



The Challenge of Ubiquity in Digital Culture

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- ABSTRACTS -

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The Perception of Art on the Web by Analysing a Tagging Platform for Artworks

A great number of pictures of artworks can be explored on the Internet. Various platforms offer the possibility to view artworks in high resolution and in great quantity. Examples are the Google Art Project and the Web Gallery of Art. Furthermore a lot of art historical information can be accessed online, since a lot of libraries and museum websites publish their scientific publications on the Web. Various Web platforms exist, that combine art historical information while examining pictures of the artworks themselves. For example smarthistory offers audio commentaries while simultaneously showing artworks.

This approach offers information only in a one-directional way. Users without sophisticated knowledge in art history might feel intimidated by the scientific vocabulary and therefore will not access this information. Also, this is an intellectual approach and therefore lacks the more joyful, playful and emotional aspects of exploring art. One way to provide a playful, bidirectional approach of communication is to offer the possibility to annotate (tag) the artworks and thereby interact with a community. Tagging allows users to freely associate and annotate whatever comes to their mind.

We created the explorARTorium, a web platform that makes use of contextualisation. Each artwork is put into context with other artworks of the same artist, the same title, the same school (Italian, English, Dutch, etc), the same motive (portrait, religious, landscape) and from the same time-period. Furthermore the explorARTorium encourages users to annotate artworks. By offering the possibility to view artworks in context, it fosters users to explore art, without presuming sophisticated knowledge about art history. More than 150 users provided over 95.000 tags for about 8.800 artworks.

We then analysed the tags and classified them in factual tags (information about location, subject, figures etc.), subjective tags (feelings, and opinions) and personal tags, which describe the personal relationships to an artwork.

Our examination shows that most of the tags describe factual tags, while only a small amount tags are classified as subjective and personal tags. We show what themes and genres of artworks evoke feelings and emotions, and which ones do not. Furthermore we draw conclusions whether there is a correlation between the knowledge of the users and their emotional perception. Finally we provide knowledge on how to develop Web platforms that endorse feelings and make it therefore possible to perceive art more emotional and joyful.

Whitney Davis and Linda Fitzgerald
The Digital and the Duplicate in Art History

The presenters are a professional art historian and a university administrator supervising a visual resources collection, both working in an academic department of art history that is confronting typical questions of crossing the "digital divide." If digital images are available in online databases, should slides of them be scanned? If picture books in an art history library have been fully scanned, can the books be removed from the library, even deaccessioned or sold? What about the reproduction and presentation of digital images themselves? Questions like these tend to be addressed primarily by considering digital images as reproductions of original artifacts, adequate or not as the case might be relative to other technologies of reproduction (e.g., prints, photographs, or slides). But the presentation emphasizes that we must also consider their status as duplicates of themselves. A photograph, slide, or scan reproduces the original artwork more or less adequately, but it also reproduces itself more or less adequately—and can be manipulated to do so.

In the past, this was a pressing question. If a book in the art library containing essential illustrations went missing, it had to be replaced (a "duplicate" had to be found); if slides began to fall apart, they had to be rebound (or duplicated from the original). Oddly, however, many approaches to digital images of artworks assume that the problem of duplication has been mitigated, even that it has disappeared-- that one of the advantages of digital images is that they can be infinitely (re)iterated at relatively negligible cost and remain perfectly alike, whatever the quality of their reproduction of the prototype. If the quality is poor, in fact, the digital mediation allows them to be "fixed" (e.g., color correction used to enhance scans) and even "improved" (e.g., "photoshopping" in order to remove distractions present in the original). At least notionally, digital mediation enables perfect reproduction in infinite duplication; many decisions about goals, costs, and standards assume this.

The presentation questions this approach. Logically or mathematically it may be true, but technically and visually it is limited. First, is it correct that digital images deliver better and wider control over processes of duplication than earlier technologies used to mediate images of artworks? Variation in the projection of one digital image-file from one context to another is possibly just as great as variation in the variation of photographic prints produced from the same negative or displayed in different galleries. Second, are there reasons to preserve (rather than try to overcome) phenomena of duplication in visible chains of reproduction in art history--differences not only from artwork to photograph to digital image but also between photographs digital images)? Because the manipulation of images becomes ever more easy in their digital mediations, it may be a crucial task of critical thinking to be maximally alert to duplicative activity, especially when images are specifically proposed as "reproductions" of an original (e.g., the way an artwork or a person "really looks"). Third, digital mediation may be changing our very standards of what counts as "the same" or "different" in the experience of an image of something, its "reproduction." How do we preserve an awareness of other regimes of duplication-- regimes within which many artworks were (re)produced in the past?

In regimes of the digital mediation of images, has the duplicate overtaken the reproduction? Using digital technologies, it is notionally possible to duplicate an image through a vast field of possibilities ranging from the production of mediations that are virtually indiscernible from the prototype to mediations that are visibly disjunct from the prototype along well-defined axes of variation, all of which can be converted into one another (and into other images) in quick and easy ways. The presentation advocates that much can be learned from experimenting with practices across this entire field, kept visible as such, as opposed to sticking with narrowly defined criteria for adequacy of reproduction in relation to the putative primacy of originals artworks and original perceptual experiences.

Ryan Egel-Andrews

Is YouTube good for art history? The potential and threat of remix culture.

YouTube is perhaps the most ubiquitous visual resource in the Western world. Taking inspiration from Lawrence Lessig's notion that remix and mash-up culture is an important development in the articulation of contemporary culture this paper considers whether this idea is an opportunity or a threat to art history. Lessig has argued that a remix, when deployed effectively, can be an actively critical enterprise and it is therefore worth considering whether edited video footage might enrich art history as a discipline.

In 2009 I edited together YouTube clips of Damien Hirst interviews to produce a mash-up that de-contextualized the interview footage, transforming it into a comical, rapidly edited sequence of Hirst appearing to criticize himself and his art. Analysis of the video alongside Julian Stallabrass's polemic 'High Art Lite: The Rise and fall of Young British Art' shows the two to critically approach Hirst's art in similar (negative) ways.

Piet Mondrian's work has been subject to seemingly endless digital reworkings. Typically these involve the '3D-ization' of his canvas paintings into motion graphics that explode out the flat colour panels and lines into animated 'explorations' of three dimensional space. Analysis of a typical example shows it to fundamentally misunderstand Mondrian's work as he described it in his theoretical writings.

These two examples, one tentatively encouraging and one extremely discouraging point to both the potential and threat the remix poses to the history of art. It is tentatively encouraging because whilst there is clearly scope for effective, critical remixes in an art context this form of creativity currently lacks the intellectual structure of referenced text to support active and continuing discourse. The question is whether such a framework might exist in the future.

The Mondrian example points to something more troublesome. The ubiquity of cheap digital editing tools, combined with Hal Foster's notion that contemporary creative output is typified by an obsession with design, leads

to a seemingly endless stream of videos that fail to engage critically with their subject matter. If we agree with Lessig that remix is a valid and ever growing force then its unchecked development runs the risk of eroding, or even reimagining, our knowledge of art.

Monika Kin Gagnon

Communicating the Intermedia Archive: The Theresa Hak Kyung Cha Collection

With the advent of media digitization, previously inaccessible conventional and media archives now proliferate in all their ubiquity, now available to researchers, but also more publicly through social media such as YouTube and Vimeo, as well as through online archival sites including UbuWeb, and scholarly consortiums such as the Online Archive of California. This presentation will take as its case example, the online archive of Korean American conceptual artist, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, whose archival collection is currently housed at the Berkeley Art Museum archive, University of California, and was part of an initial prototyping of conceptual art archives online by the Online Archive of California (Lewallen, Rinehart).

This investigation is situated within the current surge of scholarly interest in archives and media archives in relation to digitization (Chun, Prelinger, Rinehart, Van Dijck,), which has created a propitious framework to explore the ontologies of the archive and alternative modes of communicating and disseminating conventional and media-based archives. Digital and online archives introduce complex issues concerning the very nature of archives as their ontology of authenticity and originality comes under challenge, and volumes of digital data exponentially increase their very content (Van Dijck). Epistemological questions concerning archival access, circulation of documents, and copyright ownership also emerge, as do challenges concerning their storage (Hand). As Richard Rinehart has remarked, Cha's archive proposes unique challenges, as her conceptual approach to intermedia art-making requires contextualization and inter-relations between objects to be productively drawn. The tensions between archival protocols and conventions (classification and naming, for instance), and non-specialized viewer access, precipitously and productively encounter each other in the online archive. Drawing on specific examples from Cha's conceptual work and her online archive, this paper will explore the various advantages and consequences of online archives and what this offers for developing creative approaches to effectively communicating archives.

Doron Goldfarb, Max Arends, Josef Froschauer, Dieter Merkl, Martin Weingartner

Exploring Artworks on the Web by their Socio-Historical Context

A number of Art Historical resources on the Web offer data whose scope goes well beyond the standard object centred annotation that is usually found within data sources about cultural artefacts.

One particular aspect is information about the social relationships of Art Historical actors, being family members, teachers, patrons, sitters etc. The dominant medium for conveying such historical interplay between involved persons has been in the form of text telling stories about their socio-historical context and their biographical progress.

As of today, some data sources do, however, offer information about such relationships in explicit form by providing associative links between related persons, resulting in snapshots of the social network structure of the involved actors in the form of graphs. The recent emergence of online social networks has raised the discussion about the value of such explicitly represented relationships for research and interpretation, as they, of course, cannot fully represent the interwoven complexity of real world relationships between people.

Moreover, in the case of historic events, the available information is limited to - sometimes very biased - biographical sources that have survived the course of history, or to assumptions drawn from indications implicitly embedded in artefacts.

When dealing with dynamic online access to artworks, i.e. queries against image databases, the traditional means of presentation usually consist of image galleries that are dynamically arranged according to specific metadata attributes matched against an initial user query. Thus, the artworks are grouped by attributes such as title, subject, artist, style, etc., i.e. information that provides only limited socio-historical context to a non-expert audience. In this respect, and despite of the previously mentioned shortcomings, we believe that explicit facts about the historical relations between artists and other related people can be utilised to provide an intermediate layer of context for the dynamic Web based presentation of works of art, embedding the artwork within a social context that is usually only rarely addressed by traditional means of dynamic presentation.

In our paper, we therefore propose a Web based system that combines various semantic data sources within a 3D Information Landscape based on a chronologically ordered graph representation of social relations between important figures of Art History (See Figure 1). The environment is dynamically constructed upon entering the name of an artist, expanding around his or her social relationships, thus allowing visitors to immerse into the flow of history and to explore works of Art in a different way.

Stephen Grey

The Performance Art Data Structure (PADS)

Performance art, often seen as a transitory art form, in fact has long lasting interest for both artist and scholar. A technically innovative effort is required in order to 'conserve' such artworks which do not have a single solid material manifestation. A unique data structuring tool is presented which unites disparate digital documentation into a single representative record or 'score'. The tool is demonstrated in use by showing the 'score' Richard Layzell's 1996 performance artwork, 'I Never Done Enough Weird Stuff'.

The idea for PADS began during the digitisation of the National Review of Live Art analogue videotape collection. Some interesting problems occur when using a single videotape to represent a performance artwork.

The Performance Art Documentation Structure is a data tool intended to unite parts of a performance artwork (such as videos, tweets, props/objects, stills, interviews, transcripts, emails, notes and plans) into a single interoperable record. PADS does not attempt to replace a performance work, the PADS record or 'score' simply describes the connections between fragments of a work in order to assist researchers of performance art.

PADS is a special implementation of Richard Rinehart's Media Art Notation System (MANS) and both systems are built on the MPEG-21 metadata framework. This standardisation is intended to allow PADS scores to be exchanged between organisations and individuals.

Fabia Ling-Yuan Lin

Poses and Movements

Originated from suspicion emerged in the making of practices, this paper begins with the wondering that is there something keeps pixilation, the stop-motion technique of using live actors as 'puppet' in an animated film, 'alienated' from cartoon's realist approach.

The gold principles for cartoon's realistic registration are developed by the leading Disney animators and other Hollywood followers from 1930s onwards. Though originally designed for hand-drawn animation, the principles have been successfully adopted by various kinds of object animation, and also today's prevalent computer animation. It seems that with a little modification, this set of principles could work in all kinds of animation to improve a sense of realism, preventing the animated figures from looking like automatons. The technique of pixilation, however, has rarely demonstrated cartoon's realist registration in spite of its kinship with animation family.

It could be argued that cinema begins by thinking of the inter-relationship between poses and movement. In that event, pixilated and live-action films belong to two different image systems, and the core difference between them is that the former is constituted by 'poses' while the later is by 'sections'. That is to say, the smallest unit of the former is 'the condensation of time', whereas that of the later is 'the dissection of time'. The two modes of image system, as suggested in this paper, can be examined in three ways: 1) detached or immanent elements; 2) closed or open forms; and 3) different attitudes towards the unseen. In the light of the comparison, this paper argues that as a creation which have been aspiring to the realistic image system of live-action film for more than half a century, the notion of movement in cartoon films becomes so analogous to which of the live-action film that the distinction between it and live action becomes much smaller than that between pixilation and live action – even though pixilation is made by photographing live actors just like what happens with live action.

Nevertheless, borders could be collapsed. This paper argues that one of the impacts the digital technologies make for the aesthetics of moving image is that they have provided new ways to collapse borders between 'the condensation of time' and 'the dissection of time'. By examining contemporary short films, different ways of expressing the ideas of time and space through the materiality of moving image are identified. The significances of these strategies are also discussed.

Gavin MacDonald

Moving bodies in 'the inhabitable map': the GPS trace and its referent in new media art.

The development of ubiquitous/pervasive digital technologies has, according to the geographer Nigel Thrift, been one aspect of a fundamental cultural shift. We now live, Thrift argues, in a fully gridded world populated by trackable objects, and as our surroundings have become imbued with data and calculation, the world has become a fabric that is constantly being respun: 'the inhabitable map.' Thrift's argument is that life in the inhabitable map is *experienced* as continuous, flowing and mobile, and to illustrate this he draws on the anthropologist Tim Ingold's use of a wandering, gestural line as a motif for an authentic life lost – fragmented – in the transformations of modernity. However, this is not a return, rather Thrift argues that the inhabitable map is a world in which phenomenological encounter is now mass produced, with this mass production dependent on the very gridding of the world that for Ingold, is bound up with the fragmentation of both lines and lives.

The GPS trace has been employed in new media art practices since the 1990s, and is particularly evident in the locative media genre that emerged in the early 2000s. In works where maps are overlaid or even produced by aggregations of mobilities, there is often an apparent commitment to understanding the GPS trace as continuous with that which it refers to, as an indexical sign of a life, of a movement in the world. Other works problematise such understandings, emphasizing the mediation of these lines.

In this paper Ingold's and Thrift's different takes on lines and lives, mapping and mobility, are used as the starting point for a discussion of the GPS trace in new media art. This paper will draw on recent interviews, conducted during doctoral research, with artists who have made a significant engagement with GPS, mapping and mobility over the past decade: Daniel Belasco Rogers, Christian Nold, Esther Polak and Jen Southern. With reference to particular works, it will consider the way the GPS trace and its relationship with its referent has been understood and imagined.

Barbara Pezzini

Taxonomy and Contradiction in The Burlington Magazine Online Index

In this paper I will present the new Burlington Magazine Online Index and discuss the issues behind its classification system. *The Burlington Magazine*, with its juxtaposition of art trade and academia, historicism and aestheticism has occupied a unique role in the art world since it was first published in 1903. From its very beginnings the magazine has produced a detailed printed index and in 2005 it received a grant from the Mellon Foundation to create a cumulative online version of it. The Burlington Index helps to distribute culture by bringing analogue data from the printed magazine into the digital arena and uses social media to promote itself and reach new users. The Index is a groundbreaking project, not just for its wide scope - over a century of material - but also for its highly specialised contents and its open, free for all, access. This is also the first index which includes illustrations and access to images (via JSTOR).

The Burlington Index is now nearly complete and freely available online. How is the Burlington Index structured and what are its models? How its destination for general data users rather than specialised ones (eg. librarians) has influenced its structure? What are its aims and limitations? In the Burlington Online Index are contained both the taxonomic need for order and logic and the strive for embracing contradictory aspects that have been traditionally suppressed in digital systems. The Burlington Index aims to include descriptors rather than exclude them. But, is this openness resulting in a loss of coherence and logic?

This paper fits into the conference's theme as the discussion of the issues created by open access of the index engages with Bourriaud's observation on how technologies can bring about a "collective desire to create new areas of conviviality and introduce new types of transaction with regard to the cultural object." The analysis of the categories used to create the index also ties in with the subjects discussed in the conference, as it considers a digital system as bearer of complexity and contradictions and not a mere conduit of data and information.

Catherine Richards and Martin Snelgrove

Method and Apparatus - A Patent

This conference proposal presents an artwork, well beyond networks as simple conduits. It describes a convergence of wireless networks, viral programming, sensory receivers / actuators and data-mining as a blueprint for new kind of artwork.

This artwork exists as: a patent application correspondence process; an exhibited art work in contemporary art museums; published on the U.S. patent web site and finally, within the patent text itself, a description of a complex 'artefact', that is, complex devices. It engages issues of: originality in artistic terms and innovation in terms of intellectual property; the original versus viral ubiquity; the implications of real-time technologies for the creation, ownership and distribution of artworks and questions of aesthetic quality in this new terrain where other senses and structures are involved as much as the visual.

Creating an artwork as a patent had several important attractions. It implicated the discussion of intellectual property that is increasingly privatizing human activity. It created a new site for an artwork, as in some respects patents are similar to art galleries in that they maintain well-established boundaries between subject and object. It dictated an established form that offered an extraordinary opportunity to entwine both science and art as agents of desire. It created a web presence when posted (exhibited) on the U.S. patent web site and as such, 'gazes' can be tracked (as opposed to museum paintings, for example, that may only keep rough track of visitor numbers). Finally as a site to describe our 'invention' we could directly engage with the friction between the art domain and the emergence of IT, interactive, networked personal devices that increasingly seem to impinge on artists' territory.

This patent was filed at the U.S. patent office, crossing the boundary between representation and actuality. We propose to present and discuss the attached patent including the correspondence with the patent office.

Bill Roberts

Organised Networks as Institutional Critique

Over the past decade, organised networks have become a key feature in the alternative and activist media landscape. Ranging from mailing lists to collective blogs and para-institutions, these networks have been conceived and initiated as responses to the perceived limitations of 'tactical media' (TM) of the 1990s. For Geert Lovink and others, the 'hit-and-run' ethos of TM increasingly began to show itself, in its 'short-termism' and relatively narrow political horizons, as the mirror image of official neoliberal culture.

Organised networks are intended instead, then, as accountable, sustainable and (crucially) scalable architectures of 'immanent critique' – of the ubiquity of techno-capitalist culture as a whole, including the Net itself – whose 'institutional logic is internal to the socio-technical dimensions of the media of communication' (Lovink).

Just as figures like Lovink and artist Gregory Sholette have begun to provide sober reassessments of the heyday of TM in the 1990s, TM itself has begun to be embraced by the art world as the 'latest stage' in the practice of 'institutional critique' – art's critique of its social and economic constitution. TM's great attraction here has been its own hybrid institutional status, within and between the fields of art and media activism. Meanwhile, organised networks have themselves so far been discussed mostly in the spheres of media studies and net criticism, as a challenge to the mainstream mass media and as potential pathways for new forms of direct democracy.

This paper will ask if and how the shift among net critics and media theorists from TM to organised networks could also become part of an art-world narrative of institutional critique. What problems are posed for the art world's framing and absorption of activist media practice when that practice itself moves from the production of identifiable works and events – amenable to discussion in aesthetic terms – to the production of continuously evolving network architectures of discussion and critique on the model of the academy? Do organised networks jettison the 'aesthetic dimension' entirely, or do they demand the theorisation of an art beyond the production of discrete works by discrete artists? In posing these questions, the paper will consider some of the attempts so far to do just this, that is, to theorise organised networks as a practice of 'distributed aesthetics' (Lovink and Anna Munster), of the 'artwork-as-network-in-process' (John Roberts), as 'processual aesthetics' (Ned Rossiter) or 'info-aesthetics' (Lev Manovich).

David Trujillo

The Digital Image: Desensitization and Exploration of 21st Century Society

"The public is an examiner, but an absent-minded one." In his 1936 essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin discusses the increasing mechanization and commodification of art in the 20th century. Although contemporary society is far removed from Benjamin's theories of artistic reproduction as far as historical context goes, his postulations and caveats in the realm of art theory were never more relevant than they are in post-modern society. It was Benjamin's contention that art had lost its aura through mechanical reproduction and the absence of the authentic original. However, Benjamin theorized that society would slowly

grow accustomed to a deluge of commercial and artistic images, and that the public would develop a habit of distractedly processing imagery through sub-conscious affections of the optical complex.

Contemporary society is faced with this problem of desensitization, and the battleground upon which fine art will stand or fall is the realm of digitization. Photography was one of the main mediums that Benjamin focused on throughout *The Work of Art*, and it provides an example of how digitization has both advanced and cheapened art in the 21st century. Digital photography has had a massive impact on how individuals view themselves and the medium of photography in general. Therefore, it was my intention to explore this influence that digitization has had on photography and society, and what role digitization has played on transforming photography as a medium.

My paper explores a brief history of digital photography, the technological context and parameters of the digital medium; differences, similarities, and considerations regarding analog and digital photography, and will end with an examination of the consequences of widespread use of digital photography. Specifically, I will look at the effects that photosharing websites such as Facebook and Flickr have had on the way society views photographs, both aesthetically and psychologically, and how artists have embraced the digitization of the medium. The obstacles and advantages of digital photography present a complex matrix that must be understood to fully grasp the state of not only the fine arts, but also everyday life. Digitization has become a double-edged sword within the photographic medium, and it is my contention that digitization has brought about a photographic revolution that will push the medium to new heights as long as certain practical and theoretical implications are taken into concern.

Mark Winokur

Ubiquity and ideology

In his seminal definition of ideology, Karl Mannheim referred to Francis Bacon's "theory of the *idola*," which "may be regarded to a certain extent as a forerunner of the modern conception of ideology. The 'idols' were 'phantoms' or 'preconceptions,'" in other words both visual and ideational from the first modern use of the term. Except for "scopic regime" studies, we have tended to forget this visual component of ideology, especially when thinking about ideology as total. But total immersion – a principally visual phenomenon as we have been using the term in *New Media Studies* -- is very like the way, for example, Louis Althusser thinks of ideology: as a total phenomenon always seeking but never quite succeeding in being invisible. Ubiquitous computing, which I take to refer to two distinct phenomena – the utopic synesthesia of the perfect videogame and the containment of the subject within a total computing environment – has as its nearest cousin in the Humanities (after perhaps "convergence," which has not gained much traction of late) immersion. I believe that Humanities critics and scholars (like Slavoj Žižek) are deeply mistrustful of notions like immersion and ubiquitous computing because of their unacknowledged kinship to the notion of [I]deology.

I would like to argue in contrast that convergence, digital multi-media, ubiquitous computing and all the other modes of thinking about new media immersion are not necessarily reducible to ideology conducted by technological means, first because we have always been immersed, and second, because such ubiquity can be put to good use. The example I would like to use is a new online journal – epistemologies.org -- that conflates the idea of the academic essay and the art piece, and offers the possibility of immediate audience feedback on the artwork. Though the site is immersive, it is not yet ubiquitous. This paper will be in part a thought experiment about how one might think about an online arts journal as the site of visceral ubiquity as well.