metropolitan Pavilion, which is usually where art fairs are (in my world). You walk around and there is 3D printed stuff everywhere, people are touching it and picking it up—I couldn't believe it because it would be unimaginable to handle things like that in an art context.

Most people think you can just buy a printer and take it home and print something, but the reality is (at this moment in time) you really have to have somebody who knows what they're doing—they're still finicky; although there was a whole section of people who had built their own printers out of random mechanical parts. It goes both ways: anyone can do it, and it is absolutely a specialized knowledge. I was initially quite critical, thinking, "why is everyone making either sexy Comic Con-like toys or industrial design coffee mugs? Why isn't anyone looking at the implications of this and making something that is really able to create meaningful change?"

I've talked with Lynn Hershman Leeson about her current (always deeply prescient) project, involving the investigation of 3D printed organs, so I went to the fair thinking I'd see something more engaged. But I suppose maybe the way we get people excited about things is by sharing toys and widgets.

I didn't see anyone using 3D prints to talk about the kinds of things I had in mind. I had this idea of what I wanted to create and in talking with my amazing 3D print engineer, JF Brandon. He built the largest 3D printed sculpture ever in 2012, and won 50K from NYC in 2013 to use concrete printing to fix their waterfront. He's currently working on a 3D shape search-engine called 3Di. He immediately said something like, "yeah, no one is making what you want to make. This is very experimental."

When you started working with engineers and technicians, what did you have in mind for the sculptures, and in the process how did the possibilities and limitations of 3D printing change the project?

When I approached Brandon I knew I wanted to create human-scale printed crests of the original bark. The first step is creating the scan. We went to the lab and a lot of the other things they had printed were inorganic, which is interesting. When we got the scans back I realized that the next phase, the work you do to clean up a scan and make it printable, wouldn't be the straightforward, mechanical process I'd imagined. It was incredibly creative, it opens up a whole new dimension of sculptural potential.

The talented designer I'm working with is named Ryan Kittleson. He's used to working with artists, which was awesome because he allowed me to drive him crazy by sitting (actually standing) with him the entire time—asking him questions and being part of that process, using a program called ZBrush. My idea changed. In thinking of creating these thirteen crests, I originally thought they would be identical as an initial surface which I would cover with tar and paint. But I saw the shifting of the support as opposed to just the surface itself, and so in working, I realized that I wanted to manipulate each piece, pull it apart, open each as a file and as a physical object. If they break and I reassemble them, I also want to accommodate that in the forms. We are not at a point with the technology that we can create a highly detailed replica of a complex, large-scale organic form, which is part of the reason why, I imagine, the 3D printed objects that we are seeing are so smooth, streamlined, and sci-fi looking. It all comes down to dpi and polygons. There is only so much we can do right now with certain materials. But things are changing quickly.

What material are you planning on printing these in?

I want to print them in ceramic, it's extremely experimental to make that happen, especially on this scale. The idea of bringing it back to an organic material is integral to the conversation, it's just a matter of technical questions, like finding the large-scale printer partner, large-scale kiln close by, etc. The clear next phase of the project has a lot to do with scaleability.

Right now, we're printing small versions of the bark out of metal (brass) to get it out in the world. I'm also trying to raise the funds to finish fabricating them—I bring the fine art engagement and JF brings the democratized 3D print world. Politically, I love mashing up those two contexts, which is one of the reasons I like working with technology, the possibility of engagement is so much greater. That is what I loved about creating *RAW/WAR* (Lynn Hershman Leeson in collaboration with Alex Chowaniec, Brian Chirls, Gian Pablo Villamil, and Paradiso Projects), it was about democratization of access, community-curated art history. It's the same thing here.

How do you engage "art and technology" as a discourse?

These large-scale drawings that I make, I talk about them as a personal and political act; the idea of creating presentness and consciousness at a moment in time when we are saturated with images from the media and social media. It is very important for me to create the possibility for physical interaction and engagement in them. My relationship with technology is in no way reactionary. I believe that technology is a powerful tool, a way and a means to bring people into specific spaces. We humans, as the designers, developers, creators and users of technology have to be conscious of that. It's dangerous to create and disseminate and be a part of our technological universe without being conscious.

In the folding that happens with the "organic" bark, to the computerized processing, back to clay, it seems like you are putting the organic, technological, and bodily forward as a complex nexus of material relationships, but how do you think about them?

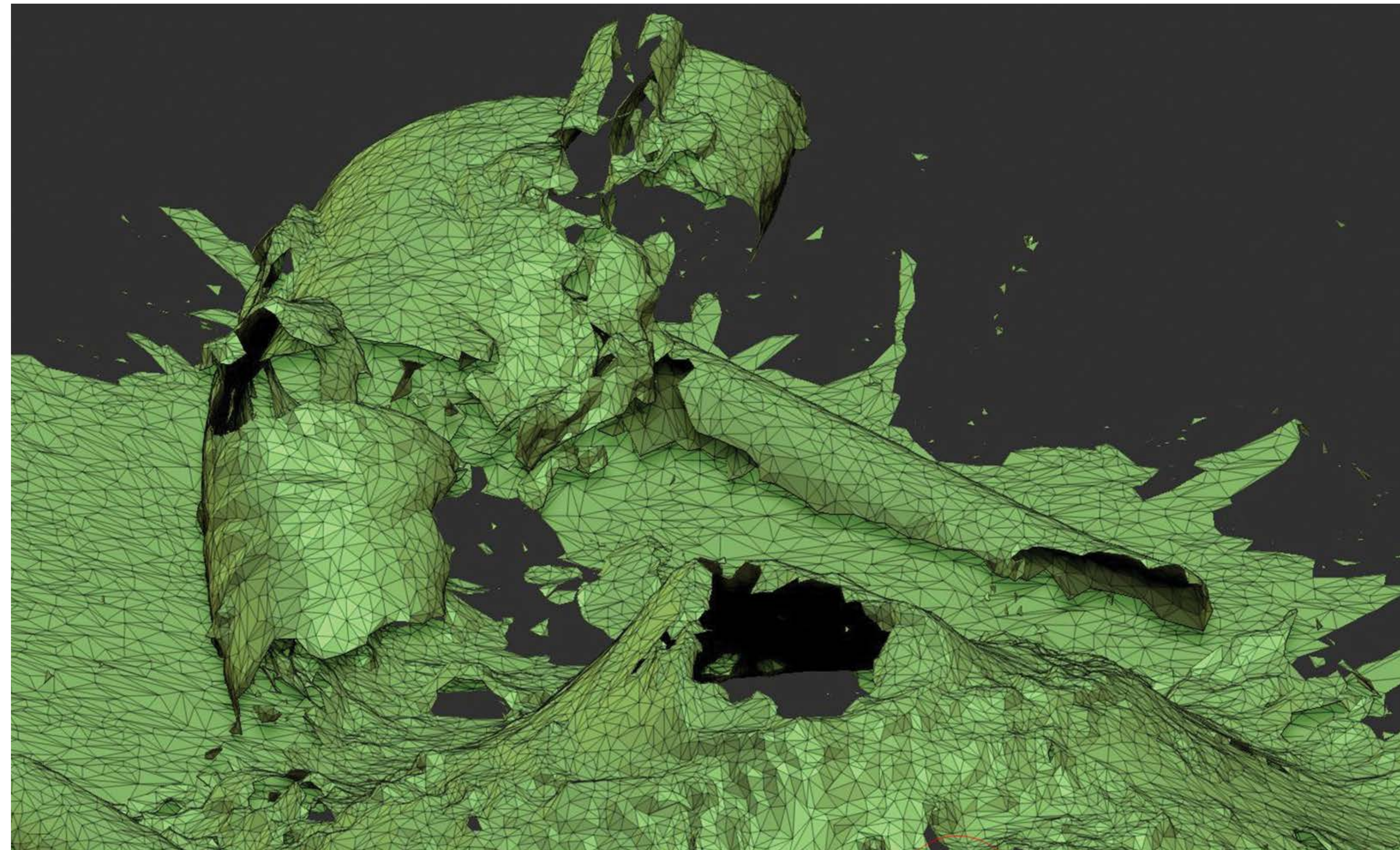
Absolutely, I think of them as extensions. One really has to release a form as it moves through these processes because they are not replicas, they are extensions of each other.

What do you see as the most exciting possibilities of 3D printing, and what are the greatest dangers?

The implications in terms of manufacturing are huge, especially in developing countries; people being able to print their own parts. By parts I mean life-sustaining tools, so they don't have to wait months—it minimizes time and cost. A lot of people think that you can only print with plastics, but you can print in cement, wood particles, metals, ceramic —powder-based printing, etc. Biomedical 3D printed tissue, as we talked about before —the physical extensions of the body. Right now we are basically creating armatures but when you can print the organic material itself, you can use your own genetic material and that is amazing.

What is exciting to me about what you are doing now is that 3D printing feels like the beginning of what will become a completely ubiquitous way of making images.

That's why I am not really interested in using it from an end-object perspective. I don't want to make something that is 3D printed just for the hell of experimenting with that new objecthood. I want to make something that is specifically speaking to the implications of 3D printing itself. It is absolutely about the process and meaning of this tool—what does it mean to be able to print your own [fill in the blank]? Technology will always be part of my practice because its power to bring people together and rethink strategies for displaying and distributing art is critical; especially as a person who makes large-scale drawings and paintings that absolutely have to be experienced in person as a visceral, physical experience. I'm finding the 3D print process a rich one for addressing these questions.



Gloria Patria 3D (screenshot / in progress), 2014. Courtesy of the artist.

Gloria Patria, 2014. 3D Rendering (MeshLab). Courtesy of the artist.

Gloria Patria III, 2014. Charcoal on paper, 51 x 38 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

BUNNY ROGERS

By JACKIE IM & AARON HARBOUR *Co-directors of Et al.*

In a series of photos titled *Pones*, the artist is posed on all fours, like a pony, in various outdoor scenarios: on a large rock, in the forest, next to a truck, in a tree. Anyone relatively immersed in contemporary visual culture, specifically online culture, recognizes all the tropes of a meme. Which is to say, whether or not these images do or don't represent something a mass of people are doing and sharing, it certainly could be. The visual cues here are repetition and ease of realization. A missing link might be imagined between performance art, with its body-as-object and repetition, and youth culture's fondness for quick, humorous, sharable actions. Bunny Roger's work in both the visual arts and, as a poet, flirts with the hazy area between historically recognized art praxis and the common.

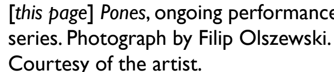
From her *Cunny Poem* blog:
Mar 10, 2014
Are u próud
Men who can see right through me
Tell that I'm just scared fuck you
Give me one example of a man using
his sensitivity for Good

These words sound as if at the crossroads of riot girl singer and high school journal keeper. Her poems are not innovative or novel formally, and neither is her manner of performance; she recites the words in a deep, dry, not quite monotone voice. What is surprising and a bit off-putting is her willingness to share and to overshare. There is temptation to read performance art between the lines of any poetry reading. While an argument can be made in the general case, to single out Roger's reading as somehow more so would be a disservice to the artist's intentions to approach the various strains of her practice with a fealty to (rather than an ironic remove from) form.

The Internet is an expediter of experience. It is an apparatus of mass melancholy—it magnifies feelings of connectedness and loneliness, that feeling of being alone in a crowd. It is misleading to describe online existence as somehow more false in its endless profile creation and identity maintenance. We are always a version of ourselves: to our family, to our friends, to a bus driver, on Facebook. Online this process is amplified. Online you can be both an introvert and extrovert simultaneously. You can create a visualization of your interior dialogue and hide it in plain sight. The difference between finding and making is negligible. There is so much of Rogers online because she is online all the time.

Timescales vary wildly across Roger's practice, with time-intensive object-making and exhibition preparation, and the immediacy of her social media presence. Presence is key—Roger's practice keeps the artist dangerously present at all times. *Self Portrait (mourning mop)* (2013) is a mop leaning in a corner. On its handle, a large, pale-pink bow, as might be seen worn by Rogers in a video or performance. The mop head is dyed, fading from a deep purple or indigo to a pink slightly brighter than the bow. Has this object been used to clean up some magical fluid, or has it received a reprieve from its function? The conflation of domesticity and the feminine comes to mind, but the work also feels less general, as if she has placed herself in a corner. This self-portrait is on display, it has been made special, or maybe it has been cast off, left behind.

When Hal Foster and Drake announce, "The Return of the Real" and "The Real is on the Rise," respectively, they are only half right. The *R* in IRL is in the foreground, but has had the rug dragged out from underneath it, hovering, groundless. Our digital lives become ever more real. That we build a public archive of our thoughts and experience is both kinds of thrilling—a wonder and a nightmare all at once.


[*this page*] *Pones*, ongoing performance series. Photograph by Filip Olszewski. Courtesy of the artist.

WATER MCBEER *WATERMCBEER.ORG*

Interviewed by ANDREW MCCLINTOCK

So Water, what made you want to start the infamous Water McBeer Gallery?
My goal since starting Water McBeer gallery back in 2010 was to bring the attention of the international art market to San Francisco. It all started at the tender age of fourteen when I inherited my distant uncle's massive art collection worth about six billion dollars. At the time it was 1969, and I was living in a small hippie commune in Northern California where I was raised, hence my name, Water. With my valuable art collection I left my family and humble beginnings behind to pursue life as a powerful art dealer

So we know each other because of the exhibition you curated at Ever Gold gallery in 2011 that ended with the riot police showing up... And more recently when we co-presented the stolen Van Gogh painting on a yacht off the coast of Dubai, which was one of my favorite shows of all time. It's nice that you offer a safe place for billionaires and politicians to mingle with each other and celebrate culture away from any pesky protesters.
Yes Andrew, it is always a pleasure to work with you. As you remember there was a physical altercation between some tenderloin locals and clients of mine, who were badly beaten and emotionally scarred. Unfortunately, the authorities had to be involved. So of course for your illegally curated exhibition [in Dubai] we wanted to ensure a comfortable platform for the wealthy to observe culture from a safe distance. As a gallerist this is my duty to provide culture to a very small percentage of special people. And this time we didn't want the stolen Van Gogh to attract any attention from the media or authorities, so we made sure it was held on a private yacht in international waters and negotiated with the Dubain pirates to provide security. Everyone was able to enjoy themselves and it was a fabulous time.

Your mission of providing unbiased and unpretentious, private culture to the wealthy and elite of the world is a very nobel cause. So you also recently worked with Hans-Ulrich Obrist, can you talk a little bit about that exhibition?
Thank you, it's not an easy job but somebody has to do it. A wise man once said, "See the change in the world you want to be," or something like that. I met Hans at a conference in New York held at MoMa PS1 where I was invited to speak. Hans and I share similar ideas about alternative exhibition formats and the future of exhibition space in the Internet age. Hans used to curate a pocket-sized museum that existed inside a 2"x3" folding frame called the Nano Museum. He had the brilliant ideal to curate the Nano Museum inside the Water McBeer gallery, featuring works by Chris Marker. It was a genius exhibition. Hans is a wonderful man.

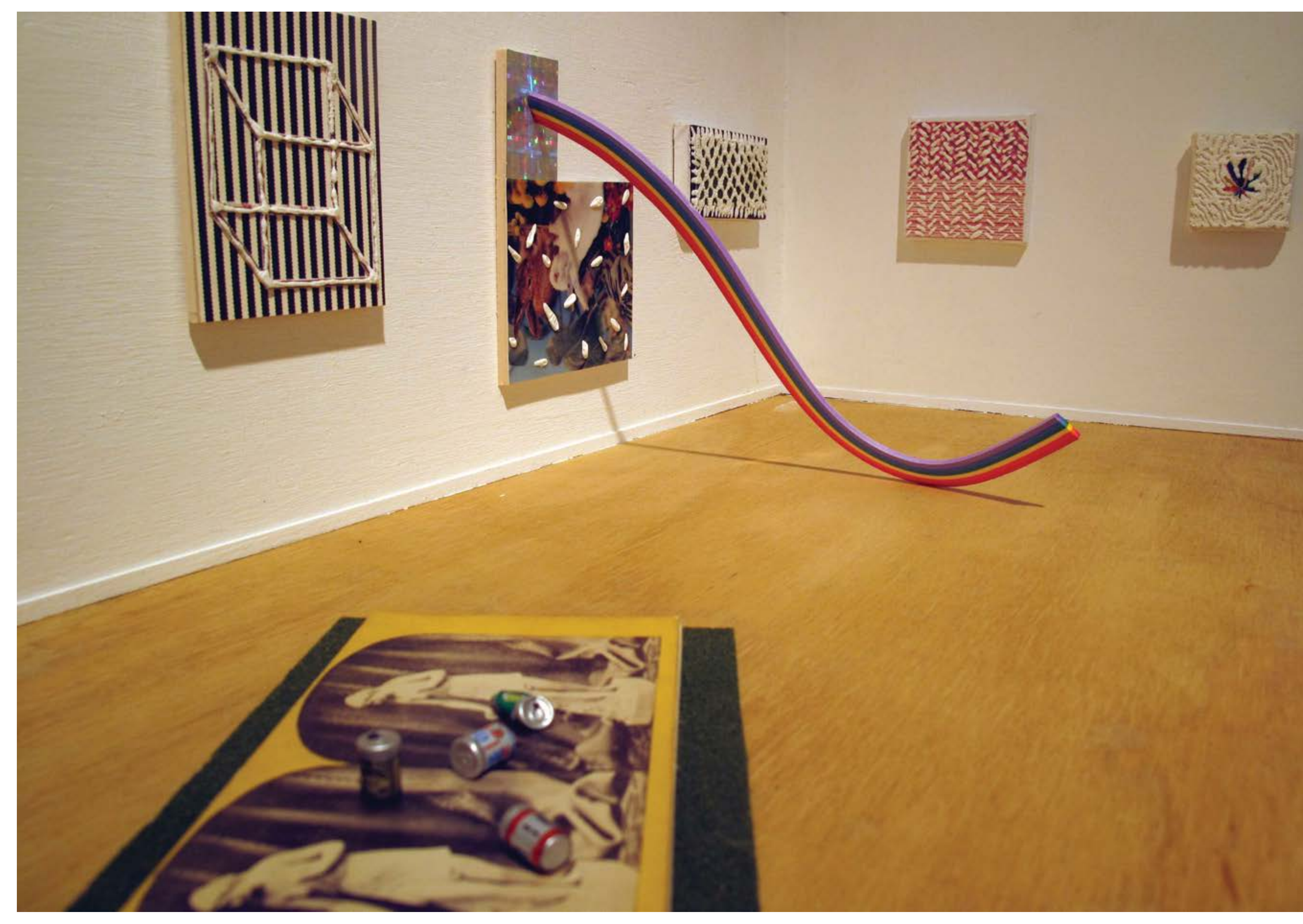
So what are some of your views on the future of exhibitions?
Downsize downsize downsize. The lines of legitimacy are ever blurring and the gallery's presence is changing and who's to say what's a gallery and what's not a gallery. All you need to be a gallery is a website. If your gallery doesn't have a website, it doesn't exist in my book. So what I'm doing is breaking the gallery down to its bare essentials. When our relationship to art is predominantly virtual who needs space? The future will be more than just downsized, more than nanosized. Size, mass and volume will be completely eliminated from the experience of art.

Are you competing with the Google art program then?
Google ain't got shit on Water McBeer. I was unaware they even had an art program. Look I've been in the business for forty-something years now and these nerds at Google come into town still suckin' on their Mama's tit thinking they're *hot shit Internet wizards*. They can kiss my ass with their new ass-kissing app.

How will net artists fit into your programming, or are you more concerned with pumping out the big secondary market shows at this point? Including your ongoing private showings of black market artworks.
At this point the gallery still operates in a physical realm and therefore net art is not so much a part of my programing. I cater to a very specific market of collectors, wanting to make big investments in smaller scale artworks and of course stolen artworks and hypothetical art works.

You are frequently seen at the casinos in Monaco with Larry Gagosian, racing cars, yachting and gambling at the high stakes tables. Do you two ever gamble with art?
I once bet Larry a Warhol that he couldn't drink a bottle of shipwrecked 1907 Heidsieck in under sixty seconds. I won the bet and he gave me his estate in the countryside of France instead of parting with the painting. I've since overcome my very serious gambling addiction.

-This interview was conducted over text message on April 15th and 16th, 2014.



[*Opposite*] Water WcBeer and Hans-Ulrich Obrist during the opening reception of Hans-Ulrich Obrist's curated Water McBeer exhibition featuring works by Chris Marker. December 24 - Feb 8, 2014. [*Top*] Evan Nesbit, *Art Party.* July 30 - August 4, 2012. [*Bottom left*] David Bayus, *PRECIOUS.* April 6 - May 11, 2013. [*Bottom Right*] Matthew Palladino, *Group Show.* July 30 - August 4, 2011

JOHN KILDUFF

By SARAH THIBAULT

"I decided, 'Hey, let's just do a painting show.'" That was John Kilduff's reaction when I asked him what inspired him to create his live television show/video performance art project *Let's Paint TV*. The first episode aired in 2001 on cable television in Los Angeles. The set was a stark, black backdrop and Kilduff, a.k.a. "Mr. Let's Paint," dressed like a used-car salesman in a cheap suit, instructed his viewers how to paint a still life of donuts, coffee, and sardines with loose, expressionistic strokes.

Thirteen years later, his show is still running (now on YouTube). Some of his more popular shows have over a half-million hits, and he has performed as Mr. Let's Paint on national TV in front of millions of viewers.

Let's Paint TV began as a reaction against the educational, kitsch painting shows like *The Joy of Painting* by Bob Ross. "I was quickly bored with almost every painting show I'd ever seen. . . . For someone who's interested in painting for the weird, crazy, fucked up parts of it, approaches to the masses on how to paint seemed wrong in a way," Kilduff remarked.

"I started doing one or two straight edge shows 'how to paint' and quickly the introduction of weird stuff was happening—I started to welcome it." The weird stuff included elements from his earlier sketch comedy show *The Jim Berry Show*—interviews, blue-screen graphics, bad camera techniques, and, once a week, cable access callers. In the 2005 Halloween special, "Portrait of a Skeleton Mask #78," the still life subject matter is replaced by a costume "Scream" mask. A graphic overlay of a skull flashes on the screen to punctuate the key moments throughout the show, while Mr. Let's Paint interjects random Crypt Keeper style laughs.

Kilduff builds visual noise, in part, through low-fi, neo-cubist camerawork—an effect he gets by layering blue-screen graphics and multiple camera angles in shapes around the frame. "I'm kind of scatterbrained. So I'm imagining, 'What would be more interesting?' Let's fill up the picture plane or do something else, instead of this straight-ahead thing." He and his collaborators, the cable access crews, continued to max out the special effects as the show progressed. Despite the compositional complexity, all the moving parts retained the same ham-fisted quality that mimicked and enhanced the sloppy mania of the show's action.

By the mid-2000s, the addition of the treadmill gave the show its trademark punk-meets-multi-tasking aesthetic. In "Let's Paint, Blend Drinks, and Exercise," Mr. Let's Paint begins the episode in medias res—walking at a brisk pace on his treadmill, his suit is already covered in paint. The background, a photograph of him and a sexily dressed woman, quickly switches to a blue screen and then to a psychedelic trail of colors and freeze-frames to a close-up of his painting table, and so on. As he walks/runs, he attempts to instruct the viewers on healthy eating, how to blend unpalatable drinks, the benefits of creativity, and how to paint—all the while fielding calls from increasingly aggressive callers saying things like "fuck Santa Monica!"

Let's Paint, Exercise & Make a Sushi-Gingerbread House, 2006. Courtesy of the artist.

The local access callers, an analogue version of today's Internet trolls, serve as an antagonistic foil to Mr. Let's Paint's indefatigable optimism. "These people who used to call in on the cable access, they didn't just call my show, they called everyone else's show. It wasn't just me. It was a great, fun thing for them to do because they're on TV. And there was no screening." Despite the name-calling, swearing, gang-related shout outs, and sexual solicitations, his character maintains its disheveled cool, like the eye in the center of a shit storm.

Kilduff's position either inside or outside the art world is ambiguous. What unifies his otherwise diverse studio practice is his desire to reach a wide audience rather than be limited to the cultural hierarchy of the art world. His work with *Let's Paint TV* has led to live performances at a range of venues from the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, to comedy clubs, to *The Tyra Banks Show* and *America's Got Talent*. He said, "To me it's just a crazy experience. Being freer to have the angle of the cable access—which [is] more entertaining—as opposed to the dryness of the art community."

"I had a teacher tell me once—she looked at my videos and she said, 'The art world does not like naiveté.'" Her comment refers, perhaps, to the art world's mean girl tendency to shame anyone who embraces mainstream culture without irony or refuses to engage in art jargon—dismissing them as either lazy and ignorant, or calculating. Whether Kilduff genuinely does not care if he performs at the Hammer or for Tyra Banks (and I mean, who wouldn't want to perform for Tyra), or if that stance is part of the punk attitude that led him to create his cable television show in the first place, it's up to the viewer to decide.

Let's Paint TV is now streaming live on YouTube instead of on cable television. The format of the program has shifted gears away from the perpetual motion of the treadmill and high volume of callers towards a reality TV-style production more akin to "the artist in his studio." This move was in part to allow him to make work for his recent exhibitions *Fast Food Paintings*, a pop-up fast food store that sold made-to-order paintings, and *Very Good Plus (VG+)*, a pop-up record store.

"The show at Steven Wolf [Fine Arts] really evolved from me doing my show every day in the sense that, well, what was I going to paint? So I started painting my record collection on the Internet show."

While some fans may miss the frenetic campiness of his earlier performances, the new show has produced some raw, introspective shows, like, "The Let's Paint TV Christmas Special with Mr. Let's Paint!" where Kilduff performs noise rock renditions of Christmas carols while jogging on his treadmill. "Performing and the way that my performances become with the treadmill—[their] improvisational aspect with the fear of failure—I incorporate that part. I'm okay to stumble because I know I'm going to keep going. That's what the treadmill does for me, makes me keep going."

Fast Food Painting Truck, part of the show *Mulholland Dérive*, LA Road Concerts 2012. Courtesy of the artist.

RANDY COLOSKY

By DAVID CUNNINGHAM

In the four years since *Secret Handshake* (his revelatory first major solo show, curated by Tracy Wheeler at the late great Bruno Mauro's much missed Ampersand Gallery), Randy Colosky has steadfastly produced an astounding variety of works in an array of media and formats, including public art projects and even a full sized, fully functioning "grow room" (*Air and Space Museum*, 2012) for the San Francisco Arts Commission Gallery. Viewed at short range the multivalent results of his investigations can be confounding, but when observed from a distance, consistent patterns and directions emerge. Two ongoing and distinct bodies of work "graph" strongly in this matrix—his by now instantly recognizable "pattern iteration" drawings and more quietly, a series of ceramic works that Colosky has been steadily producing since 2010.

Ceramics have been at the core of Colosky's creative life since he was a teenager. Something about the fluid and unpredictable nature of the elemental yet highly technical processes involved in ceramic production lends itself to invention and innovation as well as risk-taking. Transformation and flux are hallmarks of casting, firing, and forming all of which are subject to high rates of failure and loss. Physics, chemistry, art, craft, and technology are all inextricably linked, and concept and process are in a constant state of fusion and overlap. Colosky's extensive experience in this field, coupled with his deep interest in science, art history, and Zen practice illuminates recurrent themes of transcendence and transformation that suffuse his work.

Colosky often deploys basic unit materials in repetitive or iterative structures that evoke concepts of "emergence" and "spontaneous order." The basic building block for all of his recent ceramic pieces is a "found" or ready-made industrial engineered honeycomb Cordierite ceramic unit typically used in catalytic converters for automobiles. Cordierite is a structural ceramic with a high resistance to thermal shock. Completing a satisfyingly recursive loop (a frequent marker of his quietly humorous and witty practice), these properties also make it ideal for use in building kilns. The first piece Colosky exhibited using this material— "The Shape of Things to Come (2010)" composed of four honeycomb blocks joined together and then carved to form a Torus shaped ring, delivers its own quiet joke. The converter is re-born as a wheel.

"Karesansui (2013)" is the largest and most recent piece in this series. Like all of Colosky's work, it is distilled, abstract, and deeply vested in its own materiality. The title directly references Japanese "dry landscape" or Zen gardens, specifically those of the Muromachi period (the golden age of Zen Buddhism), but the piece itself is also highly suggestive and allusive. Originally exhibited with a painted backdrop reminiscent of the colored clay wall, which is an important element of the famous garden at Ryoan-ji in Kyoto, it now stands alone. Conjuring further associations with the Chinese scholar's stone (and to a lesser extent Japanese Suiseki) the piece does in fact meet all the classic requirements of a Tang Dynasty scholar's stone, including: thinness, openness, perforations, wrinkling, resemblance to a figure or landscape, texture, glossy or moist looking surface and notable origin (see above). Of course, the point is not to replicate or appropriate but to activate and reinvigorate the form as a vehicle or tool for reflection, contemplation, and consciousness. In this sense, and in the broadest definition of the term, the work is inherently "technological."

Unlike the earlier monolithic "Barbican (2011)" and bi-partite "Black Magic Mountain (2013)," Karesansui is punctured by seven large holes. The honeycomb base units are assembled and stacked in two planes lending it extra dimension and an animated quality that is suggestive of the figurative in spite of the piece's resolute abstractness. At approximately seven feet tall and four feet wide it is still within human scale and the slightly offset foot-like elements at the base establish a subtle *contrapposto* stance, which reinforces a pervasive sense of animistic energy evocative of Shinto Kami. In another reference (likely unintended by the artist) the "pose" and swirling contours of the carved surfaces that differentiate both sides of the piece bring to mind the paired Niō guardians or Kongōrikishi by Unkei at Tōdai-ji in Nara (though they are four times larger and carved of wood).

Colosky's work, however, is never literal and first impressions are invariably upended and overturned. Using a favored device of the artist, the piece operates on a polarity or dualism. What appears to be solid, matte black stone turns out to be composed mostly of voids. Depending on one's vantage point whole sections can appear almost transparent, with an otherworldly immanence or glow that appears to almost be a source of light within the piece. This is an optical effect first explored in the earlier *Barbican* piece but, here dramatically heightened by the high contrast dark finish and paradoxically emphasized by the negative space of the seven large voids carved through the sculpture which in certain lighting conditions and depending on your vantage point can appear almost solid in proximity to the transparent blocks (suggesting an awareness and interest in the Japanese concept of Ma). That finish was achieved by combining up to six different colored lacquers and metallic coatings and when combined with the surface topographies of the textured, serrated, carved edges of the exposed honeycomb cell structure lends the piece a quietly futuristic aura (and possibly also alludes to the concept of a "black body"—which in physics is considered a 'perfect emitter') that lifts it out of the referential and stakes a claim for its own autonomy. Once again, in the words of his fellow artist and friend Sarah Smith, "he takes something rigid and uniform and gives it organic life."

Upcoming projects include a 140-foot-long, digitally produced mural (a new development in his *Iteration* drawing series) for the barrier wall surrounding the Central Subway Moscone Station construction site for the San Francisco Arts Commission. Later this summer Colosky will install a monumental new outdoor ceramic piece as part of a group sculpture show at Paradise Ridge Winery, and in November, he will have his second solo show with Chandra Cerrito Gallery in Oakland.

Karesansui, 2013. 84x48x24 inches. Photograph by Jesse Chandler. Courtesy of the artist.

DAVID BAYUS

Interviewed by LUCA NINO ANTONUCCI

I sat down with friend and studio mate David Bayus to talk to him about his new body of work and our recent collaboration Stroke*. I guess you could call David a painter, but he is so much more than that. I would call him an esoteric cowboy with the excited demeanor of a school-boy.*

I think there is this tendency with your work to immediately ask you about process. So I wanted to ask you about the ideas behind your current body of work and sort of skate our way back to process from there. What are you doing right now?

I guess I should start out by saying that my previous work had been dealing with oil painting and photography in a very specific and deliberate way. In this new series, I am not only incorporating my drawing practice, but trying to find a way to de-territorialize and de-contextualize the medium I am using, the materials, and I am trying to play with the idea of a drawing being a still life in itself. Or better yet, how can the idea of a drawing as a poetic form become an object. And I don't mean that in a literal sense. I mean it in a sense of space. In a sense of architecture. I find those too often be at great distances from one another. I want to speak in a poetic language that I feel is within mediums that I find relevant.

Do you think the way in which you are producing these images and what these images represent are inextricably tied together?

Absolutely. It started out with a very Zen idea, right? I decided I am going to make drawings and I am going to make paintings. They are going to be within the realms of portraiture, landscape, and still life. These are all very basic, broad ideas. I was trying to be more poetic with my language. These concepts I had developed in grad school, those ideas were coming to fulfillment, but these other ends of my practice I felt weren't getting investigated enough. Instead I had this specificity in the process and materials, a certain set list that I had come to rely on, like so okay, I have these photo collages and I paint on top of them with oil paint and it's this very specific process that becomes a ritual.

And people seem to fetishize that specific process and it could distance them from the work?

Yeah. And in a lot of ways that is what I was interested in. I really like to put painting in awkward positions. For this idea, I really wanted to wipe clean the slate of what is painting, what is drawing. I really wanted to reduce them down to just the word. Not the material, not the object, just the word. So I started out looking at how I could approach these subjects in multiple ways but have them operate in the same poetic space. So I developed two ideas of work. One of which I was going to be working specifically in a 3D virtual format and the other in a photographic still life format, really similar to ideas of stage production and film production. So basically, I wanted to create these two separate spaces that are trying to accomplish the same goals and have the *inabilities* of one inform the *abilities* of the other.

The artists' studio.

When I am working in a 3D format, I am building an architecture and I am building space, it's like I'm taking a drawing and turning it into a structure. When I'm working in a photographic space, I'm thinking, *how can I light and shape these things, and create these drawings and images?* So everything that I can't do in a 3D rendering I end up wanting to do in the physical photographic space and that's how I come to my compositional decisions. Whatever I can't do in one space, I end up wanting to do in the other. So there is a direct dialogue there.

So, would you say that the pieces end up being exemplary of both the faults and the merits of each medium?

Yeah, absolutely. That's what I'm interested in, because that's what we see. It's all still paintings and drawings. The contents and the mediums change, but if anything it's just becoming decontextualized. You never know what anything is anymore.

Less categorical?

I think that's a better way of saying it. And its importance is questioned too. Those areas are important for investigation because they are always the kind of awkward spaces. I was interested in the documentation of art objects as a medium for deploying paintings and drawings. That's kind of odd. I make mock paintings and sculptures in order to make paintings and drawings. It's weird. It's like the art object as prop. As gesture.

Does it end up being more about the hierarchy of those things? For example with a still life, do you think historically there was a naiveté that the simple fact of arranging the fruit on the table wasn't already a drawing, painting, or artwork?

That's why this sort of work is in opposition to the work I was previously doing. I was investigating that sort of fetishizing thing. That is the subject. It's like in documenting you are destroying it. What's that story, the cartographer and the magic map, he's trying to have a more defined map and it keeps spreading and spreading and it destroys itself because it rips and tears. In the end that energy of copying the subject ends up destroying it—because the subject is no longer relevant, because we have the painting of the object.

What do you think is left after that? How do you see this work you have made? Is it a document of the destruction?

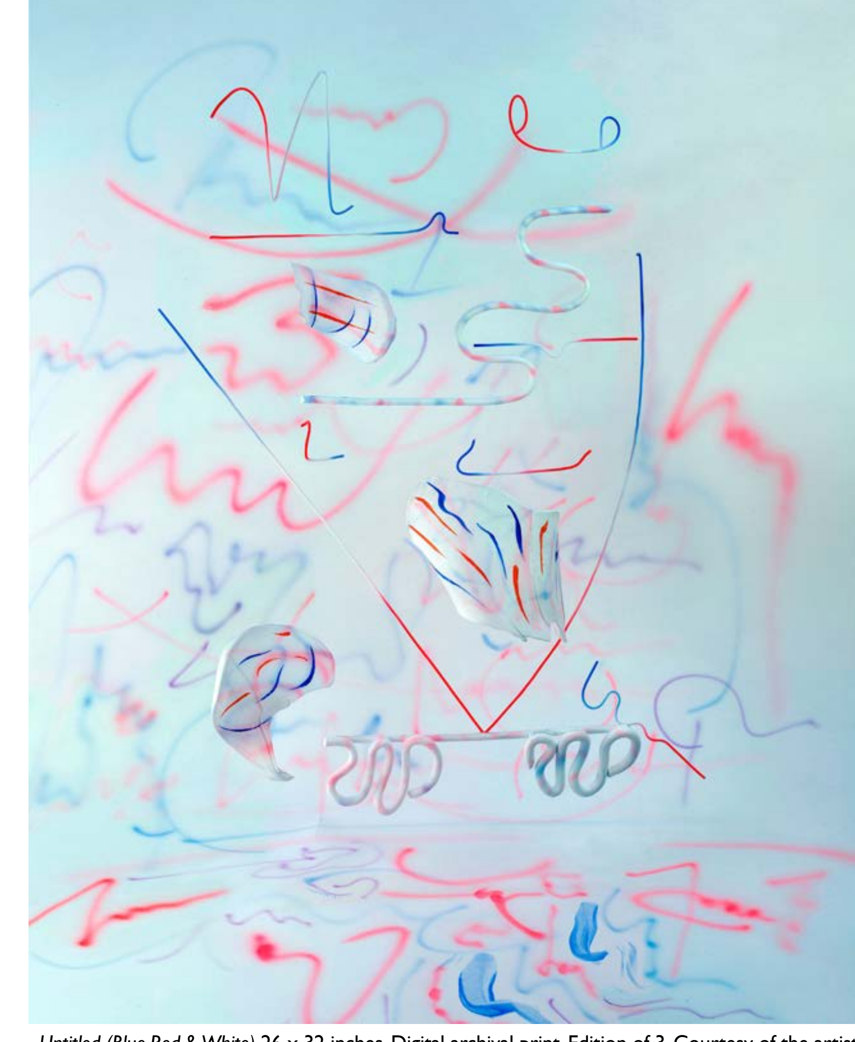
Well, that's a lot of what *Stroke* was about. It's interesting because all the pieces we ended up using for the publication were potentially important knickknacks to a collector because they were the original pieces used in the sculpture. In another context they are garbage and get thrown away. And in another context they can be used by another artist. They can be appropriated sculptures to make new drawings, which is an odd concept for a book.

I think what's interesting is that before we started the book there was already an exchange of materials between us. For example when I was finishing a book, I would hand you the end paper that I had used and it would turn up in a collage.

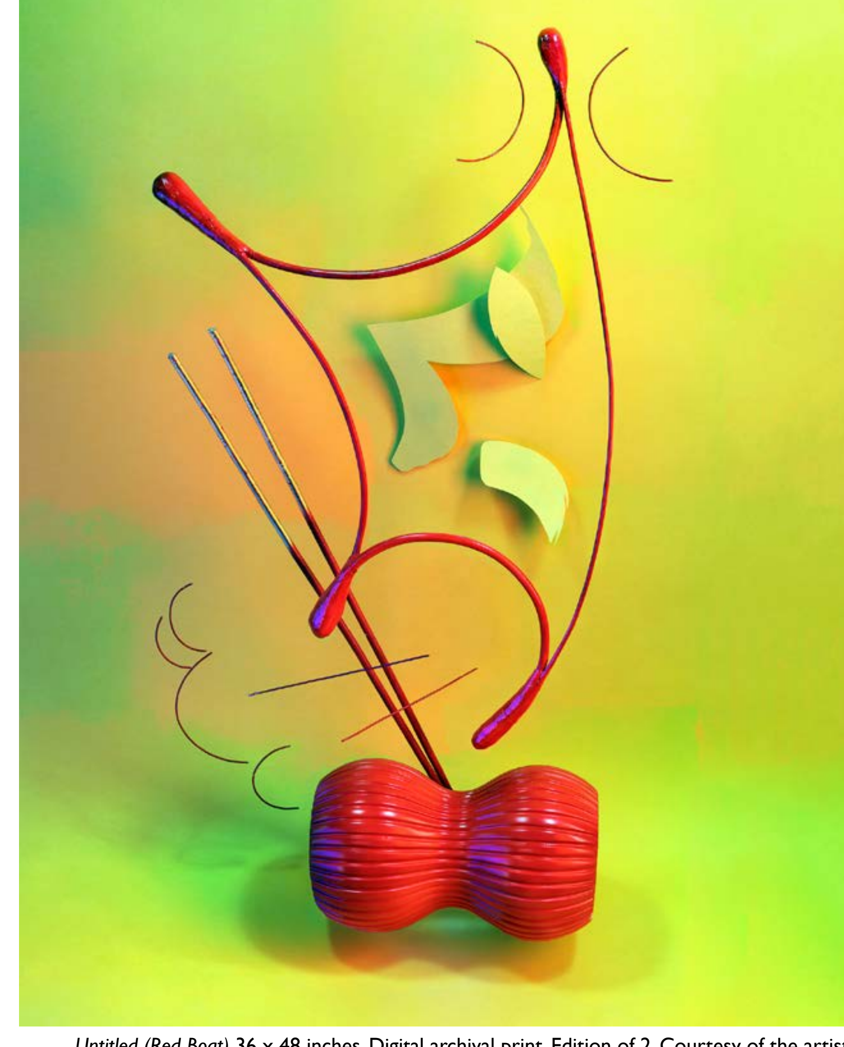
Yeah. And that's sort of how it works. You want it to start with some grand concept but it always kind of boils down to these survival strategies that are implicit in how these methods can result in a collaboration. I think that's the idea behind the book and it directly ties to the idea of how the brushstroke is not only an art object but a cultural object. Those became the driving questions behind the book. You've been playing with ideas of the book as sculpture for a long time.

Yeah, definitely. And well, that hierarchy of art object over document is something we have in common. I think it's so interesting, having talked about your process, that you make these complex sculptures and photograph them. The objects are sort of disregarded and the image becomes the final art work. That lends itself easily to the conversation of art object or book because the book ends up being a document to all this artwork that potentially doesn't exist anymore. In that way, they speak back and forth to each other. Is this a catalog or is this the art object we are looking at?

I find it best in the studio to always be in a point of question and what I liked is that I didn't know how to answer that question. The fact that the pieces are thrown away or re-used, like if someone wants to collect them like fingernails in jars or whatever, then that's great. It's more out of the nature of our space. The nature of production lends itself to this project. These are things that are inherent in all visual dissemination systems. You can't get away from it, so just the idea of trying to get away from it is interesting. You are immediately in a position to immortalize the objects afterwards.



Untitled (Blue,Red,& White) 26 x 32 inches. Digital archival print. Edition of 3. Courtesy of the artist.



Untitled (Red Boat) 36 x 48 inches. Digital archival print. Edition of 2. Courtesy of the artist.

Historically, they didn't put a rotting still life on a pedestal and have people come to see it decompose. *We will remember you, still life with fruit! And we will hang this painting in memorial of you!*

Do you ever feel the need to paint? In a traditional sense?

What I always found funny about previous work was that I would spend all this time painting on top of photographs, so that they became these hybrid forms. No one knew where the painting ended and the photography began, and in the end, it was bought by someone to be tucked away and probably seen by a few. So this leaves the simple fact that the broadest dissemination of the artwork is the photograph of it, not the painting itself. This leaves the conceptual dilemma that is ever increasing based on a million different issues. Developing the work to where I am now, I found liberating because I feel like I am addressing that contextual problem of painting. But in a grand scheme of things, unless you change the entire dynamic of how the capitalist structure works, painting is going to continue to be fetishized merely in terms of the singular object reigning king.

Yeah, that's why it's really interesting and funny to bring painting to the edition. Because the edition is like the easily traded bastard of the art world.

Yeah. It's the baseball card dilemma. With the system we are in as long as you are dealing with the unique object you are dealing with its fetishization. What's funny is that on the other side, information is infinite. Like with the "Internet." And I don't want to say *Internet* in quotation marks, but I guess I just did. It's this sort of ever growing echo-chamber of art memes with no territory and you start to see irrelevance as a concept. It's the complete opposite of a painting show in a gallery. They talk about art going online with art.com, but it's the same thing as a traditional gallery. I'm talking about the web being in complete defiance of the ability to fetishize art, because there is no standardization for its presence.

You're saying, creating art to live as an image and not as an object?

Yeah.

I think that's really interesting, because art in some way has always been about the transfer of capital, but has always been fundamentally in contradiction of it. [Lowers voice]: "Now that you own this object, you own its inherent worth and it will appreciate in your hands instead of mine and that's an investment." Just like property. So it's interesting to think about making something that escapes that system and ideally, from what I can tell from our conversation, is part of it as well. Like for example, you can buy an edition print of this object that I made, but just so you know, this object lives here and it can't be owned.

Yeah, it's noble to think you can make art that has no fixed position of value, but you still have to live in a world of commodity because you have to live. I see no difference between a projection of my work and a print of it. And in a way, it is the opposite of what I was doing before. It's a non-specificity of medium. This is an attempt to work in an in-between medium. And that's what this new body of work is and the idea of *Stroke*. It's an idea that manifests in different ways and can hopefully never be tied to one.

David's work will be on view as part of a two-person show with Ben Bigelow at City Limits Gallery in Oakland, CA from June 6, to July 7, 2014.

LIAM EVERETT

Interviewed by JEFF MCMILLAN

Liam Everett lives and works in San Francisco. He is currently represented by Altman Siegel and is also Visiting Faculty at San Francisco Art Institute. I met with him at his Headlands Center for the Arts studio in March 2014 to discuss his most recent paintings and a set of new prints he recently completed at Paulson Bott Press.

I wanted to start off with your painting practice. When I last visited your studio you were working on several large canvases that you said some people called 'sanding' paintings. Tell me about these paintings and how you create them?

This is a very primitive way of talking about them, but I keep doing this so I'll just say that they start out additive. Even before I'm adding paint on them, they're primed, which sets up essentially the tooth that I have to dig into when I'm subtracting. So after I have the three, four or five layers of primer, I'll start to add. If I just say I start adding paint, it's not really true—I'm adding it very intentionally. I'm drawing with the paint and I'm building up these grids that are between hot and cold color schemes—building up three or four columns of cold and then I'll intersperse those columns with warmer tones. In many ways, I feel more than ever that I'm building paintings rather than painting paintings. And eventually I begin to subtract but the reason why I mention that now is because I'm not adding just to have this surface to subtract. I'm trying to build a painting that is conclusive—that at some point arrives at this resolved state where I can recognize why it's doing what it's doing and I'm excited by it. It's really at that point when there's comfort that I begin to subtract the paint and that's why they get referred to as the "sanded" paintings because to subtract I sand. But I'll use many different ways—alcohol, salt, steel wool, a power sander. I use different gradations of the sanding paper, some are on blocks, some are wrapped around foam and the reason why I have several different ways of removing the paint is because some are much more aggressive than others and I don't want to strip more than one layer at a time. I want to take off one painting and then take off another because there are maybe fourteen to fifteen different paintings on each painting. So, as I'm subtracting, I don't want these to show up as expressive marks—they're more kind of excavational. And as you cut into a stone—I'm thinking geologically—I want to be able to cut into this landmass of paint and see what led to what. What I'm discovering when I finally exit these paintings is that they show up completely different than how I imagined them to be.

So previously you've mentioned the word 'foreign' when you are getting to the end of that subtractive process. Can you talk a little bit more about that?

It's probably the wrong word. The other word I was using was "otherly" but that just sounds too hokey. There's always this question—I think everyone who makes a painting at some point gets asked this question, "How do you know the work is finished?" It is actually a very strange question for me, because I don't think of these as finished. It's probably the reason—the motivation—that has sent me into this way of practicing—to avoid a finish or a problem of finishing. So it's a long way to say it but essentially "otherly" or "foreign" is what I'm looking for. I'm looking for this to appear. Not show up but to appear and I make a differentiation between showing up and appearing—for me to show up happens much faster. For a painting to appear is something that's very gradual. It's like this Greek term *aesthesis*—I'm butchering that but essentially it's "becoming," "arriving to." When the painting stands in front of me after all this addition and subtraction, if and when it arrives at this point, I literally don't recognize it. I can tell you I did this and this and this, but I can't make it happen again.

I think when many people look at your work they would call it abstraction. But you said in an interview with Hunted Projects, "I don't think of my paintings as abstraction. Inside the studio they are only work to me. I mean that literally. Work as labor." I was wondering if you could talk a little more about that?

Maybe this sounds like it's motivated by an idea or a concept, but it isn't. I would say none of this is born out of idea or concept. It's born out of practice and for lack of a better term, labor. How I do that, how I avoid the idea, is through these restrictions in the practice, in these limitations that I set up. For example, I don't allow myself to stand back from the painting while I'm working on it. I pull this table up about three feet away from the wall and then I put out the paint and start at the top and move to the bottom, always the same way. What I do is limit my art from autobiographical expression, emotion, or, for lack of a better word, self. And so in doing this, what is left is practice—put paint on surface, take paint off, put paint on—it's very primitive. For me, why these are not abstract is because they are very much of this reality—the studio. They are born out of this reality of practice and process and addition and subtraction. And so what they look like to me, if and when they appear, are that which they are—practice.

So when I was here last time you also mentioned that when you're done with the works you send off the canvases to the fabricator and then often times you don't actually see the stretched canvas until it's in the gallery. I was wondering if you could talk a bit more about your relationship to the work after it leaves your studio?

Almost 99% of the time I don't see the paintings until they arrive in the gallery. And this is the final restriction for me because if I stretch them myself I have control somehow. I have what I think of as "the finish." When you are stretching a painting, you are really cropping an image. By divorcing myself of this very conclusive act, I essentially pull the rug out from under myself. I essentially take away this control. And I create the possibility of being disturbed when I finally meet this painting in its stretched form.

Let's talk about your prints that you did at Paulson Bott Press. When were you there?

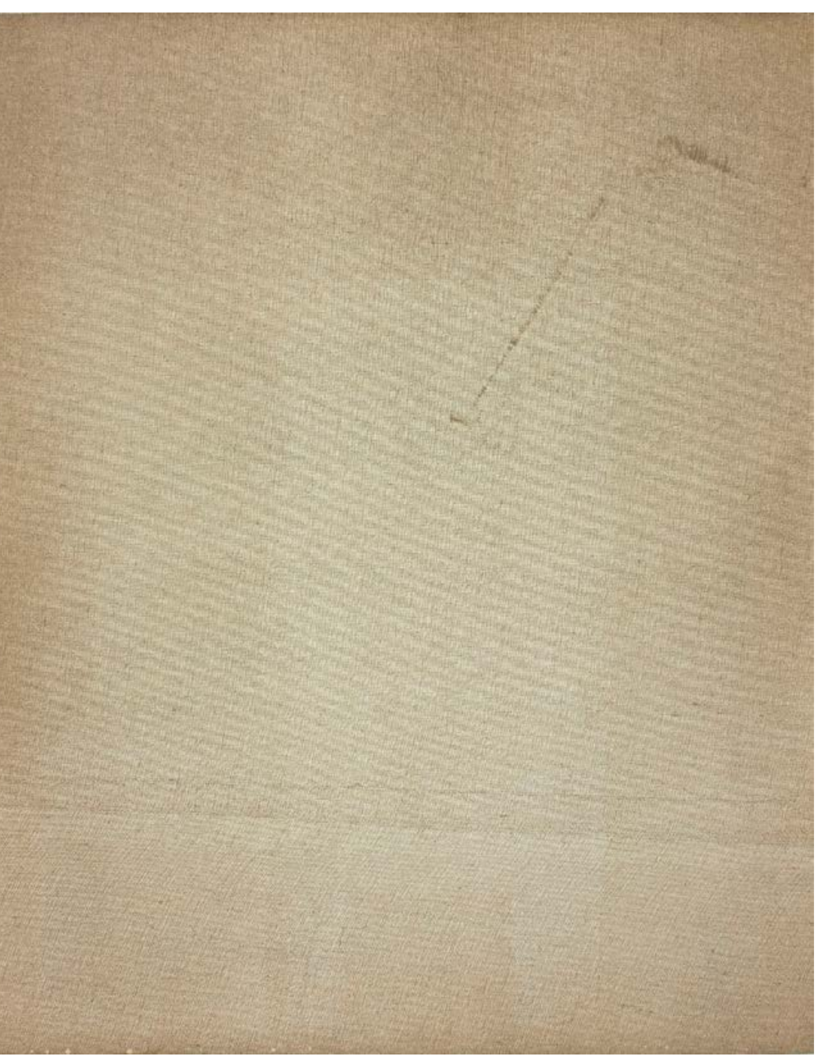
Maybe about three months ago. I've been there at two different short residencies and I'm actually going back in a few weeks to finish this group. I went in thinking we'd make one or two editions and we ended up making several. What's amazing about Renee and Pam is that they came out a few times to the studio—they tried to get a sense of the way I work—and basically we set up the same system at the press, an environment where everything is moving and there is a constant state of flux and possibilities. That was the atmosphere we created at Paulson.

So was the process that you went through—did it still entail an addition and subtraction like your paintings?

I'm probably abusing this term and misleading you because when I say "subtractive," for me it's actually very additive. As soon as you start to take away an area of paint you lose the paint but you gain many other things—you gain volume, you gain light source, you gain depth, you gain all these other kinds, and subtle modes of information. So you can erase an entire painting—*quote-unquote* "erase"—but what you have is content. If I was Zen, I would say something like this is the content of absence. But I'm not Zen so I can't say this. But this is essentially what it is. How they are similar is that everything I do in the creative process I find two points—you can call it between A and B. To establish this is a foundation. It's like two pillars that hold up a space or a support that holds a painting. When I have these two points then my job is just to move from one to the other, back and forth. And if you do this fast enough and for long enough with rigor and intention, then every now and then you have combustion. Viscosity makes sparks makes heat makes energy. And this is what I'm trying to hold in the work. The heat or whatever you want to call it—the energy that arrives because of this friction. So it's the same process—different tools, different environment, same process.

Untitled (Khonsu), 2013. Edition of 35. Color flatbite, softground and aquatint etching with sanding, 26 X 21 inches. Courtesy of Paulson Bott Press.

Untitled (Montolieu), 2013. Edition of 35. Color flatbite, and aquatint etching with sanding, 26 x 21 inches. Courtesy of Paulson Bott Press



Untitled (Net), 2013. Edition of 35. Color softground etching, 26 x 21inches. Courtesy of Paulson Bott Press.

Untitled (Ahnur), 2013. Edition of 35. Color flatbite etching with sanding, 26 x 21 inches. Courtesy of Paulson Bott Press.

MARIAN GOODMAN

Interviewed by CONSTANCE LEWALLEN

Marian Goodman photographed by Thomas Struth. Courtesy of Marian Goodman Gallery, New York / Paris

Marian Goodman founded Multiples in 1965, publisher of limited edition artists' prints, objects and books. She opened her 57th Street gallery in 1977 (in its present location since 1981) with a strong commitment to European artists. It remains one of the most respected galleries in New York.

I know that you grew up in Manhattan and that your father was an art lover whose passion obviously set you on your path.
My father was a very unusual collector. I am not sure he had great sums of money to spend, but he was an avid reader and museumgoer, especially focused on the painting and sculpture of the 19th to mid-20th centuries and enthusiast of art history, especially. It isn't that he collected widely, but he fell in love with the work of one artist in particular, Milton Avery, and he just seemed to have a deep joy in collecting his work. They became friends and saw each other on a regular basis. My father did have relationships with some other artists from whom he would buy work, but his real love was Avery.

So, you knew Avery?
Yes, he was a lovely man, and I still love his work. He was a wonderful man. I think he was a great colorist and it is generally acknowledged that he had a substantial influence on Mark Rothko in that regard.

You must have had many Avery's in your apartment.
Yes [laughter], in my family's apartment; floor to ceiling.

And didn't an Avery painting have a part in your starting a gallery?
Yes, my father gave me an Avery painting that was worth $5,000, and I sold it to help launch Multiples with the idea of publishing limited edition artists' prints and objects.

I read that you started Multiples in the mid-sixties after approaching the Museum of Modern Art [MOMA].
Yes, the idea was to make works by the most respected artists and best craftsmen available to the public at affordable prices. They weren't interested, so I did it on my own with some partners.

When did it close?
In a way it never closed. Once I started the gallery in 1977 it became clear that I couldn't do two things at once, and I wasn't interested in many of the artists of the 80s, so it was easy for me to slow down. However, I continued to do projects with artists whenever the right moment came, but no longer actively, just selectively. For example, at that time, I published most of Sol LeWitt's editions and all of [Claes] Oldenburg's etchings and aquatints.

You were one of the first dealers to recognize European artists.
It was a strange thing about the States. There was a whole world of very exciting European artists, but the news didn't come here, or only sporadically. There were exciting artists working in Italy, the Arte Povera group, for example, that hardly anyone knew. A few—Richard Long and Jan Dibbets—were showing with Leo Castelli or John Weber's gallery, via his Italian wife Annina Nosei. But in general European artists had no presence here.

What got you interested in the Europeans?
My field of study was modern European history, so I had some familiarity with European cultures. It wasn't a mysterious place to me. Also, one of my colleagues who was close to me and the Multiples gallery, a young German man who was our graphic designer, encouraged me to learn about contemporary European art. I was curious before then, but I never wanted to go to Germany given the history of World War II. In the process of knowing him, I began to sort things out and realized there was a generation of artists born after the end of World War II who could not be fairly held responsible for what took place before their birth and were very aware of their past and wanted to make amends. In retrospect, I realize how dedicated they were in seeking out better models. Through that friendship I went to Documenta in 1968 for the first time where I saw work of Joseph Beuys. When I returned to New York I tried to persuade someone at MoMA to show a wonderful film of Beuys's, which I felt was very moving indeed. Beuys was influenced by Samuel Beckett. In one of Beckett's novels the lead character transfers stones from his left to his right trouser pocket, seemingly unable to decide where they should remain—an existential dilemma. And in his film, Beuys echoes the dilemma, moving a gigantic pile of wood from here to there, looks at it, and moves it back and forth again, or to a third place, and back again—another existential dilemma. I thought it was wonderful and tried to get MoMA interested but they weren't.

Lawrence Weiner, *SCATTERED MATTER BROUGHT TO A KNOWN DENSITY, WITH THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD, CUSPED*, 2007. Language + Materials Referred To. Courtesy of Marian Goodman Gallery, New York / Paris.

Again!
After that I began to publish Beuys and the British artist Richard Hamilton. I was very eager to meet Marcel Broodthaers who was a friend of Richard's. He said, "come to Berlin, there is going to be a Fluxus meeting, and I will introduce you to Broodthaers," and that changed everything for me. I began to publish with Broodthaers and tried unsuccessfully to get him a gallery in New York. Since no one was interested, I decided that I would try to show his work myself. That's how I started a gallery, completely impractically, and with dreams.

Your first show was Broodthaers?
Yes, two-thirds Broodthaers and one-third James Lee Byars.

Even now the majority of artists in your gallery are not American.
But I do have several—Dan Graham, Lawrence Weiner, John Baldessari, and now Julie Mehretu. When I published editions, I worked with a number of the Pop artists, especially Rosenquist and Oldenburg, and many others like Artschwager and LeWitt. The gallery has grown like topsy since then; one thing led to another, as it does in life.

I know you travel extensively.
Yes.

And in your travels you see new artists. Is that the primary way in which you discover artists?
I see a great many shows, but sometimes artists come to me and sometimes artists in the gallery recommend other artists. So, there always seems to be a flow of artists to consider.

Your current show of William Kentridge is based on work that was in Documenta last year.
Yes, very much so. *The Refusal of Time*, the piece he presented at Documenta, is now at the Metropolitan Museum; it's very exciting.

Yes, I read that it is co-owned by the Met and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.
Yes.

Did you travel to Moscow to see Baldessari's recent show there?
You know, I didn't. It was the craziest month I've ever had. There were two other museum shows by gallery artists in two other countries at the same time, and an opening here in the gallery one day after Baldessari's opening in Moscow. Life seems to double up that way.

You've been in this space at 24 West 57th Street for a long time?
Since 1981, and from 1977 in another 57th Street location.

You've expanded the gallery, but you never followed the exodus of 57th Street galleries to SoHo, nor did you move to Chelsea, why?
A combination of things. Most of the gallery artists liked being uptown, especially the European artists. Also, often the spaces are too big. It didn't seem like the best way to look at art. It is too distracting for quiet looking. Since more of them felt that way than not, I decided to stay.

Big spaces encourage artists to make art to fill the space and that can lead to overblown work.
There's a lot of that that goes on.

But you did open a gallery in Paris in 1995, why was that?
It didn't have to do with making a fortune—Paris isn't that kind of a market. I represent about fifteen European artists and I try to see them regularly. That means a lot of traveling in Europe, which gets to be challenging, getting from place to place. I always try to end each trip with a weekend or so in Paris, which I love, to catch my breath. I opened the Paris space through a crazy mix of circumstances. I had been asked by a French curator who wanted to start a Kunsthalle in Paris if I would join as a commercial gallery. Some of the artists in my gallery loved the idea. Ultimately it didn't work because of lack of funding. Then later, I thought to take a pied à terre. I rented a tiny space.

I visited the gallery—it was upstairs, wasn't it?
Yes, and it was only about twenty feet square. Ultimately, artists became interested in showing there, so no more pied à terre, rather a small gallery. I had to curate the

Sol Lewitt, *Untitled,* 1975. Metal construction, 10 x 10 x 3.75 inches.
Courtesy of Marian Goodman Gallery, New York / Paris.

shows because you couldn't just fit anything in such a small space. When the lease was up after five years, I decided that if I could find the right space where the artists had room enough, I would continue, and so I did. I found a very beautiful space at the last minute of the last hour, making it possible for me to continue.

I know you had show of Richard Tuttle's work in Paris recently.
Yes.

Is one of the reasons to have a gallery elsewhere because you can show artists you don't represent in New York?
I don't think it's a driving force. I've only just started to show artists in Paris who I don't represent. Many of those artists don't show in Europe, which is strange, and for the most part they are artists that I had worked with when I did publishing, like Tuttle and Sol LeWitt. It wasn't as if I was running around trying to find new people.

I received an email announcement recently that you are going to open a gallery in London?
Yes, in about a year.

In what part of the city?
It's in Soho, Golden Square, which is a very nice area. We started by wanting to open a small space. I tried to find one in Mayfair, but I couldn't. A real estate agent showed me the space we finally settled on, which is flexible and it promises to be beautiful when it's fixed up.

Why London?
Europe has changed quite a bit. London has become the financial capital of Europe, mostly because its tax laws are more favorable to collectors than those of France, for example. And because most of my artists were excited about the idea of showing in London.

It sounds like your decisions regarding the gallery are driven by your artists?
Definitely, they are.

I heard you spend a lot of time every day on the phone with your artists.
That's true.

Your close relationship with your artists must be the joy of it for you.
It is the joy, but there are many serious collectors, museum curators, and directors with whom it is also a joy to work.

***You were in the recent documentary* Gerhard Richter Painting.**
It was a shock to me. I had an appointment, walked into the studio, and Gerhard led me into another other room where the filmmaker was. She asked me to say something. I was taken by surprise, but I did.

The art world has changed enormously since you began. What do you think about the proliferation of art fairs?
I don't feel good about it. I don't think any gallerist does feel good about it, but there's no avoiding participating in it, because it's now an important part of the market. The paradigm has changed. It has changed the habits of the way the public engages with art. Although there are still many collectors who value galleries highly as places where they have a chance to see work in depth, fewer people come to the galleries. Many prefer to shop at fairs. They are often the same people who buy at auctions. That's not always true, it's not a black and white situation, but business has taken over the art world.

How many fairs do you participate in?
Many. It's just a reality of an art world that has opened up to so many other countries. It's a much bigger arena than it used to be. I don't know how smaller galleries manage, I really don't.

I don't think fairs can replace galleries. Would an artist want to be with a dealer who didn't have a gallery?
It's a possibility; it depends on the artist. But the general practice is only galleries are welcome at the fairs.

But without a gallery how can you develop an artist, build a career? Maybe it will be a weeding out process.
I think you are right. I think it is very different to build a career without an exhibition space where the artist has a much greater possibility to be seen.

There are now biennials all over the world as well.
Of varying quality. Some are important – Documenta is the gold standard – and Venice of course is always of interest.

And now the auction houses are mounting shows.
That's even worse; there's no real commitment to the artist at all. Money is the driving motivation. If an artist is very much sought after, his or her treatment is better, and if not, artists beware.

Do you have many clients on the West Coast?
San Francisco is one of the great collecting cities of the world, and we have many important collectors in Los Angeles as well.

Are you tempted to open a gallery in another part of the United States?
No. We have a lot of out-of-town clients who come to New York regularly.

Do you work closely with museums?
Yes, very much so.

It's very difficult for museums to acquire art now because most are priced out of the market.
We try to help museums financially to acquire works as much as we possibly can.

Are there any artists you regret not taking on?
I take a long time to decide to add an artist to the gallery because it is a very serious commitment, maybe even more so for the artist. The worst thing is to invite someone and then find it was a mistake. I don't want to grab artists because they are hot. I have always added artists to the gallery before they were well known, or while they were in a more quiescent phase.

Most of your artists have been with you for a long time; there haven't been many defections.
Yes, that's true.

Who is the most recent artist to join your gallery?
Adrián Villar Rojas. He represented Argentina in the Venice Biennale in 2011. I was really intrigued. He created this amazing environment, a world seeming to be made of stalagmites and stalactites, an otherworldly landscape. I thought it very original, thoughtful, powerful, and brave. I found it really stunning in the true sense of the word. I was deeply moved by it. All the things you look for in an artist.

Has he shown in your gallery yet?
No, he will sometime next season. He just finished a well-received exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery in London.

Where does he live?
In Rosario, Argentina, the hometown of Lucio Fontana.

Do you collect art yourself?
I don't know if I would call it collecting, but I am attracted to many forms of art besides contemporary, which I am keen on. I like ancient sculpture from the Pre-Columbian era, sculpture from the Middle Eastern civilizations of the Tigris and the Euphrates, African art, American folk art, Japanese prints, and on and on.

Installation view, *Sculpture*, May 5th - 28 May, 1983. Richard Artschwager, Claes Oldenburg, Sol LeWitt. Courtesy of Marian Goodman Gallery, New York / Paris.

Richard Tuttle, *The Place in the Window, II*, 2013. Wire, mesh wall sculpture, 17.75 x 21.25 x 5.75 inches. Courtesy of Marian Goodman Gallery, New York / Paris.

Joseph Beuys, *Mirror Piece*, from *Mirrors of the Mind,* 1975. Brown lacquered flask with iodine crystal mirror-plated interior, 7.25 x 4.25 inches. Published by Multiples, Inc. and Castelli Graphics, New York. Courtesy of Marian Goodman Gallery, New York / Paris

LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI PART 2 OF 4

Interviewed by JOHN HELD, JR.

Paintings from a Gone World:

In Part One of the Ferlinghetti Interview, we discussed his childhood background, obtaining his doctorate from the Sorbonne, meeting fellow bookseller George Whitman, moving to San Francisco, becoming regional correspondent for Art Digest, *offending Jay De Feo and defending controversial murals. We continue to examine Ferlinghetti's career as a painter, often overshadowed by his sizable reputation as bookseller, poet, publisher and defender of cultural freedoms.*

I'd like to return back to your Paris days, if I might. That was a heyday for Surrealism. Duchamp was there, André Breton, and they were involved with staging a Surrealistic exhibition about that time.
That was the dominant trend in Paris at the time. I knew the son of the biographer of Marcel Duchamp, Robert Lebel. His son Jean-Jacques Lebel, organized a series of international poetry readings starting in the sixties, and I went to several of them. It was called The Festival of Free Expression. They were really some events.

Did you ever meet Duchamp?
No. That was an older generation. Those guys, Duchamp and the Surrealists, were in the twenties.

But Duchamp was in New York in the fifties and sixties.
Yes. They all came over to New York, and that's why Jean-Jacques spoke English fluently with a Brooklyn accent, because he was a little kid in Brooklyn when the Surrealists were escaping the Nazis. He's still very active in Paris. He paints and does assemblages in the Surrealistic tradition.

You still have connections to Paris, and go over occasionally?
I haven't been since George Whitman died. I used to try and go practically every year. For many, many years Shakespeare and Company was always the center for the literary expatriates. Black poets like Jake Jonas were always there. It was where you went to pick up your mail—this was before there was an Internet, or anything like that. Are you going to rewrite the answers or are you going to print them verbatim?

I'm going to transcribe them verbatim and then you can look them over and edit them.
I don't even want to see it. I just wondered which way you're going to go, whether it's going to be verbatim, or if you're going to rephrase everything.

Verbatim. Your words are eloquent and don't need elaboration. Let's talk about the fifties for a while. You were just starting City Lights and publishing your first works. I think it's descriptive that your first book was called, "Pictures of the Gone World" [City Lights, 1955].
Yeah, but let's stick to the painting subject. In the 1950s, I got Hassel Smith's painting studio at 9 Mission Street. It's the Audiffred Building. It's at the foot of Market Street and the Embarcadero, and there was no electricity over the ground floor. On the ground floor was the Bank of America. On the second floor we shared the floor with the Alcoholics Anonymous club. On the same floor was Frank Lobdell—his studio was there and in the back of the floor was Marty Snipper, who was an art teacher. There was no heat over the first floor and no electricity. I had a small pot bellied stove for heat. So, it was just like a Paris studio. It was really studio size, like in Paris. In North Beach today, there are no studios. People have one room, and they call it a studio. (laughs)

You were close to the Art Institute, then the California School of Fine Arts. . . .
I went there for many, many years, drawing in the open studio from the model.

This was in the fifties?
Fifties, sixties, seventies, and I got my studio at Hunters Point Shipyard in 1980. So, I've been at Hunters Point for thirty-three years. I have a huge studio there. It's sixteen hundred square feet. I was one of the first ones who got there, and I picked out one of the best spaces. We have a model there once a month for three hours. About twelve people come. A lot of the drawings that are now at my show at Krevsky's were from model sessions. You'll see that most of the work in there is quite recent, from the last couple of years, except for three or four oil paintings that are older. Two are very recent. There's a painting in the show from the fifties. I sold it to a woman about 1960, 1963 maybe, for a few hundred dollars. I always wanted to get that painting back. I wish I'd never sold it. I had no way of getting in touch with her. I didn't know where she was. Just six months ago, her ex-boyfriend called me. And they hated each other now, evidently. But, he had the painting. He was in desperate straights, because he had some fatal disease and he had to have an operation immediately, and needed thousands of dollars. So, he was desperate to sell this painting, and so I bought it from him. I was very happy to get it back. It's surprising. The date on the back is 1956, so I did it probably at 9 Mission Street. I might have done it at 706 Wisconsin Street on Poterero Hill, where I moved about that time. What's so striking is, that it's the same way I paint today. It's like I haven't progressed a bit. In fact, it's the best painting in the show, which shows I've gone backwards. (laughs)

What I find interesting about it—it's a figure with arms upraised—very reminiscent of the City Lights logo.
No, it has nothing to do with that. I didn't adopt the City Lights logo till the late seventies. The City Lights logo was taken from the Koch "Book of Signs," published by Dover Books. And these are medieval house marks. So, the City Lights logo is a medieval house mark without any specific meaning. That was long after the image I painted in the 1956 painting. It's a coincidence they happen to be similar.

And the name City Lights, was that was Peter Martin's doing?
That was the name of his magazine. We got permission from the Chaplin Estate to use it as the name of the bookstore. We got a telegram from the Chaplin Estate and I've been tracing down that telegram ever since. I know where it disappeared, but the trail sort of ended, and I've never gotten a copy of it. It was an old Western Union telegram.

It's not at the City Lights bookstore archive at the Bancroft?
No. It isn't.

You were fond of Chaplin.
Just as everyone else was. Except the House Un-American Activities Committee.

You've had a lot of success with your painting in Italy recently.
The first big painting show I had in Italy was in 1996 at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome. The catalog for it is bilingual. The photography is not nearly as good as the recent catalog I gave you (Lawrence Ferlinghetti, "60 Years of Painting," Museo do Roma in Trastevere, Rome, Italy, 2010). This is a very small painting [referring to a reproduction in the catalog]. It's almost full size. It's owned by Rita Bottoms, who used to be the Curator of Special Collections at UC Santa Cruz, and I gave it to her many years ago. It's called, "Portrait of Rosa." That was a big show. The Museum looks like the Metropolitan in New York with a huge facade with banners in front when I was there —"Ferlinghetti." It was really a sensation to see them.

Your archivist Diane Roby told me that whenever you go to Italy, the television crews follow you around in the streets.
Well, I get full pages in all the dailies there. I have a show up in Naples right now, and there are full pages in *La Repubblica*. In this country—nothing.

Kenneth Baker [San Francisco Chronicle art critic] still isn't writing about you.
(laughs). Too bad he can't read Italian.

A backer of yours in Italy was Francisco Conz, who passed away a couple of years ago and was associated with the Fluxus artists.
That's right. He really promoted the Fluxus movement in the 1970s and 80s, but when I came along, when I first met him in the 1990s, he adopted me as a Fluxisti and gave me a couple of shows in Verona. One in Verona. One in Florence. He drank too much and fell off a railroad station platform. He was in a wheelchair the last few years of his life.

Did you know any of the other Fluxus artists, like Dick Higgins, who ran Something Else Press?
I knew about Dick Higgins, although I never met him. They were like an earlier generation of Fluxus artists.

They started in the early '60s with George Macunias.
I knew all the names, but I never met any of them. I didn't see them as very radical.

No?
Not from a political point of view, or as visual artists. They were original but not radical.

Who are some of the contemporary artists that you do appreciate?
Oh well, in Italy Francesco Clemente is one of my favorites. There is a group called the Trans-Avantgarde.

There was a famous Italian critic who was the champion of the group.
He has a main essay in my catalog.

He called you the Father of the Italian Trans-Avantgarde.
That's right—the Godfather.

He's an important critic. I think he was the organizer of the Venice Biennale for many years. Susan Landauer has written about you as well.
Yes. She wrote the introduction to my last George Krevesky show.

I believe she and her husband Carl had an essay about you for your 2010 Italian exhibition in Rome [Paint the Sunlight and All the Dark Corners too: The Art of Lawrence Ferlinghetti]. Did you ever go to shows at The Six gallery?
The Six Gallery was associated with the painters of the American Beats. Bob Levine was a painter. . . .

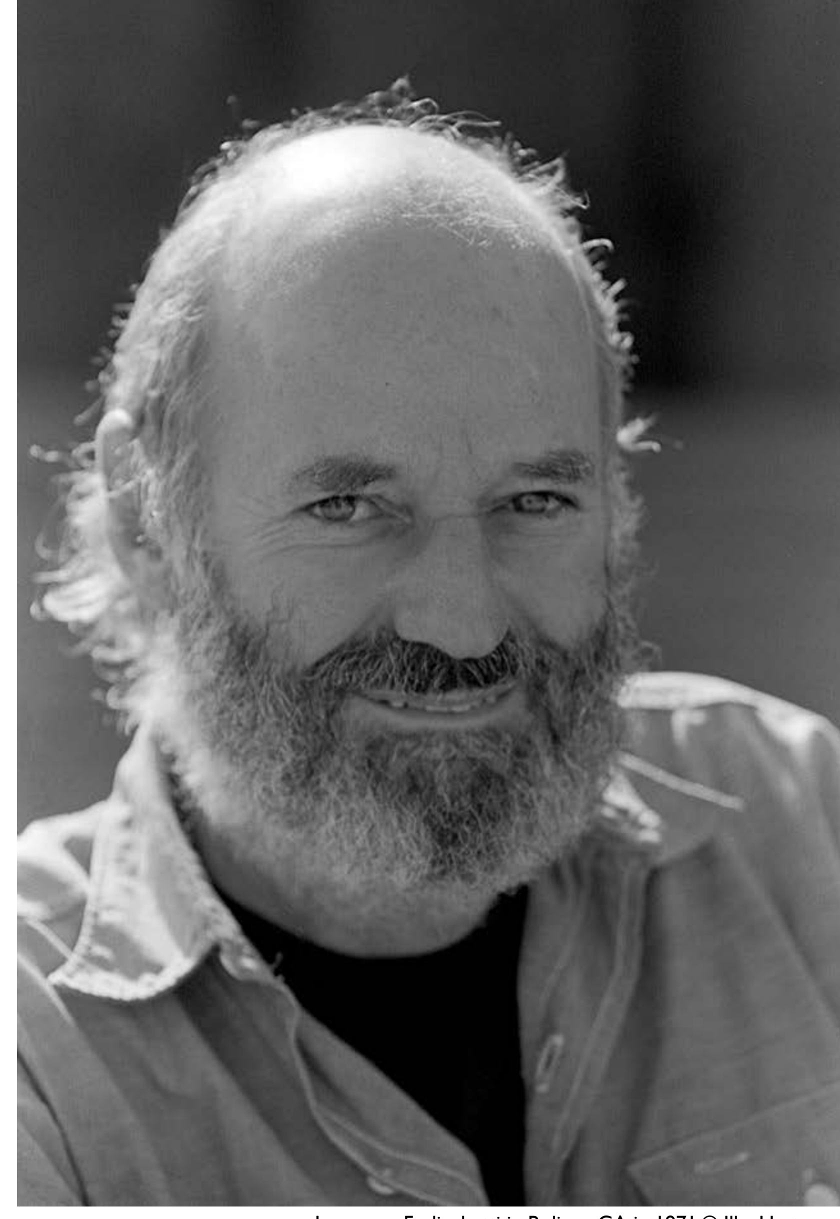
They were basically students at the California School of Fine Arts, Wally Hedrick, Deborah Remington, De Feo. . . .
Michael McClure was friends with many of them.

Did you know Wallace Berman?
I knew him, I mean I met him. He was a good friend of McClure. But the Six Gallery was associated with the Beats, not with the painters in the Bay Area Figurative group like Diebenkorn, Elmer Bischoff and David Parks. There was quite a divide there. The San Francisco figurative painters were alkies. They drank and had great parties and jam sessions and drank. Whereas, down the street, twelve blocks away, were the Beats smoking dope and not drinking alcohol, mostly, except someone like [Gregory] Corso did both. But, there was no communication between these two groups. I mean, there was a revolution in poetry going on in one end of North Beach, and a revolution in painting going on at the other end near the Art Institute, and there was no communication between the two. It's like dopers and alkies, and The Six Gallery is more or less associated with the Beats, like Bruce Conner, who came slightly later. His basic vision, like the famous pieces he has at the San Francisco Museum of [Modern] Art are very definitely LSD visions. Like cobwebs and everything—definitely a dope vision, not from drinking alcohol.

They had their own galleries like Batman Gallery.
There was a generation gap, too. The figurative painters were mostly veterans of the Second World War and the Ginsburg and Kerouac generation was ten years behind that. When I was in Paris, some of those painters were there too, but I never saw any of them.

What about Sam Francis and Claire Falkenstein, who were there about that time?
I didn't know her. They didn't make any contact with French culture as far as I could tell. There was a seminar at the Legion of Honor about fifteen years ago where they had all the painters there who had been in Paris. I don't know what they were doing there. They didn't seem to know anything about what was happening in the Paris art scene.

(End Part Two)



Lawrence Ferlinghetti in Bolinas, CA in 1971.© Ilka Hartmann.

". . . There was a revolution in poetry going on in one end of North Beach, and a revolution in painting going on at the other end near the Art Institute, and there was no communication between the two. It's like dopers and alkies, and The Six Gallery is more or less associated with the Beats, like Bruce Conner, who came slightly later. His basic vision, like the famous pieces he has at the San Francisco Museum of [Modern] Art are very definitely LSD visions. Like cobwebs and everything—definitely a dope vision, not from drinking alcohol."

PLAN DU CENTRE DE PARIS
À VOL D'OISEAU

Flying away to Milan
I look down and back at Paris
(as in that famous map
seen by a bird in flight)
and think of Allen yesterday
saying it was all 'solidified nostalgia'—
houses monuments and streets
bare trees and parks down there
fixed in time (and the time is forever)
exactly where we left them years ago
our bodies passed through them
as through a transparent scrim
Early versions of ourselves
transmuted now
two decades later
And was that myself
standing on that far corner
Place Saint-Sulpice
first arrived in Paris—
seabag slung—
(fancying myself some seaborn Conrad
carrying Coleridge's albatross?)
or was that myself walking
through the Tuileries in early snow?
And here Danton met Robespierre
(both later to descend into earth
through that Metro entrance)
And here Sartre lived with Beauvoir
above the Café Bonaparte
before death
shook them apart
(The myth goes on)
And here in the Luxembourg
I sat by a balustrade
in a rented iron chair
reading Proust and Apollinaire
while the day turned to dust
and a nightwood sprang up around me
Solidified nostalgia indeed—
the smell of Gaulois still hangs in the air
And in the cemetery of Pere Lachaise
the great stone tombs still yawn
with the solidified ennui of eternity
And, yes, here I knew such aloneness—
at the corner of another street
the dawn yawned
in some trauma I was living in back then
Paris itself a floating dream
a great stone ship adrift
made of dusk and dawn and darkness—
dumb trauma
Of youth!
such wastes of love
such wordless hungers
Mute neuroses
yearnings & gropings
fantasies & flame-outs
such endless walking
through the bent streets
such fumbling art
(models drawn with blindfolds)
such highs and sweet inebriations—
I salute you now
dumb inchoate youth
(callow stripling!)
and offer you my left hand
with a slight derisive laugh

By Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Previously published in: *EUROPEAN POEMS AND TRANSITIONS*, Over All the Obscene Boundaries. (New Directions, 1980). Courtesy of City Lights.

INVISIBLE PAINTING & SCULPTURE

By TOM MARIONI

April 24 - June 1, 1969
Richmond Art Center, Richmond, California

Invisible Painting and Sculpture show at Richmond Art Center 1969, curator Tom Marioni.
[*Left to right*] George Neubert & Wally Hedrick, *Vietnam* series all black painting.

Since World War II the creation and evolution of movements in the arts have accelerated to such a degree that often it is difficult to trace their development. The public enjoys a seemingly spontaneous show of wild innovation. This invisible show is part of a tradition that's first product may have been a commissioned sculpture for an Egyptian tomb. The show isn't literally invisible, nor is that the intent. The works are all complete. It would be difficult to justify, much less install, completely unembodied concepts, but more to the point, the quality of invisibleness is dependent on reality. The works of the artists in this exhibition basically fall into two categories: the negation of formal art, or a new Dada, and the process of reduction, or Minimal Art, leading to partially invisible objects or the absence of an object completely.

Don Potts stated in a recent interview with Grace Glueck, "I got tired of doing one little piece of art after another. I know what art is—it's the development of a man. An artist is not producing things, he's evolving himself. I'm doing this not as art, but to live. I know my dharma and it's to build." —*New York Times,* March 30, 1969.

When Claes Oldenburg was commissioned by the city of New York to do sculpture in the parks, he hired two union gravediggers to dig regulation graves to expose the underside of the ground to sunlight. He went beyond Andy Warhol's *Painting is Dead* show, where Warhol threw silver pillows out the window. Oldenburg was saying, "Objects as art are dead."

Christo has been wrapping things, even an entire museum, sealing them off completely.

Harold Paris ceremoniously sealed in a black Plexiglas box a sculpture and marked it: "This sculpture was permanently sealed within this box on March 11, 1969, 8:16 p.m."

William Wiley has burned old sculptures and saved the ashes in a glass jar; he has tied up canvasses, painted side in, and exhibited them on pedestals as sculpture.

Bruce Nauman has made a sculpture with a mirrored bottom that lies flat on the floor, mirror side down.

Robert Barry, who is doing literally invisible work, stated:

It's a logical continuation of my earlier work. A few years ago, when I was painting, it seemed that paintings would look one way in one place and because of lighting and other things would look different in another place. Although it was the same object, it was another work of art. Then I made paintings which incorporated, as part of their design, the wall in which they hung. I finally gave up painting for the wire installations. Each wire installation was made to suit the place in which it was installed. It cannot be moved without being destroyed. Color became arbitrary. I started using thin transparent nylon monofilament. Eventually, the wire became so thin that it was virtually invisible. This led to my use of a material which is invisible or at least not perceivable in the traditional way. Although this poses problems, it also presents endless possibilities. It was at this time that I discarded the idea that art is necessarily something to look at.

Certainly, it is not unusual to hear artists say today that they do not wish to make objects anymore. Duchamp decided this for himself many years ago. He stopped producing artworks and devoted his time to playing chess. Perhaps it's important that a negation of objects or things, mediums or materials, is a contemporary reality.

Negation isn't without its opposites, like a trend towards visibility by employing technology as in light sculpture. The Dan Flavin exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, December to January 1967-1968, was entitled *Pink and Gold* and consisted of fifty-four eight-foot fluorescent tube lights situated at five-foot intervals throughout the museum's first-floor galleries. The visitor to this exhibition found himself in an immaculate light-filled continuum that reflected in the polished floors of the museum and extended into a visual sensation of infinity.

Another loosely connected group is concerned with spatial relationships, both in volume and in time. Often these works are returned to a new kind of abstract expressionism. Many are only works of art as long as they are on exhibition. Carl Andre's sculptures of 144 pieces of zinc, arranged like tiles in a floor, would never have been seen as a sculptural expression if it had been shown anywhere other than on the floor of an art gallery. Robert Morris's felt Anti-Forms can never be seen again as they were shown, because of their formlessness.

George Neubert's piece in this show points out space by scribing the edges of two rectangular volumes. Because they are on an architectural scale, the viewer becomes involved physically with the empty space between the volumes as he walks in and around the work. Les Levine, on January 20, 1969, placed three hundred plastic disposable curves in a vacant lot on Wooster Street in New York City. Each day for the next thirty days, ten of the curves disappeared, never to be seen again. At the end of the thirtieth day a vacant lot appeared.

Also in this exhibition, David R. Smith, a poet, has broken the word *vacant* into three pieces — VA CA NT—and separated them so attention is focused on the spaces between. Warner Jepson, who feels that he paints with sound, has composed electronic music that includes prolonged periods of silence that become positive spaces within the composition. This relates to Edward Albee's play *The Box*, which uses the space on the stage as a focal point while a voice offstage narrates seemingly unrelated ideas. Larry Bell is doing sculptures that are glass boxes more about painting than sculpture —they deal with illusion and color. Other artists through an invisible form are making a social comment. Many artists are refusing to show in Chicago because of the police violence at the Democratic Convention. In this exhibition, Wally Hedrick's all-black painting is part of a series entitled *Vietnam*.

Naturally, an invisible show presents problems. One wonders if its logical conclusion will be a totally conceptual art—where work is discussed and planned but never realized. It seems, however, that the trend is an affirmative one, if radical. Obviously, many artists dealing with invisible ideas minimize the value of museums and galleries, just as they do the value of objects or things.

In Michael Kirby's anthology *Happenings*, New York 1966, Alan Kaprow states, "At that point my disagreement with gallery space began. I thought how much better it would be if you could just go out of doors and float an environment into the rest of your life, so that such a caesura would not be there." Perhaps the caesura Kaprow is talking about is a separation or a rhythmic jolt between art and life, or between art and art. It is obvious that all the arts are merging and overlapping.

"What is the nature of art when it reaches the sea?" —John Cage.

The artists in the exhibition were Larry Bell, Jerry Ballaine, Bruce Conner, Albert Fisher, Lloyd Hamrol, Wally Hedrick, Warner Jepson, Harry Lum, George Neubert, Harold Paris, Michelangelo Pistoletto, David R. Smith, and William T. Wiley. Each artist had two pages in the catalog. The curator, Thomas Marioni, added an invisible work of his own: two blank pages in the catalog in the spot where "M" would have occurred.

ON POINT 2.01 // Art Fairs and Mall Boppers

By MARK VAN PROYEN

Even though I was not quite ten years of age, I was there. The Topanga Shopping Mall opened in the spring of 1964, billing itself as the West Coast's first enclosed shopping mall. Very soon thereafter, others appeared, each a harbinger of previously unimagined options for the exercise of consumer choice. These malls were not merely extensions of the older department stores with which they competed; instead, they were something entirely different, because department stores all supported centralized security to guard product lines that were chosen to not compete with one another. The early suburban malls turned this model upside down, setting each store contained therein in implicit competition with each other, even if as they knew all too well that they collectively benefited from the competition. But the spaces between those stores were always somebody else's problem, and from within these interstitial netherzones existing between the many different flavors of corporate consummerdom came a new social formation. Enter the Mall Boppers, they being media-manufactured teenagers who put each other on consumable display as potential consumers of the pseudo-new.

Decades later, the Mall Boppers have grown up and set themselves up with Facebook pages and booths at art fairs, but their prevailing ethos has undergone little change. In fact, it now flourishes as *the* single indisputable master-narrative of the post-Warholian zeitgeist. Its chief metaphysical tenant was and is that looking good was and still is the path to fabulousness, in effect stating that actually knowing anything was and is at best a counterproductive waste of valuable time, valuable because the youth that looking good both requires and panders to is in itself but a fleeting moment of graceless grace. In the early years of mall bopperdom, the alternative position was fraught with peril, because that required thinking about "ideology an' stuff" in the fleeting moments between the percussive bursting of gum bubbles, said stuff being (at the time) things like the Vietnam War, the Watergate scandal, up-spiking fuel prices and the utopian possibilities of the kind of "advanced" art that was supported by government funding and educational bureaucracy.

When the Cold War unwound about two decades ago, "ideology" and its kindred "stuff" unwound with it, leaving behind a vast product line of other kinds of stuff that middle-aged Mall Boppers are often inclined to mistake for art. Why not? It certainly spoke and continues to speak to their experience, limited though it may be. Poor fools. Little do they know that for anything to be called art, it needs to represent something besides itself and the sheer buyablilty that might appertain at any specific moment in time. And that something had better be a big idea of some kind, or at least something that can pass itself off as a big idea in the context of whatever momentary confusion that surrounds any given moment. It is more than difficult to see how Mall Bopperdom and big ideas might go hand-in-hand, or even hand-in-glove. But judging from the advanced publicity coming at us from the Silicon Valley Contemporary Fine Art Fair, running from April 10-13 (produced by the Hamptons Expo Group in conjunction with "Team San Jose"--whatever that is-- at the San Jose Convention Center), the digerati and the art world at last have found the right time and place to copulate.

God knows they have been trying for years. Ever since the go-go 1990s, the dumb money has been fantasizing about how the giant piles of cyber-money that were being made in the South Bay would somehow translate into a golden age of arts patronage for all of northern California. At that time, institutions went out of their way to show how "hip" they were by inaugurating "media arts" programs that were tossed into the marketing mix like brightly colored fishing lures into a trout stream. Meanwhile, those members of the digerati, who at that time were gentrifying the Mission, decided that graffiti was cool. From where they stood, the entire art world was one giant valorization of quaint incompetence, so why not give a chance to the kids who never had a chance while ingratiating themselves with their new neighbors in the bargain? Enough said about that. Anyway, the trout didn't bite and it took *Uber*-Mall Bopper Jeffrey Deitch decades to make graffiti cool (or uncool if your hipster pretenses are up-to-date), and oh, yes—there were two giant recessions (2000-2003 and 2008-2010).

Jeffrey Deitch and the Hilton sisters. Courtesy of the Internet.

To date, the best effort in marrying Silicon Valley to the Art World has been made by the ZERO1 Biennial, headed into its 7th iteration this fall. After several fits and starts, and some internal struggles that resolved into new leadership, the ZERO1 has managed to establish itself as a serious contender for leadership in the world of international biennial exhibitions of media art. But where is the fun in that? That's the question that was being asked in Silicon Valley, because from a corporate marketing perspective that seeks to encourage all that it can control and discourage all that it cannot, such seriousness is a sign of failure because it admits to standards of excellence outside of itself. Real fun is when you can hold the world accountable to your own standards, and make it come begging because you are the one that has the magic that will create the next-big-thing-that-will-change-everything-for-the-next-five-minutes. And there is the chief reason why the purveyors of high technology have been and will continue to be reluctant to support Art World institutions and the art fostered by them. It's not because said world is a rigged game (although it is that); it's that it's a game too difficult to re-rig in the radically neo-liberal image of those purveyors. The chief cause of that difficulty is the fact that said institutions still see themselves as being responsible to history, and still harbor a concern about the way that they will be judged by it. Mall Boppers will never understand why this is so, and never feel the shame that should be part-and-parcel of this failure.

Thus we come to the central problem that vexes contemporary art. Assuming that works of art need to represent and/or embody something besides themselves to be works of art; and assuming that qualitative value can be assigned to the ways that these acts of representation and/or embodiment are actualized; and assuming that Mall Bopperdom is an identifiable zeitgeist with a more-or-less coherent value system; then does not Mall Bopper Art Fair art succeed in *being* art because the something outside of its own aspirational fabulousness *is* the Mall Bopper zeitgeist reflected by it? With fearful trepidation, I must say that the answer is yes. Of course, I qualify my affirmation by saying that said art is not my kind of art, and that it is much less interesting than other kinds of art, but I am not the one writing the checks or hiring curators to flatter and substantiate my pretenses.

And so, what of the Mall Bopper Zeitgiest and its artistic reflections? Don't worry, I had better things to do than drive down to San Jose to check out the sixty galleries who are listed as exhibitors at the Silicon Valley Contemporary Art Fair—after all, I once wrote a dismissive review of Art Basel in Basel (not its cocaine-addled doppelganger in Miami), so that makes me the been-there-and-done-that king shit as far as art fairs are concerned. My take on the question draws on a much longer arc of experience that is framed by a fairly acute sense of - dare I say it? - history. Two paragraphs back I used the word "neoliberal," and now I return to it. It fell into favor right around the time that the old Soviet Union collapsed, signaling an unwinding of the Cold War, and all of the "ideology an' stuff" that was, or seemed to be, a part of it. Prior to that moment, one could simply say "Capitalism," and people would know what you meant. But now, you have to say neo-liberalism because "socialism" has been discredited as mere state capitalism, which it was, but that's another story.

I keep coming back to this moment of unwinding because it still casts a long shadow, but I also am fully aware that such shadows are only visible to those who are not blind, or otherwise hypnotized into states of sightless short-sightedness. Yet, as paradox would have it, this statement admits to another kind of blindness: the one of a rose-colored hindsight that puts "ideology an' stuff" on a pedestal that it may not deserve. Lately, I have been reading texts that make a rather indiscriminant and unqualified use of terms like "the sublime," "conceptual," or "utopian," and it is time to call this practice out. Not because I want to throw these terms into some dustbin of irrelevance (which no doubt would make today's art fair Mall Boppers all too happy), but because I want to make sure that they can still mean something more specific than being the sound effects of presumed importance. In other words, I think that their continued use requires careful qualification, if only to save them from being turned into mere incantations in service to tenure applications. It may be too late.

And if it is too late, why worry? Herein lies the Mall Bopper question that grabs us all by the scruff of the neck. The reason is disarmingly simple: those words and many others like them point us to places where art can be understood to be something more than "stuff." It may be cheap stuff or expensive stuff, but if all it is is stuff, then the techie Mall Boppers have won, because in that circumstance, the stuff that *they* make and sell inherits the job of organizing experience, while art is merely relegated to looking good at the Mall.

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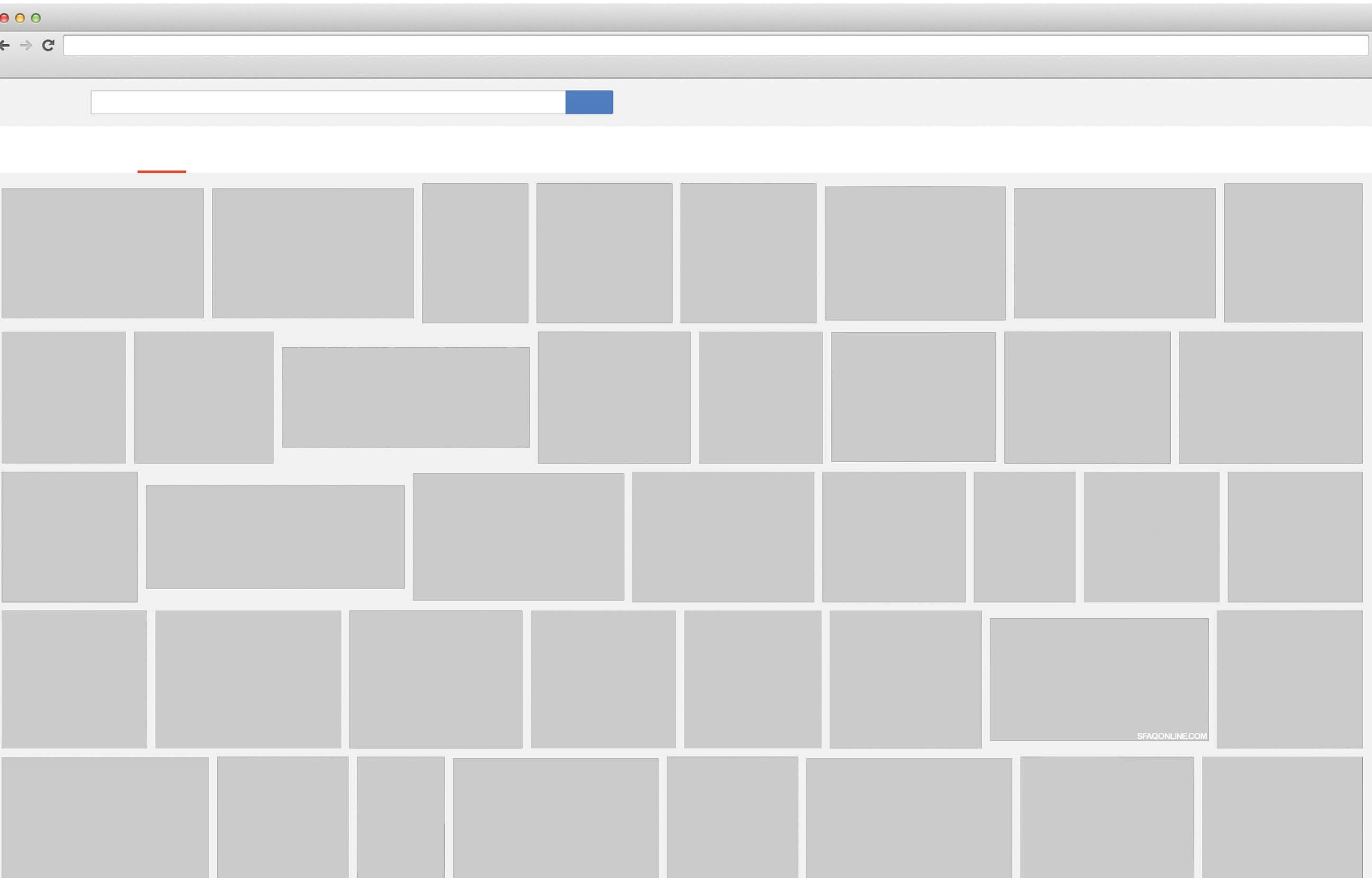
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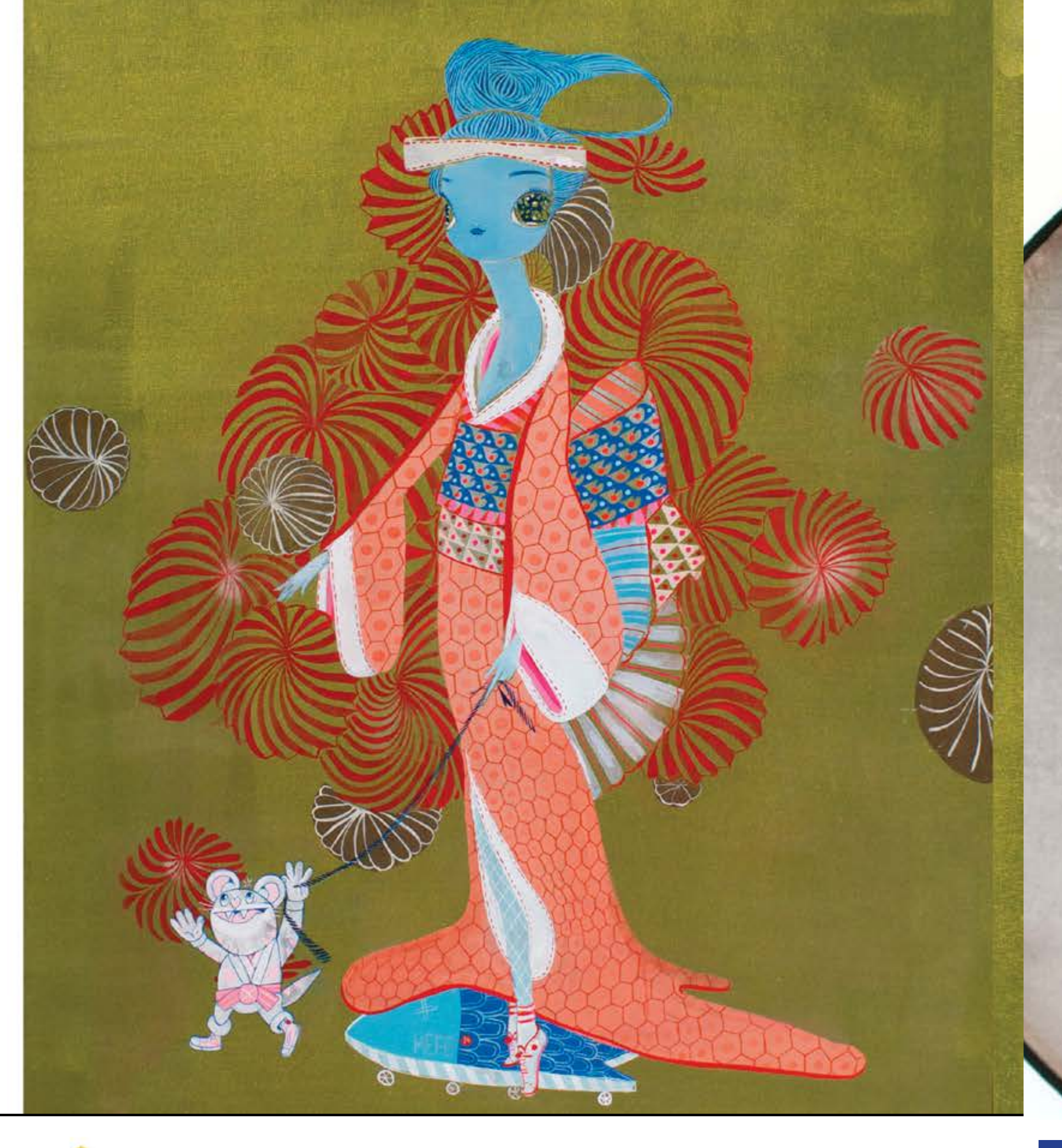

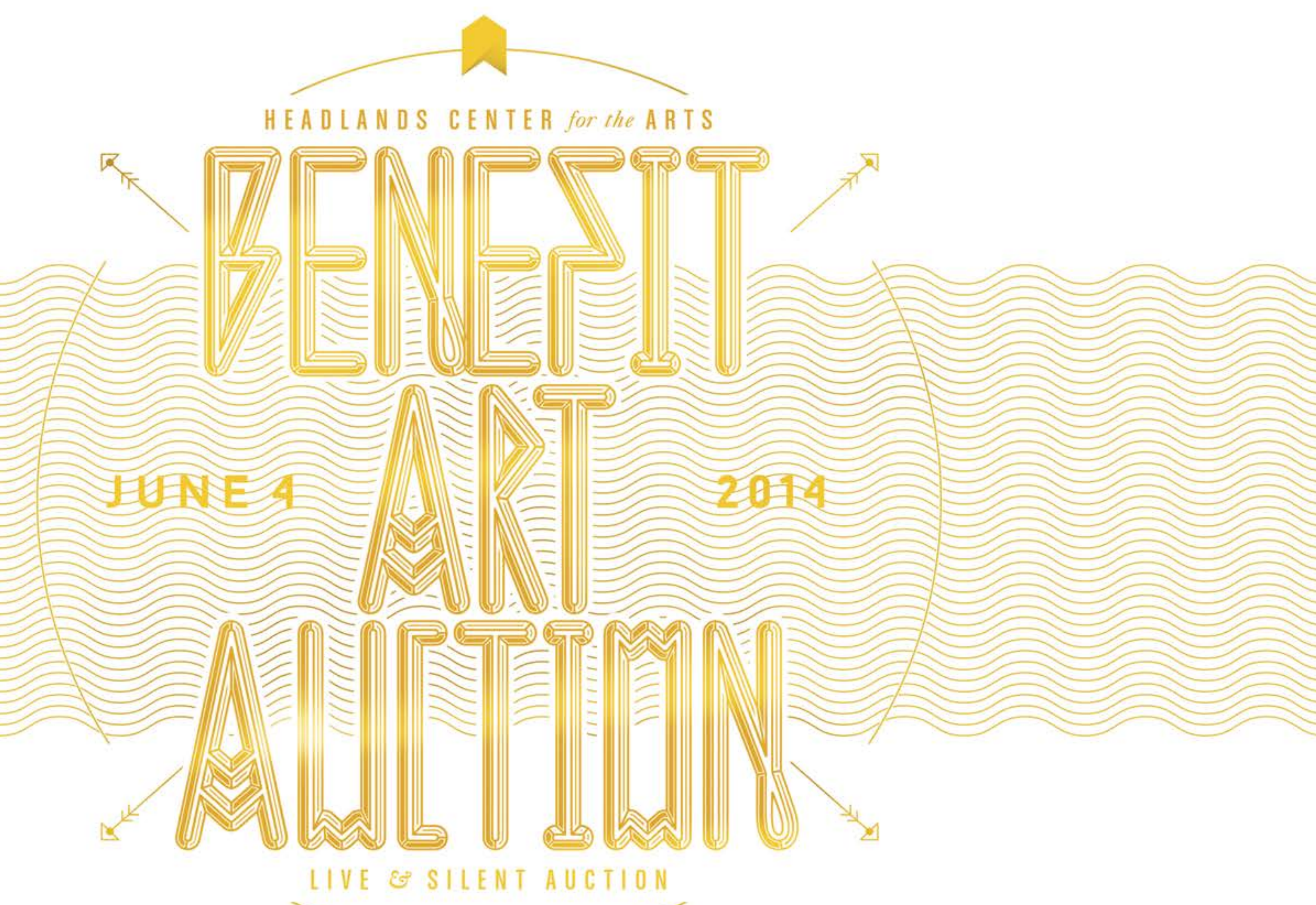

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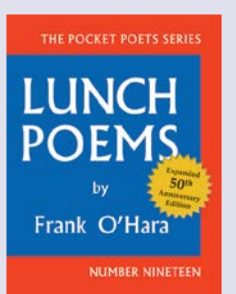

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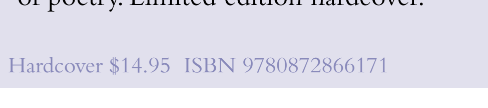

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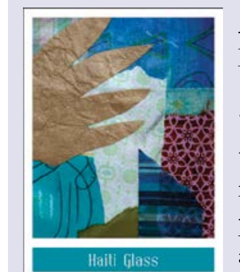

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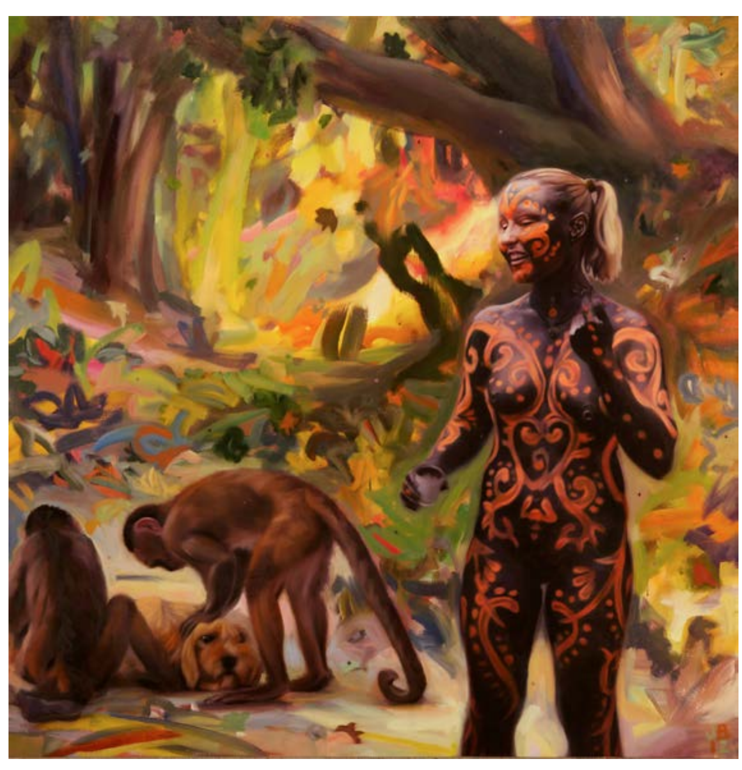

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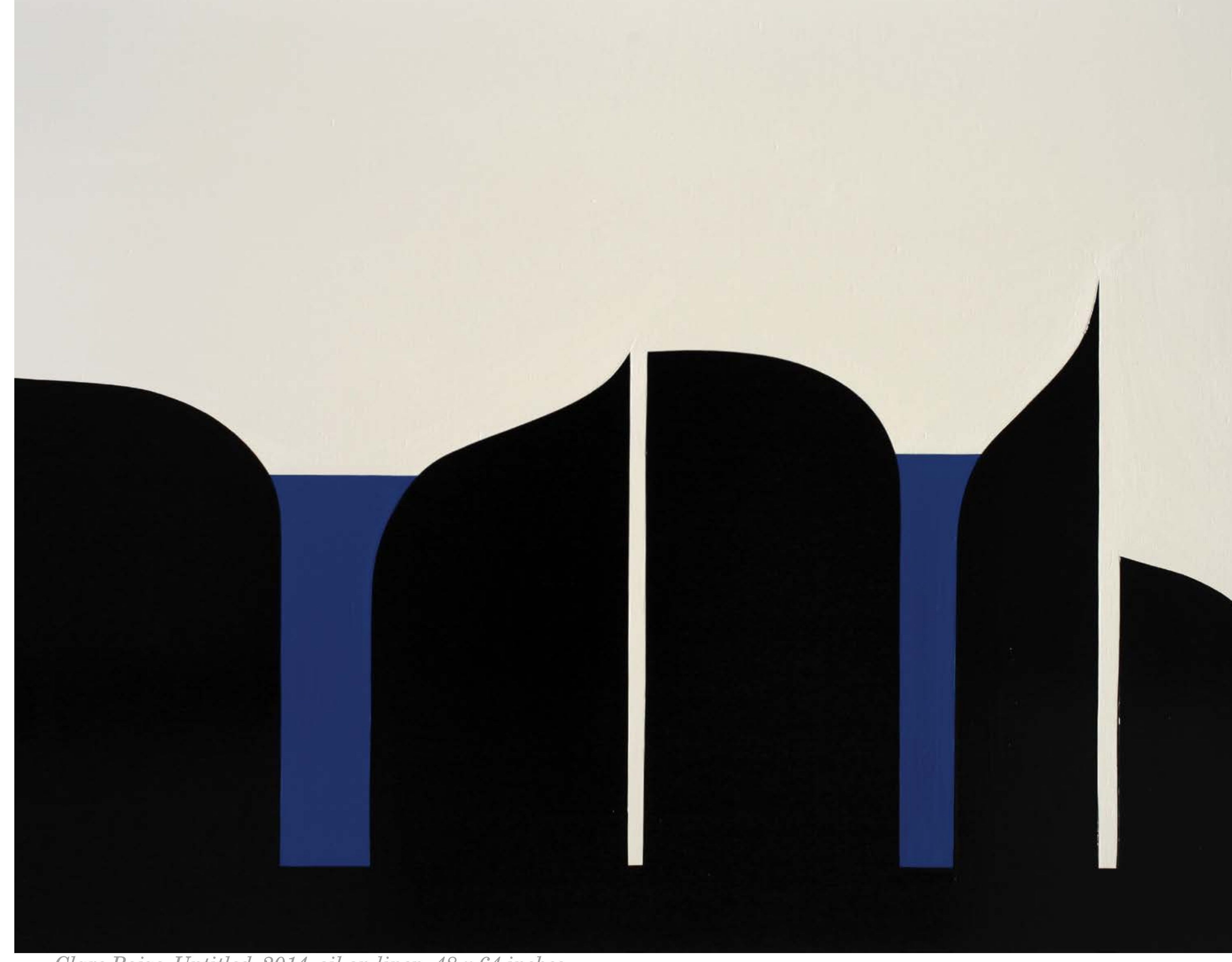

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