Fall 10-1-2008

Profile, Fall 2008

Columbia College Chicago

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COLLEGE CHICAGO

iam
Interactive Arts + Media

Profile

Fall_2008

To Estonia and back
Chicago video art in the Baltic

Please join Andrew Hicks as he reports on the experience of showing the work of 14 Chicago video artists in Estonia. Known as CHICAGO WORKS, this collection of videos features the efforts of 4 members of the IAM faculty: Janell Baxter, Niki Nolin, Emily Kuehn, and Andrew Hicks

CHICAGO WORKS is part of Fideofest, an art festival in Tallin, Estonia. Fideofest is organized by Non Grata, an Estonian artist collective. NG has a 10 year history of experimental art production and international exhibition. They host 3 international festivals each year. NG supports artist residencies and art education programming year round.

http://www.nongrata.ee
http://www.nongrata.ee/film/film.html

FROM CHICAGO

TO CHICAGO

November 11th at 5PM
room 405
623 S. Wabash

iam
Interactive Arts + Media

Over the course of one hour CHICAGO WORKS presents the research of 14 video makers into concepts surrounding the (virtual) body. Their findings range from the highly symbolic to the plainly overt, providing a unique insight into the culture of the city and the bodies inhabiting it.

CHICAGO WORKS | CW OCTOBER ESTONIA
EXPLORING THE VIRTUAL BODY

www.andrewhicks.net/chicagoworks

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student profile/

▶▶ Shaun_Crittenden

Artist Portfolio: www.shauncrittenden.com
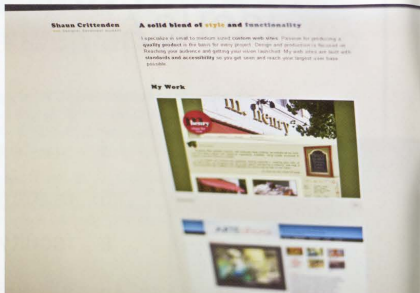
From time to time I like to plan: Plan what will take place later this day, this week and sometimes the rest of my life. Plan, plan and plan some more. However, sometimes the surest of plans are not the most fulfilling.

Until my senior year of high school, I was lollygagging my way to a state university, probably to major in accounting. If you told me I would end up living in Chicago and designing my way to a degree in the Interactive Arts and Media department, I would have had difficulty believing it. But, in those final months when life-changing decisions are made, my plan took a sharp curve and went towards Columbia instead.

I have always been drawn to the aesthetics of things   how everything looked. Composition and uniqueness   or lack thereof   would draw my interest. Growing up, I would study my grandma's masterful doodles, trying to absorb some of her style. I have also always been curious as to how things worked. "How Things Work" happened to be the title of one of my favorite childhood books. It was filled with brilliant illustrations of levers and pulleys and tiny cavemen and woolly mammoths making these gadgets function. This eventually drove me to pry apart many household electronics and toys just to see what was inside. My mother loved that new hobby. It was only natural for me to aim for a field that incorporated both of these interests: Aesthetics and functionality. Good Web design truly requires having a passionate interest in both of these.

Chicago has a plethora of opportunities and is also close enough for me to go home and visit the family. Columbia has provided a forum for the development of my skills and passions. I have made new friends and even a few contacts. Recently, I have achieved some success with the re-design of my portfolio. A number of online Web galleries have featured my site. It is great to see the traffic spike and get compliments or critiques from other designers. It is very exciting to enter my senior year and still see so much yet to learn. The Web evolves so quickly that it takes passion to keep up with it, and I look forward to the chase. I am eager to get out in the field to experience it all, while learning everything I can and to be a part of what is developing.
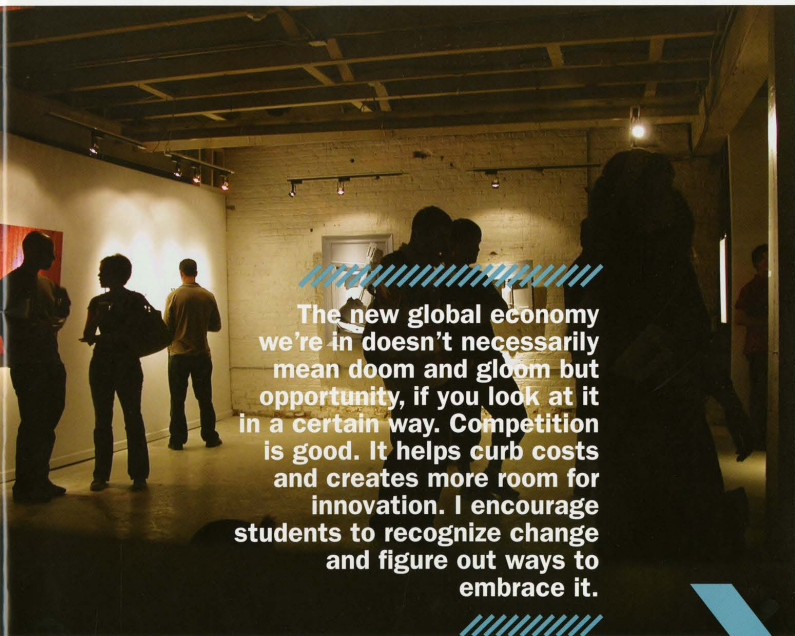
All of this feels more right than the first plan ever did. ⚡

alumni profile/

▶▶ Kelly_Anderson, 2006/IAM Alum

Artist Portfolio: www.thisiskell.com

The new global economy we're in doesn't necessarily mean doom and gloom but opportunity, if you look at it in a certain way. Competition is good. It helps curb costs and creates more room for innovation. I encourage students to recognize change and figure out ways to embrace it.

Gallery Opening at the Ante:room

Overlooking ruins in Hampi, India

So, tell me a little bit about yourself.

Well, I am tall-ish, ride a bike and prefer not to wear shoes during the summer time. I originally came to Columbia to study art, but funny enough, I came out a programmer. Even though I chose become a software engineer, I always strive to maintain a sense of balance between technology and art.

What do you do for work, and how did you get there?

I recently joined Mediafly, a really solid company here in Chicago that deals in Podcast distribution. It's exciting work, but challenging at the same time. I'm currently working on redesigning their websites new mediaw player, and by the time you read this, it may be live! Look for it at: www.mediafly.com. The tough part though, as with any job in this industry, is being open and willing to learn an entire, new set of technologies. Right now, my desk is littered with both fat and skinny books on ASP, NET, CSS and JavaScript.

Previous to Mediafly, I worked with Babaroga, a top-notch development company specializing in mobile video games. I used primarily BREW and J2ME and was directly involved in developing several, high-profile games for Electronic Arts, including SimCity, Pictionary and Spore. I had a couple of amazing mentors at Babaroga and owe them a lot of credit for molding me into the programmer I am today.

How did Columbia help prepare you for your career?

I'll be the first to admit that I lacked a bit of direction when I first started school. I bounced from college to college and department to department before finding my muse in the Interactive Arts and Media program. It was there that I found teachers who inspired me, classes that challenged me and peers who supported me. Columbia reinforced my independent nature, encouraged me to create my own opportunities and instilled a desire to "Create Change."

I would argue though, my experiences outside of school made just as much of a difference. During the same period I attended Columbia, I was also very involved in the art community. I, along with a group of like-minded artists frustrated with the gallery-scene establishment, decided to open our own space: the Ante:room. Together, we curated dozens of shows and opened the doors for artists to experiment, take risks and receive immediate feedback on their work. From this, I realized a new level of the do-it-yourself mentality.
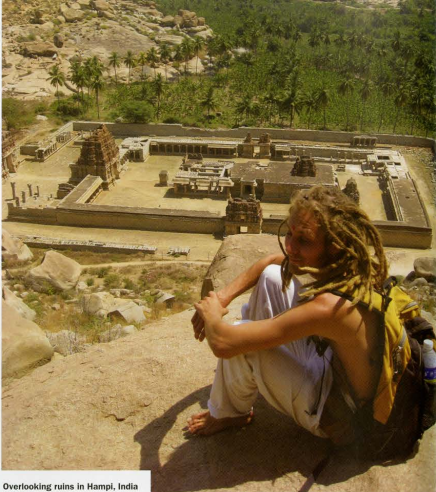
Any thoughts on the future of the tech industry?

I recently returned from living, traveling and studying in India. I became curious about the rise of modern India and the impacts it has on the tech industry so I decided to experience it first-hand. I bounced all across the country for five months but I spent the majority of my time in Bangalore, the "Silicon Valley" of the East.

It blew my mind to realize how many American companies were actually out there, off-shoring their work. Within my first two weeks in Bangalore, I already made contacts with employees at Google, IBM, Adobe and Motorola. I became acquainted with a couple of these guys very well. They were all every talented, well educated, yet getting paid a fifth of the salary of an American worker in the same job. This may sound like slave labor, but the truth is their cost of living is so low that — relatively speaking — they actually enjoy a much higher standard of living.

Mind you, much of the work being farmed out to India tends to be grunt work such as monotonous stuff that nobody here seems to wants to do. But, with the economy heading in the direction that it is, I would not be surprised to see more and more in-demand jobs heading their way. This experience was a real eye-opener. For anyone who has not yet read, "The World is Flat" by Thomas Friedman, I would highly recommend it.

Any advice for current or prospective students?

Absolutely. Sure, I could repeat and stress the same, old clichés like "Get Involved," "Network," or "Find an Internship!" And while these are all excellent pieces of advice, I would encourage students to look even further. Look outside your school, your city and especially your country.

Change is inevitable. There is no sense fighting it. The worst thing you can do is to ignore it. The new global economy we're in doesn't necessarily mean doom and gloom but opportunity, if you look at it in a certain way. Competition is good. It helps curb costs and creates more room for innovation. I encourage students to recognize change and figure out ways to embrace it.

This is where I feel my Columbia education has really paid off. I believe the future is bright for the idea-people out there: Those who can think outside of the box. I also see major opportunities for anyone who can cross cultural barriers between America, India, China, and even Russia and Brazil. These countries are becoming more and more interdependent, especially in the tech sector, and anyone willing to experience working abroad should be in huge demand.

Plans for the future?

Ha! I can hardly tell you what I will be doing two weeks from now, not to mention two years. Yet, I always aim to guide myself in a forward-moving direction. These days I live by the mantra that things always work out, generally in ways you least expect them to. So, I guess I plan to continue keeping my mind and eyes wide open and to take full advantage of each opportunity as it comes.

A number of thanks to those who made my IAM experience everything that it was: Tracy Taylor, Laura Watral, Andreja Djokovic and, of course, the late, great Chris Sorg and Frank Christ. Plus a shout out to John, Jenn, Joe, Tzu Sing and all of you from the Manifest crew! ⚡

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"Well if you are the artists, then where are the paintings?"

Read www.thisiskell.com

faculty profile/

▶▶ Theresa_Devine   💼 Artist Portfolio: www.theresadevine.com

by Steven Beach

Art is an object, idea or experience that transcends and becomes more than the sum of its parts. This is a phrase that Theresa Devine lives by and, a long time from now, will die by. This is her definition of art. In her classroom this definition is the core of her teaching. Through lectures, PowerPoint presentations, various videos on the web and in-class assignments, Theresa encourages and pushes her students to develop unique, individual, artistic identities. Not only does she challenge and inspire her students, but teaches them to not merely entertain the masses, but to add value to our society through their work. As a former student of Theresa's I could have written pages about the things I've learned and observed in her classroom throughout the semester. But this isn't my story to tell — it's hers.

HN163500 Feb 06,2007
30" x 42" digital print
from the *Not in my Neighborhood* series

What is your educational background?

In May of 1991, I achieved a Bachelor of Fine Arts with an emphasis in Painting and Printmaking from Texas A&M at Corpus Christi. In May of 1994, I also earned a Master of Fine Arts in Painting from the University of Houston. In April of 2002, I fulfilled the requirements for a Microsoft Certified Solution Developer designation.

Where were you before you started teaching at Columbia?

I have been making my living as a programmer for 10 years with various corporate IT teams. Before that, I taught art at Junior High and K-8 schools in Houston. I was also a teaching fellow during graduate school where I taught color theory and drawing. I am also currently a resident artist at the Chicago Printmakers Collaborative.

How did you become interested in programming and video games?

I was looking for a medium that would afford me a larger audience. Painting seemed impotent to deliver a message to an audience: A gallery wall is too isolated from the mainstream and it seemed arrogant for me to expect that a larger audience would seek me out. I decided to take my message to the people. This also coincided with my daughter becoming a gamer (she was in third grade) as I realized that the inclusion of interaction and time within the video-game medium gave me more tools to communicate with my audience in addition to providing access to a larger venue. This motivated me to learn how to build games.

You transitioned from teaching only programming at Columbia to teaching programming and game design. How did you acquire the game-design class?

I can only speculate as to the reason, but I suspect because I'm teaching "concept" within the programming class and this got the attention of the faculty. When the question came up as to who would teach the design class, I believe I might have been chosen because of my interest in "concept."

What were your expectations with your first design class and were they met by the end of the semester?

I wanted to give my students the tools to be leaders in the industry. To me, the tool most necessary for this is to be self-aware of a creative identity. Any English major can write specification documents, but a game-design leader will be a mature artist in control of their medium. By the end of the semester, all my students found a beginning of a creative identity and created their first game design based on it. I was really pleased with the results.

HN215428 timestamp: 01024225
Video still

First, I would like my students to have knowledge of their importance within the creative class and the importance of the role the creative class plays in contributing economically and creatively to society. Students also need to understand that games have a tremendous ability to communicate to a larger audience: This gives great power and with this power comes great responsibility.

Second, it is my goal for my students to become self-aware and familiar with their creative identity. It is also important that they obtain practical tools and skills not just to survive, but to thrive. I would also like them to be able to synergize their creative identity with their practical tools to make the next generation of games truly amazing.

My students help keep me aware of what is going on in the game industry and popular culture. They show me links, bring in articles and feed my game and creative craving. This is non-monetary remuneration which happens in the classroom as a result of the synergistic environment. I love what I am doing and the students in my classroom become energized and, thus, are willing collaborators and creators. We share the excitement between us freely.

Every student I taught last semester had a moment of brilliance when they showed me a beginning of their greatness. This gave me great joy and excitement about perhaps collaborating with them someday one day. I am so eager to begin a future when I can hire the people I am training and enjoy a professional, creative relationship every day.

Also, in my quest to help my students grow, I strive to discover new ways of presenting information, to pull self-awareness out of my students and help them learn to synergize. While this is very challenging, this process of teaching makes one a better teacher.

Ludology and narratology are two different approaches to game design. You've coined the term "conceptualist" in regard to game design and believe this is a third approach that should be considered when designing a game. What is a conceptualist and how does it compare to the other two approaches?

A conceptualist begins a game design with a concept. I define concept to be an idea that creates a transcendent moment for the audience. This idea is what drives the design. All choices — including aesthetics, level design, sound, gameplay, etc. — are governed by the idea.

For a conceptualist, the experience of the game is orchestrated by the designer to communicate a larger concept. This is different from ludology. A ludologist will explore games for games' sake and does not care about an idea or story when designing a game. However, if a ludologist is completely pure in his/her

quest to make games for games' sake, he/she is inherently a conceptualist because the idea of games for games' sake is driving the work.

Pure ludologists are the minimalists of the game world. For narratologists, the story comes first. But, I believe this is putting the cart before the horse because a good story always has a larger concept behind it. Yet, for many, this approach works well. The Final Fantasy franchise is an excellent example of a narratologist approach. Their stories are very interesting and entertaining but the concepts found within the story are weak. The games they create are fun and engaging but do not provide any transcendent moments for the player.

First, concept is the compass for art produced in the game medium. Second, entertainment and conceptual depth are not mutually exclusive. And third, art can change the world.

When the *Mortal Kombat* movie came out in 1995, it collided with frustration I experienced communicating with an audience and inspired me to mainstream my artwork. This decision was solidified in 1997 when *Final Fantasy VII* was released. As I explored the game, I started redesigning the game in my head to satisfy my need for conceptual depth. It was at this juncture I realized games could be a true art medium.

Every artist has to decide for themselves what art is so that they have overriding criteria for what they do. I was initially influenced by Joseph Beuys when he said, "Jeder Mensch ein Künstler" ("Everyone is an artist"). I adopted his philosophy when I started to think, "Everything is a medium." A natural extension of this would be, "Everything is art." But that is too simplistic and not true for me. As tried to define art for myself, I asked, "What is important?" I struggled with that question for a while when I decided it was easier to answer the question, "What is not important?"

One aspect I define as not important is the physical manifestation of a work of art. How something becomes manifest is merely a byproduct of the exploration of the artist which is further interpreted by the viewer/interactor. A work of art is just like a person, in that it is not only what it looks like, but also the life that resides within. That it has a physical presence of any kind is only so we know it exists, after which, we can begin to engage and attempt to understand.

What is the "it"? "It" is the transcendent moment that is passed from one person to another through the work of art. From there, it is only a small leap to say, "Art is an object, idea or experience that transcends and becomes more than the sum of its parts." This is vastly different than, "Art is everything." I draw the line there because it is the transcendent moment which sets art apart, and not all objects, ideas and ex-

Game Screen Shot
Out of control - every key you press causes something to happen but you have no idea what will happen next. It is a windows game.

periences have a transcendent moment. This definition gives me the freedom to produce transcendent moments in any medium appropriate for the message. It is also an extension of the Bauhaus adage, "Form follows function."

Which video games today you would consider art?
BioShock, Deus Ex, Thief, WOW: Fury of the Sunwell, WOW: The Black Temple, WOW: Gods of Zul'Aman.

Do you think there will be a golden age for art games, where they'll be part of the mainstream? Is this something in the near future or for years to come?
It's happening now! The evidence is found in games like *Bio-Shock* and WOW's release of *Fury of the Sunwell*. The popularity of these games is very encouraging. The rise of the creative class is underway because the demand for conceptual depth is rising. The audience is demanding entertainment which satisfies their sophistication and does not insult their intelligence. It is a good time to be an artist and a very exciting time to be making games.

What is Toxic Interactive, LLC?
TI is a startup limited liability corporation that creates video games which transcend and become more than the sum of their parts. The games produced will help to initiate a new dawn of awareness, social responsibility, creative and critical

thinking and that these contributions will enrich all of our lives. At the moment, TI is comprised of a lawyer, an accountant and me. I am the CEA (Chief Executive Artist). The title Chief Executive Artist is a title I made up to describe what I do within the company. It is a combination of the traditional roles of CEO and Creative Director. The creative direction of the company is directly tied to the growth of the company and a CEA is able to bridge the gap between the business and creative production.

TI has realized these milestones: In October of 2007, TI became incorporated in Illinois; in April of 2008, the TI website was launched, the trademark for "Toxic" was filed and the first downloadable game bearing the trademark was posted for distribution.

The current focus of Toxic Interactive is to accept submissions for game-idea documents and independent games to sell online, and to collect resumes to assemble a team. This will enable me to open the doors to a brick-and-mortar location. I will choose resumes for a team of 40 employees for the purpose of obtaining start-up funds from investors. 15 of the 40 slots will be junior positions.

Besides Toxic Interactive, your day job, and teaching at Columbia, are you currently working on any projects?
Yes, I have five other projects. The first one is called Calcu-

HN229539 Apr 22,2007
30" x 42" digital print
from the *Not in my Neighborhood* series

lated Leap. This is a book which tries to define and solve the problem, "Why are artists starving?" I am also working on a companion site which will give tools to artists to start their own businesses. The motivation of this book and website is to help others help themselves. As I discover the tools and information needed to save myself from the plight of the "starving artist," I am passing on the information. In short, if I need it, others will need it, and I'm going to tell them what I know to help them. You can sign up to be notified of the launch of the book and website here: leap.the-resadevine.com

> A work of art is just like a person, in that it is not only what it looks like, but also the life that resides within. That it has a physical presence of any kind is only so we know it exists, after which, we can begin to engage and attempt to understand.

My second project is "Not In My Neighborhood." This is a series of prints, videos and simple games which incorporate beauty imagery into locations of domestic battery found within a half mile of my home for the year 2007. I strive to give each location a release from its violent identity through the amalgam of beauty imagery. This work makes the point that this violence is found everywhere, even in neighborhoods that are considered good places to live. Each piece is titled with the police report number of the incident. I consider this project—and all traditional studio work— conceptual research and development for future games. To view the portfolio, browse to: nimn.theresadevine.com

My third project is "Unspoken." This is a series of photos and merchandise which make visible the subtext of our lives. Most of the "Unspokens" are inspired by co-workers. I also consider this conceptual research and development for future games. To view the portfolio and purchase Unspoken merchandise, visit: unspoken.theresadevine.com

My fourth project is The Visual Literacy Organization. This organization will be a non-profit. At the moment, it is merely a twinkle in my eye. The vision is to advocate for art and counteract the downward spiral that has been set in motion since 1989, or so, when Jesse Helms crusaded against Robert Mapplethorpe. The mission is to marshal resources to spread visual literacy, create an art public-relation campaign, encourage artists to position their artwork in the mainstream and create a national, non-government endowment for the arts. The strategies I propose to utilize is to revise conceptions of what art education is, change the way art is taught K-12, create pragmatic career options for art graduates and influence public and private funding for the arts. One of the first projects of this organization will be to finish the curriculum I started when I was teaching K-8 and distribute it to teachers for free via art evangelists. literacy.theresadevine.com

And my last project is a collaboration with a garment and textile factory in Pakistan. They saw my portfolio and are interested in producing the aesthetics of the "Not In My Neighborhood" beauty imagery on clothes. It is very exciting to me that "The Beauty Within" could literally be visible on the person wearing it. I will probably pursue this as well. It will be a collaborative effort between fashion designers, the garment/textile factory and me.

Where do you think video games will be ten years from now?
The demand for entertainment that satisfies the audience's sophistication and does not insult their intelligence is rising. This demand will push companies to rise to the challenge of producing products to satisfy these expectations. Video games will be on the bleeding edge of this larger market shift. The games that will rise to the top of the market will be ones that understand this and utilize conceptual sophistication in their design. The video-game medium will mature as works of art are produced and the standards for greatness within the art community will be implemented. The MFA is truly the new MBA and we will see this take hold in all industries in the very near future. I am very excited to be alive right now and to be an artist. The whole world is a canvas now. ⚡

12

internship experience

▶ Gary_Kupczak

This summer, I began an internship at High Voltage Software in the audio-video (AV) department. An independent video game developer located in Hoffman Estates, High Voltage Software just celebrated their 15th year of operation.

Although my position is unpaid, my schedule is very flexible. It's a bit of a commute, so I generally opt to come in for a long day once a week instead of trying to work a few hours over several days. The drive out there isn't too bad and since I don't have to be in until 10 a.m., morning traffic isn't usually a problem.

Working in the AV department is nice because, as one of the smallest departments in the company, it's been really easy to get to know everybody. It's hard to feel insignificant when there are only a half-dozen or so people on your team.

Unlike the other departments, where people are committed to specific projects until completion, AV works on all of the company's titles simultaneously and occasionally does outside work as well. It's a lot of fun, actually, because I'm never sure what I'm going to be doing on any given day.

My responsibilities have been pleasantly free of the usual internship drudgery of getting coffee and running errands to the mailroom. That said, most of what I do is still grunt work: Cutting up temporary voice-over tracks, doing batch file renames and, when there's nothing else to do, cataloging the department's sound libraries.

Occasionally something more interesting comes up. One day, I sat in on a voice-over session in the morning and later went next door to Red Eye Studios to record production tracks during a motion-capture session in the afternoon.

Yet, no matter what else I'm working on, I spend the largest portion of my time working with MicroSoft Excel. For example, when I get a voice-over session to work on, I'm given the audio file for the entire voice-over session and a spreadsheet containing every line, which character it belongs to, what part of the project it goes with, and information on the path and filename conventions. Then the rest of the process is to find the best take of each line —or make one if necessary — and make sure it gets exported in the correct format and with the correct filename. When we're doing foreign, localization work, it's important to make sure the translated voice-over matches the original in length, so a lot of time is spent checking things against the spreadsheet for consistency. Easily, half of the job is documentation.

The company culture is great and everyone there has been very friendly. Once in a while, I get an opportunity to test the latest build of one of the projects and give feedback. I look forward to continuing my experience, at least through the end of the summer. ⚡
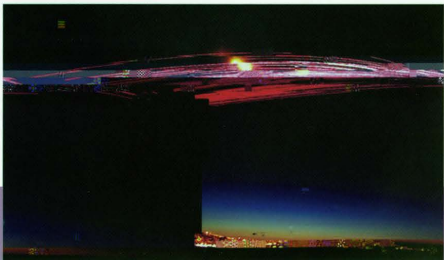
art
review/ ▶▶ Terrence_Hannum

Sean Dack
Girl Next Door, 2008
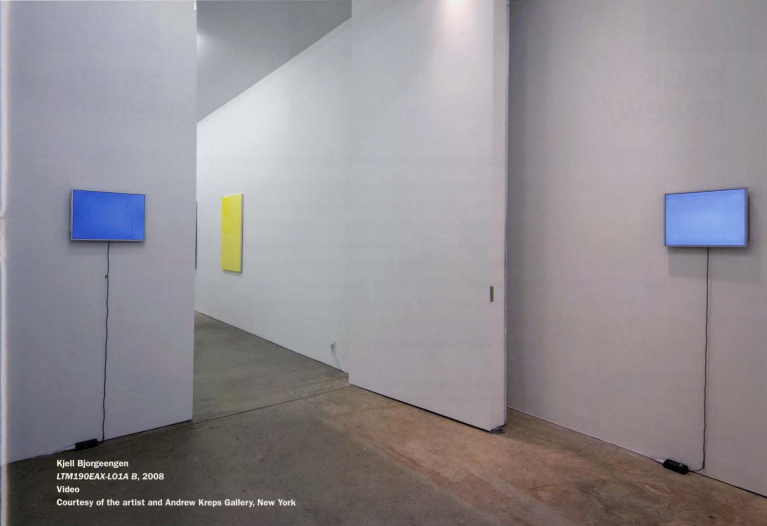Unique digital C-print
45 x 30 inches

Sean Dack *Ghost Hardware* at Daniel Reich Gallery
May 24 – July 5, 2008

Maneuvering between the translated image and the translator (consumer electronics) New York based artist Sean Dack presents a dialectic on the hauntology within our digital recollections in his exhibition *Ghost Hardware*. Equal space and consideration is given to the c-prints of deteriorating digital images stopped mid-download as is to the DVD players and compact disc players made inutile because they are cast in rubber. These untitled sculptures tell the tale of the inevitable antiquity of the future as, once, they were themselves on a cutting edge. Here, they are relics and the imprint of themselves without function or purpose: Reduced and charged with a recent history.

However, in the c-prints, this element of "pause," whether utilized by the home viewer or thrust upon home viewers by scratched DVDs or fudged downloads, holds the potential to open up linearity and provide a sequence unintended by the original author. While here, we witness partial areas that could be read as a female face, shreds of postmodern architecture or even, in one case, a CIA plane. It is this slowly opening aperture of information that aids and abets the enhancement of an overall sense of unease — even paranoia — since nothing is made entirely clear. Rather, the wrongness of the transmission is understood and appreciated for itself without the necessary knowledge of the source. I have always admired the problems of mediating information and how it contains within itself a random elegance and I admire how Dack exploits this theme here.

Though, perhaps the most pressing was the aspect of *Ghost Hardware* that was not physical in the gallery, making up the downloadable aspect of the exhibition titled "Future Songs". Set to the lyrics of Philip K. Dick, predictions with the music to Top 40 hits from the years 1983-2000, this virtual exhibition brings the predicted apocalypse of a sci-fi visionary to our earbuds. ⚡

Sean Dack
West Coast Missile Test, 2007
Unique digital C-print
30 x 44.7 inches

Kjell Bjorgeengen
LTM190EAX-L01A B, 2008
Video
Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York

Kjell Bjorgeengen in *Standard Sizes* at
Andrew Kreps | June 14 – July 12, 2008

*Standard Size*s was an exhibition curated by Portugese born and
NYC-based curator Joao Ribas that was absolutely massive,
containing over fifteen artists in a wide swath of media. Covering
sculpture, painting and digital realms, the summer group show
held few surprises except for the small corridor given over to
Norwegian artist Kjell Bjorgeengen whose flickering, flat screens
hypnotized with their competing, staccato rhythms.

The monitors in the corridor seemed to transmit an interrupted
or incomplete signal, full of digital noise. Reminiscent of Tony
Conrad's *Flicker* (1965) or Stan Brakhage's *Mothlight* (1963) —
but digitized and wrong —it takes some time to see that beneath
what appears to be erratum, is deliberate. Beneath what
appears to be a flickering chaos, is the throb of a cadence,
as the subject and source of these pieces is, sound itself. ⚡

Sean Dack
The Road, 2007
Unique digital C-print
39.6 x 30 inches

book review/

Janell_Baxter

There are many computer languages in the world but few that take an approach targeted towards visual artists. Processing is one of these and it attracts a flourishing community by contributing tutorials, open-source code, libraries and other helpful materials. Like many open-source languages and environments there is a large amount of material available online to help you get started. There are also, however, two excellent books I highly recommend for those wishing to learn the language quickly and in depth. Both take a different approach to the material yet complement each other well.
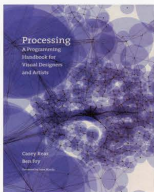
Processing: A Programming Handbook for Visual Designers and Artists
by Casey Reas and Ben Fry
ISBN-13: 978-1-59059-617-3, Friends of Ed

Processing was created by the authors of this text, and their thorough knowledge of the language and environment is apparent in their writing and code examples. Readers with no prior programming experience and a desire to learn will have no problem learning how to create interesting interactive work by the time they are half-way through the text. Although the book is written with no prior programming experience in mind, it does cover programming essentials (such as variables, functions, objects, etc.), and it does it in a very engaging manner.

The book takes a generally tutorial approach; each section starts with an overview of new syntax introduced and an introduction, and is full of examples that the reader is expected to actively recreate, run and modify to better understand the concepts. It is definitely a text that should be read in front of a computer with Processing running.

For a text that is written for newcomers to programming, it takes the reader fairly far in the language and environment. The second half of the book covers challenging topics such as kinetic forms, physics, 3D, and mobile applications. And the compelling artist interviews dispersed throughout the text provide readers with inspiration on how to expand upon what the text has covered.

Processing: Creative Coding and Computational Art
by Ira Greenberg
ISBN-13: 978-0-262-18262-1, MIT Press

This text has a more traditional approach in that it starts first with theory and then moves on to practice. The first chapter, "Code Art," gives some history and background on computational art and brief biographies of some influential computational artists. The second chapter, "Creative Coding," discusses the origin of Processing and some of the basic ideas in programming, such as procedural versus object-oriented. For readers using Processing as a first step to programming, this text will provide more in-depth information about some of the foundational concepts that are common in most languages.
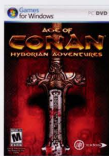
So which text should you buy if you want to learn Processing? If you like to jump in and start exploring, you will probably enjoy the text by Casey Reas and Ben Fry more. If you like to try to understand a concept before "trying it out," you might like the book Ira Greenberg has written instead. Or, you could get both. Each book has strong points and you might find having both gives you a better understanding of the language and environment.

If you are interested in learning more about Processing, visit the website (processing.org) to download the language and environment for free and sign up for an IAM class that teaches **Processing: Generative and Algorithmic Art** (36-3310-01) and **Computer Controlled Installation Environments** (36-3630).
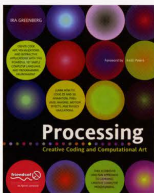
game review/

▶ Tom_Dowd

Age of Conan, released in May of this year, is an online massively-multiplayer, action/role-playing game (MMORPG) based on the Conan stories created by Robert E. Howard. Howard began writing Conan stories in 1932 and those rousing tales of swords-and-sorcery adventure provide a notable example of what is known as "low fantasy". So-called "high fantasy", typified by the J.R.R. Tolkien *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, is filled with magical creatures such as elves and dwarves, and often contains a clear moral sense of right and wrong, good and evil. Things are much darker in low fantasy, however. Magic and strange creatures are still abundant, but the world depicted is darker, grittier, morally ambiguous and usually significantly more blood-splattered.

Age of Conan: Hyborian Adventures
Funcom, Developer
Eidos, Publisher
Massively-Multiplayer
Online Action/RPG
Windows Vista/XP
(Xbox 360 to be announced)

This is the world that Norwegian game developer Funcom has built for *Age of Conan*, a visually stunning realization of Howard's prose. It certainly shares some visual cues with the 1982 motion picture, *Conan the Barbarian* (starring a never-more-buff Arnold Schwarzenegger), but it ably builds on that vision and creates a world that is both amazing to look at and a whole lot of fun to explore. A price is paid, however, for this fidelity in that *Age of Conan* requires a state-of-the-art computer and graphics card to really show itself off. The mountains are towering and distant, the forest and grasslands lush and thick, the characters and their equipment sharp and detailed, and oh, does the blood splatter (as one would expect for a game with this heritage.)

Age of Conan is rated "M" for blood, violence, mature themes and nudity. It is a dark and gritty world that is savage and violent. Howard's stories (and the film adaptation) are full of barely clothed (if that) heroes and villains and the game does not shy away from showing more than a little flesh, though it will be interesting to see what happens when the game is available on the Xbox 360, a platform not exactly known for displaying naughty bits. It is very possible that the Windows players will not be able to play alongside the Xbox players, which would allow the inclusion of different content for each platform.

Age of Conan is different from its MMORPG brethren like the cash-cow *World of Warcraft* or *Everquest* in that, in addition to focusing on group questing and raiding (either with long-term

guildmates or in short-term ad-hoc groups), it allows its players to experience a great deal of the game as a solo player. In fact, the first twenty levels (of a possible eighty at the time of release) are primarily solo-play and very single-character focused. This allows the developers of the game to present a story that actually seems to involve the player's character in a significant role, as opposed to the narrative disconnect felt in many MMORPGs. Later in the game, the solo experience is deemphasized over group-play, but the connection the player feels to the story and environment persists.

Gameplay in *Age of Conan* is more or less typical for the genre of game. At the start, the player gets to pick from one of three cultures —all human — and then choose from a selection of character classes (variations on warrior, mage and healer) available to them. Not all classes are available to all cultures and each is a proper fit for Howard's world. Combat in many MMORPGs is often automatic, where a key command (or sequence of commands) triggers an action that the player then watches play out. In *Age of Conan*, the player stays more closely involved with combat by having to make decisions about how to attack based on the opponent's defensive posture or movement. It does sometimes get a little excessive on the key-mashing (a concession to the eventual translation to a game console perhaps) but it does make for a more engaging experience.

Overall, *Age of Conan* is great fun, but it is not without its problems. Though the launch of the game was smooth and well-managed given the incredible complexities involved in launching a modern MMORPG, the game remains a little rough around the edges. It is clear that not all of the content was finished and polished before

release and that the developers hoped they would have a few weeks or months after release to clean up the higher-level content, but many (gamers being gamers) plowed through the early part of the game in no time and began pointing out — and in some cases exploiting — the problems. Some of the locations and quests are buggy, and remain so nearly three months after launch. Additionally, many users with powerful gaming machines report less than acceptable frame-rates or graphics glitches. These graphics problems aren't necessarily purely Funcom's fault as graphic drivers for the newest video card are often unstable themselves and glitchy, and video drivers in general are known for cutting corners in pursuit of performance in ways that later produce problems.

Funcom can be held responsible for how it has communicated with its community of gamers. If anything, MMORPGs are all about community, and that group of players has to be managed at all times. Above all, they demand transparency of information — something a developer is often loath to provide — especially if it means admitting to problems. Gamers, however, in general are very understanding when dealt with forthrightly and truthfully, which is something that Funcom has only recently come to understand. With a hugely successful 1,000,000+ copies sold at launch, it remains to be seen what kind of long-term legs *Age of Conan* will have. But if Funcom can maintain open communications with its community, fix the outstanding bugs and supplement what exists with a regular stream of new content, *World of Warcraft* may finally know which MMORPG it should be worried about nipping at its heels. ⚡

web review/

▶ Eric_C._Brown

Jon Taplin's Blog
An argument forum by a communications expert (who also produced Scorsese's "Mean Streets") in which he prods his readers with an anti-neo-conservative/pro-Obama fork (particularly over current events in finance), and consistently drives good debates between his well-read liberal and libertarian-conservative readers.
jtaplin.wordpress.com

Awesome Tapes From Africa
awesometapesfromafrica.blogspot.com/

BiblioOdyssey
An exhaustive resource of obscure and unusual manuscript art.
bibliodyssey.blogspot.com

BoingBoing
This probably needs no introduction: An eclectic array of tidbits to peruse each day, although there are too many references to Mario Bros. papercraft/pastries/etc.
www.boingboing.net

Time Has Told Me: Artist Index
An enormous archive of folk and psych obscurities I have only a spotty familiarity with. Through this site, I was finally able to get my hands on numerous Kuzuki Tomokawa recordings.
time-has-told-me-artist.blogspot.com/

WFMU's Beware of the Blog:
This NJ station's hip musicologists post a great assortment of collector-fair and bin finds. They maintain the mp3s on their server and are thus rivaling UbuWeb as an archive. DJ/Rupture and Donna Summer (Cock Rock Disco) are associates.
blog.wfmu.org

Other music blogs I check from time to time:
Garage Hangover – www.garagehangover.com/
Crud Crud – crudcrud.blogspot.com/
Lost in Tyme – lost-in-tyme.ucoz.com/blog/
Ezhevika Fields – ezhevika.blogspot.com/
Reverend Frost – reverendfrost.blogspot.com/

Cute Overload, naturally.
www.cuteoverload.com/

Drawn!
A cartooning/illustration blog that features an occasional post that really grabs me.
drawn.ca

Bldg Blog
Geoff Manaugh's great blog on architecture, environmental design and ecology in which he often concludes his posts with ruminations upon the topic at hand taken to absurdist extremes.
bldgblog.blogspot.com/

Pruned trafficks in similar topics and is worth a mention.
pruned.blogspot.com

Interactive Arts and Media Fall 2008 Visiting Artists Series

Scott Rettberg

Scott Rettberg is a Chicago native who now lives in Norway. He writes about new media and electronic literature. Rettberg is an associate professor of Humanistic Informatics at the University of Bergen.

retts.net

Paul Slocum

Paul Slocum is a Dallas, TX based artist and director and co-owner of And/Or Gallery in Dallas, TX. He has exhibited at ArtHouse in Austin, TX, CANADA in New York, NY, Dunn and Brown Contemporary in Dallas, TX, iMAL in Brussels, Belgium, Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, MD as well as the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York, NY. And/Or Gallery opened in January 2006 and shows emerging and mid-career artists from around the world who work in all mediums, but our emphasis is on new media. They are one of the few spaces in the country that has the equipment and experience to handle the most current new media work.

qotile.net
www.andorgallery.com

Christy Matson

Christy Matson is a Chicago based artist working with immaterial data to create artifacts. Matson is also a professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In her work she is concerned less with truthful representation of information but with creating an embodied experience with the resulting objects. She entertains an ongoing interest in systems and structures that form the basis for a technological narrative. She is struck by the incongruity of the quantitative nature and ubiquity of digital technology with the analog experience of day-to-day living. Daily life resists reduction to a measurable string of numbers and remains as a dynamic terrain subject to an analog interchange between our bodies and the objects we encounter. Working with the traditional practice of hand weaving, her work conflates the seemingly oppositional structures of a digital and analog construction. Creating work as a means to explore the ways that technology has become a mediator of human experience and perception. Mining the everyday for source material she draws on her own everyday interactions with both digital and analog technology. The images she weaves often draw from sound recordings of the loom, from digital "glitches" that arise from file transferring processes or from a conceptual investigation of binary systems. Sometimes employing feedback loops to create generative or iterative structures: sounds collected from the loom are fed back into the computer to create a new structure for the loom to weave. Matson has a continued interest in the shift in reciprocity that occurs when standing at a loom versus sitting at a computer preparing files to weave and how that manifests in changes to her physicality and her experience of time.

www.cmatson.com

Mark Napier

Mark Napier is one of the early pioneers of net-art. Beginning his work as a self taught programmer Napier would go on to be featured in some of the important early exhibition of internet based art. Perhaps most famously known for his piece "Shredder 1.0" (1998) that using his own Open Source programming language would deconstruct elements of a given url and craft a new hacked image interface—often very abstract. Mark Napier is known for creating interactive online work that challenges the very definitions of art

www.potatoland.com

Timetravel:
30 Years Of Ars Electronica

A six-part lecture series about 30 years of Ars Electronica the festival for art, science and technology. In conjunction with the School of the Art Institute of Chicago & The Electronic Visualization Library at UIC.

Each lecture focuses on a different aspect of Ars Electronica, ranging from interactive art to virtual reality, computer animation, performance art etc. Additionally, this series explains Ars Electronica as an organization and how it transformed the industrial city of Linz, in Upper Austria into an internationally renowned center of digital media arts. This lecture series includes rarely seen materials from the Ars Electronica archives and thereby gives a unique insight into the history of media art.

www.aec.at/en/

Eddo Stern

Eddo Stern works on the disputed borderlands between fantasy and reality, exploring the uneasy and otherwise unconscious connections between physical existence and electronic simulation. His work explores new modes of narrative and documentary, experimental computer game design, fantasies of technology and history, and cross-cultural representation in computer games, film, and online media. He works in various media including computer software, hardware and game design, kinetic sculpture, performance, and film and video production. His short machinima films include "Sheik Attack", "Vietnam Romance", "Landlord Vigilante" and "Deathstar". He is the founder of the now retired cooperative C-level where he co-produced the physical computer gaming projects "Waco Resurrection", "Tekken Torture Tournament", "Cockfight Arena", and the internet meme conference "C-level Memefest" He is currently developing the new sensory deprivation game "Darkgame".

www.eddostern.com

For more information contact Terence Hannum at 312 369 7957 or thannum@colum.edu

Just What Is It that Makes New Media So Different, So Appealing?

by Patrick Lichty **Rather than taking this question at face value, it is better to consider the cultural underpinnings that caused me to ask this very, "silly" (according to Domenico Quaranta) question in the particular way I presented it. Given the source of the pun, its historical context in regards to its source reference, and the relevance to the subject of New Media, it is the very silliness of the question that demands we take the matter with utmost gravity. Because, to paraphrase George Grosz, "This is bloody serious."**

The title here may seem like an off-hand reference to Richard Hamilton's seminal collage, *Just What Is It that Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?* It is that and much more. The question of *Just What Is It that Makes New Media So Different, So Appealing?* is actually a probe driven deep into the antecedents of New Media.

In 2008, we are living in a resurgence of Pop Art as evidenced by the Japanese Neo-Pop and Murakami's SuperFlat movements as well as the American 8-Bit movement. In addition, there is a resurgence of Pop cultural structures such as (micro)celebrity, where everyone can have 15 seconds of fame on YouTube, as well as the centrality of consumer culture mirrored in Hamilton's collage. There are curious similarities and differences of the Dada, Pop and New Media times: The differences have to do with an atomization of social and cultural scales through progressive, rhizomatic distribution through increasingly distributed networks. Similar key issues, however, remain in place.

The emergence of Hamilton's collage work undoubtedly comes from his research on the Dadas during the 1950s. In 1952, after meeting Roland Penrose at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London, Hamilton was introduced to Marcel Duchamp's *Green Box* notes. Subsequently, Hamilton would develop a friendship with Duchamp, which among other things, would result in his creation of a replica of *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)* for Hamilton's curatorial retrospective of Duchamp at the ICA in 1966. From *Just What Is It that Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?*, Hamilton distills Dada collage aspects reminiscent of Hannah Hoch's *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* and juxtaposes these with a mix of post-atomic anxiety and consumer-kitsch giddiness prevalent during the 1950s industrial era. This actually makes great sense—given that Hamilton was also active in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament—as it echoes the moral outrage

after World War I that would result in the emergence of the Dadas.

The era of *Just What Is It that Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?* also reverberates the elegiac feeling that arose after World War I in Weimar culture through to the time of Theodor Adorno's *After Auschwitz*. Briefly put, Adorno states the impossibility of the justification of art after the atrocities of the Holocaust. But, as with the Dadas, Hamilton persists. However, in contrast to the brutal satire of the Dadas—as Grosz demonstrates in publications such as *Der Blutige*

Here, have some culture. Have all you want. Don't worry— we'll make more.

Ernst (Bloody Serious)—Hamilton balances his critique with a playful style reflective of advertising, and spectacular design reflective of the American automotive industry. Here, Hamilton incorporates signifiers of the idealized "new" life: A Ford car; Mr. Universe; a pulp romance cover framed as art; a scantily clad, burlesque girl—all in a new, California living room. In many ways, I feel that Hamilton ironically advertises this marvelous, new world of industrial plenty, despite that it was born of the dual atrocities. But as Richard Hulsenbeck once said, "We lived in Dada times…", Hamilton, through his piece, is speaking to a neo-Dada sensibility that would also be heralded as the beginning of Pop. So, Hulsenbeck lived in Dada times; Hamilton ushered in Pop times with a Dada sensibility and, as we'll see, there are clear echoes of all this in the New Media times.

Segue: Hamilton, Consumption and Technology

In many ways, Hamilton represents the numerous bridges between the early 20th century avant-garde and the *fin de millennium* technological arts. For example, the Independent Group—of which Hamilton was a part—had a keen interest in ideas relating to the new electronic age, that is, by thinkers such as Marshall McLuhan and work being done in cybernetics. In addition, the ties the Independent Group had to the ICA London led to Jasia Reichardt's seminal curatorial project at the ICA: *Cybernetic Serendipity* (1968). It's interesting to note that Reichardt also consulted with Max Bense, father of the Stuttgart School of computational art, again linking the influences of Dada and the ICA. In addition, it would lead to the emergence of other, early new media by artists such as Roy Ascott—a student of Hamilton's—who would lead the Caiia-STAR program and found the Planetary Collegium, a leading institution for the exploration of speculative thought in art and technology. From this, it only makes sense that Hamilton's collage is actually a touchstone between Dada and the coming of New Media and even Neo-Pop.

Secondly, mass production and consumption played a pivotal role in the lineage from Duchamp to the digital. For example, the rise of cinema and mass media in the Weimar era would cause thinkers such as Walter Benjamin to raise question regarding authenticity of the art object. It is the shattering of this authenticity of "Art" as auratic fetish that Hoch and Kurt Schwitters would perfect through collage and Merz-Assemblage. Duchamp would also pioneer this through the Readymade: urinals, snow shovels and bottle racks. Therefore, through Hamilton's obvious influence from Hoch, et al. and his research and friendship with Duchamp, the lineage, in the time of Hamilton—from mass production/consumption, industrialization and its interrogators from the early avant-gardes—would become remapped along with the rise of consumer culture, mass media and the coming of the telematic and cybernetic movements.

However, from Duchamp's questioning of the mass object in the form of the Readymade, Hamilton also presages the emergence of mass consumer culture in his collage. The signs of mass excess are evident through the invocation of Mr. Universe, the new car, the California home, the girl-as-fetish/fetish-girl—and even the electronic media devices in the room—all announcing the great ironies of Pop. Pop, as Warhol would show, would center mass media communications technology firmly within the production of contemporary art through film, commercial printing techniques and later, video. Therefore, the progression of leaps from the "fetishization" of the mass object (Duchamp) to mass consumption, (Hamilton) and mass media (Warhol and Pop) to mass storage (New Media), is not so outlandish.

Lastly, there also seems to be a progression of scales in regards to the production of objects during the span of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century. For example, Duchamp's Readymades still imply the centrality of utility: the coat rack, the snow shovel, the urinal. These objects, while still mass produced, are still "objects of utility" and ones that are consumed by institutions as much as individuals. However, in the era of Hamilton's collage, excess capability from wartime production engaged for the creation of consumer goods centered on pleasure. *Just What Is It that Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?* showcases the individual house, the profusion of luxury and comfort items like electronic appliances, entertainment and lingerie that will be expanded through Warhol's legends of soup, Elvis and Marilyn Monroe.

However, a key difference seems to be in the scale of commodity in those 40 years or so: In the mid 1950s, the scale of the economy suddenly shifted to individual consumption (with society's encouragement) and thus for the individual to buy the new home, the new car, the TV. All of these are still relatively significant in size: They are still relatively "durable" goods, representing industry as such. But, what is also significant is that there is also the emergence of the rise of throwaway, consumer culture—also alluded to by Pop—and represented in Hamilton's collage by the framed pulp magazine. This illustration of the coming atomized, ephemeral culture presages the coming of the "micro-," or even "nano-" culture that is the domain of New Media.

New Media Pop: Microatrocity, Microcelebrity and Snack Consumer Culture.

Up to this point, I have been constructing a matrix of trajectories attempting to show the similarities and developments in art and cultural milieus. From the Dadas—including Grosz, Hoch, Schwitters and Duchamp—to Hamilton and the Pop and cybernetic eras, trajectories of production, concepts, cultural trends and technological developments draw vectors towards the current New Media age. There seems to be a cyclical relation between significant, aesthetic developments, cultural upheavals and resultant market effects that draw us into engagement with recurrent subjects between the times of Duchamp, Hamilton and perhaps Manovich. I feel that the trajectory that modulates the cultural effects from Dada to New Media in regards to fame, atrocity and consumption has to do with their deconstruction, "miniaturization" and ephemeralization. I believe that these transformations—what I will call nano-effects—are essential in understanding *Just What Is It that Makes New Media So Different, So Appealing?*

MGandhi Chakrabarti

Microcelebrity

One of the defining elements of the Pop movement is its play with and criticism of the exploding mass media. Hamilton opens the dialogue with his many referents to the profusion of media: the pulp magazine as painting; the tape deck; the TV; the formal nature of collage itself. This is only logical, as Dadas like Raoul Hausmann and Grosz were some of the first to hint at tactical media by their use and recombination of mass media to create notoriety. Of course, Warhol (and others) would expand on the linkage of media and celebrity through his creation of silk screens, films and publications (such as *Interview* and his *Screen Test* series), pronouncing that in the future, everyone would have "15 minutes of fame". Perhaps that has happened, but now it is a second at a time, perhaps at best.

A recent issue of WIRED magazine speculated about the concept of Micro-celebrity, in which a person develops a media following through their blog, *YouTube* posts, or even *Second Life* or *World of Warcraft* exploits. Such a following can include a few hundred to a couple thousand individuals, mirroring the niche-culture of cable television, blog aggregation and customizable media. In short, it is the fracturing of mass media to what I call "you-media" where the centralized broadcast/distribution channels have become targeted at the individual. Such is the media-targeted environment, where the individual need only consume what they desire to consume and—as I will mention later—in bite-sized chunks. Notoriety and celebrity now comes as fifteen emails; fifteen posts of press about your blog; fifteen clips on *YouTube*.

In addition, New Media times are a recursive pastiche: A mash-up of styles and influences where the movement, the "ism" has imploded; where Neo-Pop (including Superflat and 8-Bit) is consuming Anime, fan culture, video games and expressing concepts in terms of the local context of the time and place. The contemporary art world has mirrored the Internet and cable television by becoming hundreds of micro-genres or communications channels. We have 500 channels. But, is anything on?

Microatrocity, Microeconomy

Both Dada and Pop—if we extrapolate from Hamilton's influences, sensibilities and as seminal progenitor of Pop—were born of atrocity: World War I, World War II, the Holocaust and Hiroshima. However, in the era of New Media, we live in the era of micro-atrocity in which the notion of horror/terror is simultaneously atomized and made ubiquitous. While conflict or genocide events (Rwanda, 9/11, Kosovo, Darfur, the Iraq invasions) initially evoke horror and response, eventually the frequency and visibility of media attenuation, however, make them seem even more frequent, (and thus) less important and ultimately elicit only feelings of abjection. Or, worse yet, atrocity becomes abstraction when taken in context of Baudrillard's assertion

that "The Gulf War did not happen," because he felt the war was turned into a video game via distortions created through mass media (like CNN). It is not surprising then, that while the two World Wars were undoubtedly life-altering events that caused major, global disruptions, President Bush encouraged people after 9/11 and in the early days of the second Iraq invasion, to "get back to normal" and go shopping so as not to disturb the American consumer economy.

The irony in the Neo-Pop culture is that the primary engines of Pop culture—that is—consumer culture based on post-war excess and industrial capacity, have proliferated and become distributed through networks, hundreds of distribution channels and global production. To counterpoint Baudrillard's idea in the *Transparence of Evil*, where he states that cultural functions have rhizomatically distributed to everywhere except their source— politics becoming sex and sport; sport becoming war and politics, etc.—one finds that everything has become semiotically de-centered. Or, as McLuhan puts it, "The walls have all blown out." What has happened is that cultural artifacts, war, economy, art movements, consumption, have become (largely) ephemeral—that is—to the point where Pop's "quick hit" and flatness have created an equally flat culture. This resultant culture is equivalent to a sea of quantum noise where the importance of events is ultimately devalued and art is something that cannot demand more than the fifteen seconds of attention, let alone, fifteen minutes.

Microproduction

This statement—that art cannot demand more than fifteen seconds of attention—may seem shocking but is the result of the excess capacity of media production created by networked culture. Chris Anderson in his book, *The Long Tail*, states the explosion of media production capacity will create an increasingly specialized niche-culture of increasing numbers of genres and niches. If one is to apply the principles of supply and demand, products in expanding niche-markets will become devalued and proliferate like dust: The movie becomes the episode to the "webisode" to the podcast to the *YouTube* clip; the record album returns to the single track—or even the sample of three seconds or less (if one is to avoid copyright issues). The mass-market toy is collapsing from the mass market to the limited edition (like vinyl toy boutiques such as Kidrobot, Rotofugi, et al.), and one-off fabrication made possible by emerging, rapid prototyping technologies. It is the smorgasbord of culture, with the collapse of fame to microfame; production to microproduction and consumption to microconsumption.

Microconsumption, or "Snack Culture"

With the flattening and atomization of culture envisioned in Anderson's *Long Tail* and the increasing "niche-ing" of culture brought about by exponential production, the Neo-Pop era is one of microconsumption: 15 second clips; 99 cent singles and free wallpapers; and do-it-yourself weekend science projects. In addition, online environments like *Second Life* valuate the currency of their virtual dollar at a quarter of a cent so entire clothing ensembles can be purchased for only one dollar. It is the era of the dollar: McDonald's dollar burger; a dollar music track; a dollar car in your virtual world. Everything's a dollar or less (metaphorically speaking): it is *YouTube* and YTMND.com (a website with single-page webmedia "vignettes", largely of pop cultural and crass, social themes); it is the experiential snack culture of the quick, fun and ephemeral. And, as Anderson states, there are shiploads and servers full of it: Immense quantities of cultural fodder for pennies on the dollar for the consumer to graze upon. Welcome to the cultural "Value Menu"!

Conclusion

It's ironic, that what was first playfully posed as a tangential question became a knife cutting to the heart of issues pertaining to New Media times. *Just What Is It that Makes New Media So Different, So Appealing?* cuts to the quick of quantum media culture, where one is continually bombarded with continuous streams of snack-sized, cultural content: Celebrity, microcurrency content, micro-holocausts, pocket toys and forgettable webisodes. Forget the fifteen minutes of fame! We all get fifteen seconds and fifteen die-hard fans, from Brussels to Bangalore. Actually, that's very democratic: Everyone and everything becomes roughly equal, culturally speaking. Grab your favorite media clip, then format your digital video recorder and get ready for the next snack. New Media has the capacity to be what you want it to be, when you want it, where you want it—on whatever platform you wish. That's sexy. It's different. It's appealing! But Duchamp and Hamilton showed us we had it coming. It's bloody serious—but, oh—what fun!

Here, have some culture. Have all you want. Don't worry—we'll make more.

Fall 2008 Schedule

Exhibition Space for the Interactive Arts + Media Department

September 18th – October 23rd

Pixel Shift

PixelShift introduces exciting new works by 20 students from the IAM Time-Based Composing and Sound & Motion classes. The artists investigate the perception of space while exploring themes of myth, time, social networking, viral campaigns, the real and unreal. The work will be presented through the seemingly simple, yet exceedingly complex art of digitally manipulated pixels within the physical space of multiple graphics monitors. The exhibit features explorations of sound as shape and structure using the computer as a creative visualization tool. Narratives and subliminal messages pepper this collection of work from today's up-and-coming media artists.

December 8th – January 15th

Soft Machine

The third annual Freshmen and Transfer Student Exhibition, Soft Machine centers around the college-wide initiative welcoming Jack Kerouac's On The Road scroll to Columbia College. Curated by the IAM Senior Practicum class, this exhibition will focus on artwork inspired by the disparate group of poets, artists, filmmakers and musicians who made up the Beat Generation and transformed the American cultural landscape.

October 30th – November 27th

The Art of Play

As a celebration of the Columbia College Chicago's Game Design Program, the Interactive Arts and Media De¬partment at Columbia College Chicago is pleased to present the 2nd annual Art of Play exhibition at The Project Room, October 30th – November 27th. Works range from fine art dealing with notions of playfulness to video and cellular phone games that the audience can literally play.

/the Project Rm/

623 SOUTH WABASH AVENUE, ROOM 416

iam.colum.edu

faculty + staff updates/

Annette Barbier presented a paper at the International Symposium on Electronic Art in Singapore on July 27 entitled "Representation, Visualization, Art and Science". The abstract can be accessed at: www.isea2008singapore.org/abstract/a-c/p459.html

A brief overview of the conference is featured on the IAM blog.

Sal Barry was accepted to Graduate School at DePaul University to earn his MA in New Media Studies.

Janell Baxter has recently shown work at COMA 16: Roam and COMA 12 in the California Occidental Museum of Art, Chicago, IL, and The Project Room at Gosia Koscielak Studio. She had an interactive sculpture at SL5B and collaboratively built the SL5B IAM exhibit (Second Life), and received a Columbia College Chicago Faculty Development Grant for a collaboration with Dr. Joseph Cancellaro.

Wade Chandler participated in Looptopia Chicago 2008 by instructing at the Animation Station, helping people to create their own stop-motion animation. His Videography and VJ work done during the 2006 production of Scott Parrish's "Kill TV" performance was broadcast in August 2008 on Channel 19, Can-TV as well as VJ'ing at local music venues like Club Subterranean and The Butterfly Social Club, Chicago, as well as at the "Children of All Ages" event in Chicago.

Walker Hamilton is the "Site Architect" at Obama for America. We raised $51 million dollars last month. $27 million of those were brought in purely online.

Terence Hannum had a solo-exhibition of his work titled Threnody at Invisible NYC, NY this summer. A CD of his solo-music titled Oaths/Omens featuring soundtracks for some of his early videos was released by PowerSilence. An interview he conducted with painter Scott Anderson will be featured in the September issue of Beautiful/Decay and his essay "Restoring the Aura: A Comment on Ritual" will be a featured article in the upcoming Chicago art journal Prompt.

Patrick Holbrook was included in "Global Honking Ground," a video screening organized by 16Beaver at The Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco in June.

Weston Morris is, as of January of 2008, an official ordained man of the cloth through the Universal Life Church and was selected to showcase his art at the Around the Coyote River Gallery during the 2008 Looptopia festival.

Niki Nolin performed INK at the 2008 Calligraphy Conference as well as co-presented with Brody Neuenschwander "When Words Move: Live Calligraphy as Film" about their video component of the performance. Niki Iso exhibited in "A Look at Chaos Shows This to be True" at the Blink Contemporary Art Center in Michigan City, IN. Niki will also be participating in an Interdisciplinary installation with Sherry Antonini, Basil Abbott and Susan Cohan-Lange titled Little Black Dress that opens Monday, Sept. 29th at the Indiana University Northwest Art Gallery.

Andrew Oleksiuk was accepted into the Electronic Visualization MFA program at the School of Art and Design at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He is leaving his staff position of 9 years at Columbia College Chicago to pursue his graduate degree full time. Andrew will continue in his capacity as a part-time instructor in the Interactive Arts and Media department.

Farewell to the Fourth Floor

Can walls and bad carpeting mean something more?

By now, you have probably heard the news that the Interactive Arts and Media department will be vacating our current facilities—both in the Wabash building and in the 624 S. Michigan building—and relocating to the 1200 S. Wabash building in January of 2009. While I am excited that our department will get a brand new, state-of-the-art facility, I still can't help but feel a little sad.

You see, the Fourth Floor of the 623 S. Wabash building is—as I like to put it—where I "grew up." I came to Columbia College as a student in 1997, not quite sure about what I wanted to do with my life and not knowing a darn thing about computers. But this department occupying the Fourth Floor—called Academic Computing at the time—needed students to work in the Open Lab. And I needed a job. Little did I suspect that this floor of an antiquated, downtown building would become a consistent part of my life for the next eleven years. Working in the computer lab, I was able to discover my talent for and love of digital media, specifically web design. Upon graduation in 2001, I landed a job as a web designer and was also hired as an adjunct faculty member in this department.

As both a student and a teacher on this floor, I've witnessed this department progress. Over time, the bland walls slowly got covered with display cases to showcase

many of the vibrant and outstanding student works produced. With the merger between the Academic Computing and Interactive Multimedia departments, enrollment has grown exponentially. And, of course, who could forget the time when the ugly, brown carpeting was replaced with less ugly, gray carpeting? Not to mention the addition of the Project Room, the auditorium and many other great things that have increased the awesomeness that is the Fourth Floor. This is where I did the bulk of my learning and I've seen so many good things happen here. So, is it wrong for me to feel sad about our department leaving this floor—this building—for a new one?

To an extent, yes it is. Change is good, or so I have to remind myself. So we all have to remind ourselves, as we do every time a new version of Photoshop is released. Whenever we upgrade Photoshop, we usually say or hear others say the same things: "Jeez, now I have to learn the new hotkey for the Paint Bucket! It never used to do that when I hit F5." Or, "Why can't it just do things like the way it used to?"

Eventually, we grow accustomed to the new software, which is better adapted to help us achieve our creative visions and we wonder how we ever got by before Photoshop CS number whatever.

The same process applies here.

It's time for me to accept the fact that this warm, fuzzy place known as the Fourth Floor of the Wabash building—where I and many others no doubt "figured it out" and kindled their passion for all things digital—will indeed be a thing of the past.

Sure, I'll have to get off at a different train stop and no more grabbing a quick lunch at Harold's Chicken Shack between classes (not that I ever eat there). On the upside, for the first time, we are gaining a facility that is tailor-made to our department's needs; more space, more classrooms and hopefully, better carpeting. ⚡

Theresa Devine
030407_HN209500
30" x 42" digital print
from the *Not in my Neighborhood* series
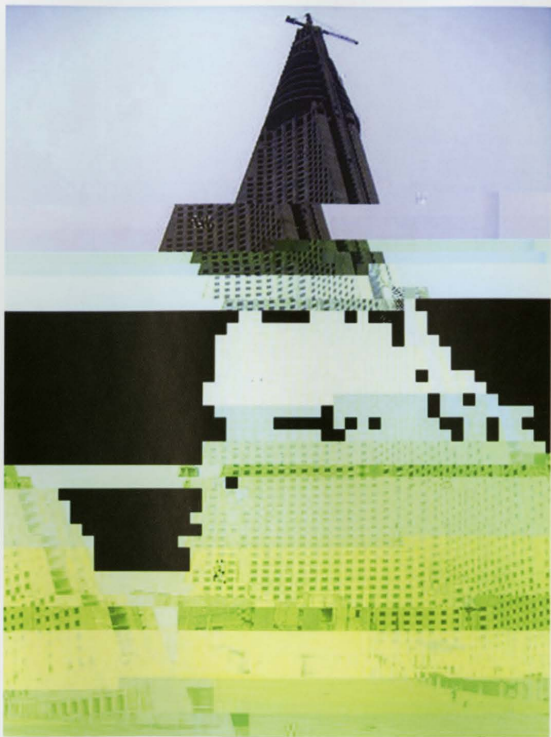
Sean Dack
Building (Hotel, Pyongyang), 2008
Unique digital C-print
39.7 x 30 inches

Iam

Interactive Arts + Media

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