**The Media Art Institution in an
Information-Filled Atmosphere:
The Edith-Ruß-Haus for Media Art as a Case Study**

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die auf Medienkunst spezialisierte Institution ist bislang noch nicht Gegenstand einer akademischen Betrachtung gewesen. Die vorliegende Dissertation beginnt damit, diese Leerstelle zu füllen. Ausgangspunkt ist eine Beschreibung der Prozesse von Definition, Kontextualisierung, Präsentation und dem Erzählen von Medienkunst in eigens dafür vorgesehenen Räumen.

Die Strategie dieser Untersuchung ist dabei die einer Fallstudie: beschreibend und erläuternd. Methodisch qualitativ angelegt, untersucht diese Arbeit warum und vor allem wie die Medienkunstinstitution die Perzeption und Rezeption von Medienkunst gestaltet. Durch die für diese Untersuchung ausgewählten, beispielhaft diskutierten Kunstwerke wird auch die Institution selbst interpretierbar.

Die Autorin war selbst in den Jahren zwischen 2001 und 2004 als künstlerische und organisatorische Leiterin des Edith-Ruß-Hauses für Medienkunst tätig. Das erst im Jahr 2000 eröffnete Edith-Ruß-Haus war bei der Berufung der Autorin im Jahr 2001 kein vollkommen unbeschriebenes Blatt. Allerdings war die Position des Hauses im lokalen und internationalen Kontext damals genauso wenig definiert, wie seine Haltung zur Medienkunst und Programmatik. Die in dieser Untersuchung behandelten Themen entwickelten sich aus den damaligen Überlegungen zur Gestalt einer zeitgenössischen Medienkunstinstitution. Aus der Arbeit heraus haben sich diese ersten Setzungen vielfach modifiziert und erweitert – um Fragestellungen aus den Bereichen der Curatorial Studies, der Sozial- und Kunstwissenschaft, der Medientheorie, Rhetorical Theory, Relational Aesthetics und Participation, sowie Film- und Architekturtheorie.

Der Begriff „Medienkunstinstitution" bezieht sich – trotz des hier verwendeten Singulars – auf alle Medienkunstinstitutionen; wissend, dass diese sich in grundlegenden Punkten durchaus unterscheiden. Sie alle verbinden jedoch vergleichbare Fragen der Dynamik der Institution, die sich als Raum und Akteur zwischen Medienkunst, Publikum und KünstlerInnen definiert. Wie das traditionelle Museum sind auch sie als Ort von Mauern umschlossen, gleichzeitig aber bewusst Teil der alle Sphären der heutigen Gesellschaft durchdringenden

technokulturellen Atmosphäre, aus der sie Inhalte generieren und für die sie *Content* produzieren.

Zu den ersten Überlegungen einer neuen, auf Medienkunst spezialisierten Institution gehört die Klärung, was überhaupt zur Gattung Medienkunst gezählt wird. Eine Frage, die sich immer wieder neu stellt und verhandelt werden muss, ihr gilt das erste Kapitel „Media Art Under Negotiation", in dem es nicht nur um Definitionsfragen geht, sondern auch die Gründe für die anti-essentialistische Haltung der zeitgenössischen Praxis. Die Spannung zwischen den Termini *media art* und *new media art* und ebenso die aktuelle Position, Medienkunst als durch charakteristische Verhaltensweisen (*behaviors*) zu beschreiben, wie dies in *Rethinking Curating: Art after New Media* (2010) von Beryl Graham und Sarah Cook vorkommt, werden untersucht.

Edward Schiappas *Defining Reality* (2003) aus der Theorie der Kommunikationswissenschaft und Rhetorik abgeleitete Methodik ist Grundlage einer Definitionsfindung, nach der es nicht darum geht, ein taxinomisches oder philosophisches „ist" zu verhandeln, sondern pragmatisch über dessen normative Auswirkungen nachzudenken. Medienkunst „ist" einerseits die Kunst der neuen Technologien – sie „soll" (ought) aber auch eine künstlerische Praxis beschreiben, die alle Gattungen der Kunst aus der Perspektive der Kunst- und Medientheorie betrachtet: Hier ist auch die Medienkunstinstitution ein Ort der analytischen Perspektive. W.J.T. Mitchell und Mark B.N. Hansen folgen diesem Ansatz mit ihrer Aufsatzband *Critical Terms for Media Studies* (2010), einer Suche nach einem dritten Weg zwischen Empirismus und Interpretation. Aus diesem Ansatz heraus ist in dieser Dissertation die Medienkunstinstitution, die gleichfalls zur Erkundung der Schnittpunkte von Technologie, Ästhetik und Gesellschaft ansetzt, selbst ein Medium das Medienkunst verhandelt.

Aber mit wem wird in welcher Arena verhandelt? Das Kapitel „*Can You See Me Now – Oldenburg*" verortet das Edith-Ruß-Haus in ganz unterschiedlichen geographischen und kulturellen Topografien und beschreibt die Institution als Teil mehrer Arten von Communities, Sphären, die nicht als voneinander isoliert betrachtet werden dürfen. Hier wird die Institution sowohl als physischer als auch als virtueller Ort beschrieben und das Handeln zwischen diesen Räumen durch das

Prisma des Kunstwerks *Can You See Me Now – Oldenburg?* (2003) betrachtet.

Unter der Überschrift „Forms of Participation" werden Strategien zur Gestaltung von Interaktion mit Communities und vonPartizipation beschrieben. . Die Partizipation am Programm reicht dabei vom flüchtigen Blick auf das Geschehen oder dessen schweigsame Beobachtung bis hin zur Diskussion oder zur aktiven Teilnahme an der Realisierung eines Kunstwerks. Traditionelle Programme – wie beispielsweise das Künstlerstipendium (residency) –, können nach aktuellem Bedarf oder entsprechend der Arbeitsweise der KünstlerInnen kalibriert werden, um jeweils in unterschiedlichem Grad die Partizipation zwischen KünstlerInnen, lokalem Zusammenhang und der Institution zu ermöglichen.

Kuratorische Strategien, die aus Nicholas Bourriauds Begriff der „relational aesthetics" hervorgegangen sind, sind Grundlage einer Methodik, die hier als „relational spaces of participation" und „relational program infrastructures" genannt werden. Victoria Vesnas Installation und ihre Mobiltelefon-Performance unter dem Titel *Cellular Trans_Actions* (2001) sind exemplarische Arbeiten, durch die die relationalen Aspekte von Technologie den Ort und das Programm der Institution als relationalen Raum aktivieren. Die Implementierung von relationalen kuratorischen Strategien stellt ein Echo zwischen dem vernetzten, sozialen Modell des zeitgenössischen Medienumfelds, das dem Publikum intuitiv bekannt ist und dem Umfeld der Institution her.

Dieses Umfeld ist dadurch bestimmt, dass hier eine Geschichte der Medienkunst – oder vielmehr: Geschichten der Medienkunst – erzählt werden, dass die Institution aktuelles Geschehen und Entwicklungen sowie mögliche zukünftige Abläufe formuliert. Das Kapitel „Narrating Media Art" reflektiert die Art und Weise, in der die Institution sich ausdrückt. Dabei aktikuliert sich die Präsentation in den Medienkunstinstitutionen als „speech act", wie sie der Kunsthistoriker Bruce Ferguson in dem Aufsatz „Exhibition Rhetorics" (1996) vorstellt. In diesem Vergleich sind die narrativen Formen beispielsweise Ausstellungen, Diskussionsserien oder Vorführungen, die bisher an den unterschiedlichen Orten, an denen Medienkunst historisch gezeigt werden, wie Festivals, Konferenzen für Kunst und Technik oder dem Museum präsentiert

wird. Die daraus resultierende Frage ist, wie eine Medienkunstinstitution in ihrer Programmstruktur diese diversen und hybriden Präsentationsgeschichten reflektiert.

Die Institution „spricht" aber nicht nur in Form von Kunstpräsentationen, sondern auch da, wo sie tatsächlich schreibt: In der Pressearbeit oder in den das Programm begleitenden Publikationen, die ebenfalls eine wichtige Rolle im Prozess der Historisierung von Medienkunst spielen. Zudem sind viele KünstlerInnen auch als WissenschaftlerInnen, TheoretikerInnen und VermittlerInnen tätig – die Rolle als Erzähler von Geschichte und die Möglichkeiten der Medienkunstinstitution, dessen Ressourcen einzusetzen, um Ko-Erzähler der Geschichte zu sein, werden hier diskutiert.

Der Gedanke des Erzählens wird unter dem Titel „Sounding an Atmosphere" weiter verfolgt. Zwei Formen von Metaphern des Hörsinns (aurality) werden verwendet, um die Institution zu beschreiben: Einerseits, dass sie eine Stimme hat und, auf der anderen Seite, dass sie Teil der umfassenden Atmosphäre ist, die, wie Sound, einen allseitig umfängt und einhüllt. Die Institution produziert so eine Atmosphäre für Medienkunst, während sie selbstreflexiv mit der umgebenden technokulturellen Atmosphäre im Austausch steht.

Der Filmtheoretiker Michel Chion benennt mit dem Terminus des Acousmêtre auch einen Charakter, der im Film zwar als Stimme zu hören ist, dessen Körper allerdings nie auf der Leinwand erscheint. Diesem Konzept folgend, wird die Institution als „silent acousmêtre" beschrieben, die in ihrer Arena autoritativ als allwissend agiert während es das Publikum dazu verführt, am Programm der Institution teilzuhaben. Dieses Verhalten der Institution kann man mit dem Begriff der auditiven Persönlichkeit in Beziehung setzen, der aus der Architekturtheorie stammend in *Spaces Speak: Are You Listening? Experiencing Aural Architecture* (2006) von Barry Blesser und Linda Salter entwickelt wurde. Mark Bains Kunstwerk *Sonusphere* konnte als Verstärker der auditiven Persönlichkeit des Edith-Russ-Hauses gelesen werden. Die Institution erscheint als „inter-reactive" Zone, in der jeder, der diese Arena betritt – ganz gleich, wie peripher -, die „Atmosphäre" in und um diesen sozialen Raum beeinflusst. Dieser Erkenntnis folgend, kann man die Medienkunstinstitution als

Ort verstehen, der in einer „resonanten, informations-gefüllten Atmosphäre" existiert und diese gleichzeitig generiert. So zumindest erscheint sie hier in der technokulturellen Umgebung, wie die Medienkunsttheoretikerin Frances Dyson diese in *Sounding New Media* (2009) beschrieben hat. In der ihr eigenen permeablen Atmosphäre stellt die Medienkunstinstitution Bedeutung erst im Zusammenspiel mit denjenigen her, die in ihr und mit ihr verhandeln und an ihren Aktivitäten teilhaben.

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INTRODUCTION

The specialized media art institution has garnered little attention in academic research. This dissertation addresses that paucity by investigating how media art is defined, contextualized, exhibited, and narrated in the dedicated space of the media art institution. I explore the media art institution as at once a space enclosed by walls (like a traditional museum) but self-consciously permeable and permeating as it acts within the technocultural, information-filled atmosphere of contemporary society from which the institution draws and produces content and meaning.

As a research strategy, this is a case study of the Edith-Ruß-Haus für Medienkunst that is descriptive and explanatory. The methodology of this dissertation is qualitative, investigating how the institution acts to shape the perception and reception of media art. From 2001 through 2004 I was Artistic Director (künstlerische und organisatorische Leitung) of the Edith-Ruß-Haus für Medienkunst. Exhibitions and other curatorial formats for the presentation and discussion of artworks as well as individual artworks from the program are given as examples. Artworks are often used metaphorically here: they are less interpreted by the institution than the institution is interpreted through the artworks.

The Edith-Ruß-Haus had two artistic directors and a changing advisory committee in the one year before I came in as the first permanent director. Though the program in 2001 was not a blank slate, that institution's position in the landscape of contemporary art, including media art, was still largely undefined. The physical shape of the Edith-Ruß-Haus, the building's facilities, was established when it opened in 2000. Yet the manner in which the program would shape its encounters with audiences, with local and international cultural communities, and with artists was something still to be determined. Every time a new director begins at an institution its program changes to some degree, but the Edith-Ruß-Haus's very short institutional history meant that it was less a matter of changing a program than initiating one. The question of what a media art institution could be in Oldenburg was wide open. The subjects in this dissertation can be traced back to deliberations over the possibilities. This

dissertation incorporates my practical experience in designing and executing a media art institution's program as well as research in the areas of curatorial studies, art history, media theory, contemporary rhetorical theory, relational aesthetics and participation, film theory and architectural theory.

Every media art institution has another configuration: In addition to differences in facilities (with or without a cinema, with or without research labs) or basic content (with or without a collection) each emphasizes particular aspects of media art in its general program. This dissertation nevertheless speaks of the media art institution in the singular because they all grapple with similar issues pertaining to the dynamics of the institution as a space and an agent acting between media art, audiences and artists.

Usually, when media art and institutions are the research topic, the reference is to museums for the broader field of contemporary art and the appearance (or lack thereof) of media art within them. The essays edited by Christiane Paul for *New Media in the White Cube and Beyond* hit upon the main themes and questions for media art and museums: institutional spaces and "immaterial" forms of art, distribution, participation, and preservation.[1] I explore these subjects only in their specific application to the media art institution, not from the standpoint of a program in which a curator must fight for "real estate" in the museum to show media art or must grapple with adapting a museum's infrastructure to accommodate art involving new technologies. The media art institution has already built its infrastructure and program around the "behaviors" of media art (a term Beryl Graham, Sarah Cook and Steve Deitz have described and is discussed in chapter 1) and for those who desire to view it, listen to it, and perhaps participate in it.

At certain points the discussion of art and programming in the media art institution pertains equally to contemporary art institutions in general. This is because the media art institution does not exist in a vacuum, unconnected and unaware of what is happening in art and institutions outside its specialty. After all, contemporary art *is* the media art institution's specialty and "media" in its manifold meanings is the perspective. Rather than separate out how *this* is a

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[1] Christiane Paul, ed., *New Media in the White Cube and Beyond: Curatorial Models for Digital Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

characteristic of media art institutions and *that* is a characteristic of contemporary art institutions, which would drive a conceptual wedge between these categories, I emphasize the sense of technoculture used in the development of the contemporary (media) art institution. This culture is brought out and refined in the media art institution, but it is found elsewhere even if it is not always recognized as such.

Since there is so little written on media art institutions, they have been left to historicize themselves, often publishing their institutional histories online and upon their major anniversaries.[2] These accounts are documentary in nature: a timeline of events accompanied with supporting reflections on what has happened at the institution. In 2011 the Edith-Ruß-Haus also published two retrospective books on specific components of its program: *medien kunst vermitteln* is based on the institution's educational program under Sabine Himmelsbach's artistic directorship and *Produced@* celebrates the ten-year history of the institution's artist residencies with documentation and essays on current issues in residencies and artistic production.[3]

In a sense, this dissertation is almost part of a self-historicization, but works at a slight remove. As its former director, my discussion of the program at the Edith-Ruß-Haus comes directly from my experiences with it. Yet the emphasis is institutional rather than autobiographical. I believe to have benefited from the passage of time and distance from Oldenburg when it comes to removing the self-promotional tone so common in "curator lit." Instead of being an anecdotal memoire, I rely upon Edith-Ruß-Haus events, publications and artworks presented in the institution as "field notes" in order to illustrate larger points on the media art institution.

In the most comprehensive survey to date on curating media art, Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook's *Rethinking Curating*, media art institutions receive

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[2] See "zkm_beginnings," ZKM Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Online, accessed July 17, 2012, http://on1.zkm.de/zkm/stories/storyReader$3854; "About" and "Past Archives," ICC InterCommunication Center Online, accessed July 17, 2012, http://www.ntticc.or.jp/About/introduction.html and http://www.ntticc.or.jp/pastactivity/top?lang=en; Hannes Leopoldseder, Christine Schöpf, and Gerfried Stocker, eds. *Ars Electronica 1979-2004: The Network for Art, Technology and Society, The First 25 Years*. eds (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2004).
[3] Nanna Lüth and Sabine Himmelsbach, *medien kunst vermitteln* (Berlin: Revolver Publishing, 2011); Sabine Himmelsbach, ed., *Produced@-10 Jahre Stipendium für Medienkunst* (Berlin: Revolver Publishing, 2011).

attention in one paragraph: "The desire for institutions that understand the meaning of both art and technology has led to a growing number of specialist media art institutions, such as FACT in Liverpool and ZKM in Karlsruhe—the former without and the latter with a collection. Beyond the task of providing buildings with the right facilities for new media, these institutions bear the burden of exhibiting, historicizing, and discussing the critical subdivisions within the field, including the division between video and other new media."[4] Much remains beyond the scope of this passage, which is addressed again in chapter 4. The starting point of this dissertation is how media art institutions complete those tasks and where audiences fit into them. It goes on to investigate the institution's environment for the reception of media art and how it relates to a greater information-filled atmosphere.

At the time the Edith-Ruß-Haus began its program these questions were often positioned within a discourse on Internet art. An uneasy relationship between a decentralized art form that spreads itself across the Internet and institutional centralization had been hotly discussed since *net.art*, as it was often called at the time, was exhibited in 1997 at *documenta X*.[5] Debates over Internet art dominated the discussion of media art for the next four years and could still be witnessed at the 2001 seminar *Curating New Media* at BALTIC Center for Contemporary Art in Gateshead, which was in its pre-planning stages before its new facilities opened in 2002.[6] BALTIC is not specifically designated for the presentation of media art but it has a very strong history in this area. The seminar focused on institutional practice and media art, and it invited artists, museum curators, and commercial gallerists to participate. Upon reading the

[4] Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook, *Rethinking Curating: Art After New Media* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2010), 190.

[5] The controversy over the installation and institutionalization of Internet art at *documenta X* as it unfolded on its own Web forum is summarized by Kathy Rae Huffmann, "The WebSite of documenta x," *Telepolis*, August 8, 1997, accessed July 17, 2012, http://www.heise.de/tp/artikel/4/4079/1.html.

[6] The artist Vuk Coşic laid a funeral wreath next to Jeffrey Shaw's *The Net Art Browser* (1999) during the *net_condition* exhibition at ZKM to commemorate Internet art's "death" by institutionalization and Shaw's work that sorts and categorizes Internet artworks. "Interface Example: Exhibitions - net_condition," CRUMB, February 15, 2001, accessed July 21, 2012, http://www.crumbweb.org/exhibDetails.php?id=4&ts=1257009730&op=5&sublink=4. See also Josephine Bosma, "Jeffrey Shaw," *Rhizome*, February 15, 2001, accessed July 21, 2012, http://rhizome.org/discuss/view/29895/#2252; See also Sarah Cook, Beryl Graham and Sarah Martin, eds. *Curating New Media: Third BALTIC International Seminar 10-12 May 2001* (Gateshead: BALTIC, 2002).

published transcripts of this forum a decade later, it is striking how *new media art* was mostly synonymous with *Internet-based art.*[7] Though a broad spectrum of media art was being presented in institutions, the fact that Internet art was a stand-in for everything else speaks volumes on the limited focus of critical discourse in the field at the time the Edith-Ruß-Haus opened.

What possibly could be the need or function for brick-and-mortar institutions in a time when the Internet seemed to be the new "space" for media art? One conclusion is that Internet art and institutions can co-exist with the artwork being visualized in variable forms of reception in private or public space and reach different audiences in different contexts. The media art institution is not just a dedicated box for presentation but a purveyor of information, an interpreter, a gathering spot and a space that "visualizes" art that encompasses much more than works that exclusively use the Internet as their artistic medium. Media art has a history that reaches before the Internet was invented while *new* media art has a trajectory that is bound to surpass the Internet as new technology. As a space for media art, the institution is obliged to take a wide view within its narrow specialization.

The discussion of *new institutionalism* that took place in the northern European artworld during the period in which the issues and events of this dissertation is situated was essentially held under the influence of technoculture but did not include media art institutions.[8] The exception is a mention in an overview of new institutionalism by the curator Claire Doherty that attributes the success of FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology) as one of the new institutions that "seems to be balancing the visual experience with a self-reflexive programme" and have "developed organically from commissioning non-gallery organizations."[9] The latter reason is likely a reference to FACT's roots in film screenings and the *Video Positive* media art festival[10] but is not specifically

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[7] See Cook, et. al, *Curating New Media,* 2002.
[8] See *New Institutionalism*, Jonas Ekeberg, ed., Verksted #1 (Oslo: Uta Meta Bauer, Office for Contemporary Art Norway, 2003); Nina Möntmann, ed., *Art and its Institutions* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2006).
[9] Claire Doherty, "The Institution is Dead! Long Live the Institution! Contemporary Art and New Institutionalism," *engage* 15 (2004): unnumbered and accessed July 16, 2012, http://www.situations.org.uk/media/files/Engage.pdf.
[10] "History of FACT," FACT Online, accessed July 16, 2012, http://www.fact.co.uk/about/history-of-fact/.

named. The reference to FACT was removed in a slightly longer and updated version of the essay published two years later—a sign of media art's disappearing history?[11]

The "'new institutional' values of fluidity, discursivity, participation and production" as the writer and curator Alex Farquarson summarized them for *Artforum International*,[12] sound very much like the values held by institutions that present and take their cues from art that often incorporates fluid, discursive and participatory media. Many of the characteristics of new institutions described by Farquarson are in fact dominant in media art institutions: that "exhibitions no longer preside over other types of activity," that institutions place "international residencies with artists, curators and critics under the same roof as their exhibition spaces," that "production takes less conventional forms" such as the production of television shows, that "production doesn't necessarily happen prior to and remote from presentation," but as part of the presentation and "reception, similarly, refutes the white cube ideal of the individual viewer's inaudible monologue, and is instead dialogic and participatory. Discussion events are rarely at the service of exhibitions at 'new institutions'; either they tend to take the form of autonomous programming streams, or else exhibitions themselves take a highly dialogic mode, giving rise to new curatorial hybrids."[13] Though this dissertation does not insert the media art institution directly into the debate of new institutionalism, Farquarson's insights resonate throughout my description of the Edith-Ruß-Haus' program because media art demands similar programmatic structures.

Whereas the new institution finds its niche in the landscape of contemporary art institutions by staking out a cultural-political ideology, the media art institution comes with a built-in niche. Discursivity, for instance, is not an overarching point. The center of attention is media art with discursivity coming through as an inherent part of many of the artworks that fall in the

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[11] Claire Doherty, "New Institutionalism and the Exhibition as Situation,"in *Protections: This is not an Exhibition*, eds. Adam Budak and Peter Pakesch (Graz: Kunsthaus Graz and steirischer herbst, 2006), 172-8 and online *Situations*, accessed July 16, 2012, http://www.situations.org.uk/media/files/New_Institutionalism.pdf.
[12] Alex Farquarson, "Bureaux de change," *frieze*, February 9, 2006, accessed July 17, 2012, http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/bureaux_de_change/.
[13] Ibid.

institution's specialization. Media art will propound cultural-political ideologies, but that is not the driving force behind the institution's program. It is just as well, because new institutionalism has not survived in the long run for those sites that embraced it.

By 2007 new institutionalism had run its course as an exclusive programming structure. In her essay "The Rise and Fall of New Institutionalism," the curator and former director of NIFCA (Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art), Nina Möntmann, spoke from experience and wrote of new institutionalism in the past tense. She explains how "they were institutions of critique, which means institutions that have internalized the institutional critique that was formulated by artists in the 1970s and 90s and developed an auto-critique that is put forward by curators in the first place. Curators no longer just invited critical artists, but were themselves changing institutional structures, their hierarchies, and functions."[14] The "values of fluidity, discursivity, participation and production" Farquarson outlines were intended to open up institutions in which viewers are not passive recipients but, together with artists and the institution, are participants and contributors in cultural production. The emphasis was on the generative value of exchange between theory and practice, between cultural critique and cultural making, and between reserved contemplation and participation.

New institutions did not point to museums and critique their structures as artists who practice institutional critique do; rather they internalized institutional critique and developed curatorial formats to address it. Since much of media art inherently functions in this realm of fluidity, discursivity, participation and production—and the media art institution presents art that is not always well served by the static gallery presentation of the traditional museum—this specialized institution is already hitched to the star of an internalized institutional critique without that being its acknowledged purpose.

Unlike the programs run under the flag of new institutionalism, which Möntmann lists in her essay as being "cut down to size" or closing altogether,[15]

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[14] Nina Möntmann, "The Rise and Fall of New Institutionalism: Perspectives on a Possible Future," *European Institute for Progressive Cultural Politics*, August 2007, accessed April 14, 2012, http://eipcp.net/transversal/0407/moentmann/en.
[15] Ibid.

media art institutions have woven themselves firmly into the cultural landscape. Möntmann sees new institutionalism's demise in an unwillingness to embrace criticality and that it did not survive "the 'corporate turn' in the institutional landscape."[16] This is probably part of the explanation, but another is that audience members should be able to reserve the right to observe from a distance instead of participate directly, to contemplate, to view, to listen and that new institutions seemed to disallow this. Sven-Olov Wallenstein offers this insight to the conundrum of opening the institution to include more audience input: "There seems to be a built-up conflict between what one could call audience expectations and expectations of audiences: the more open the institution becomes, the more it focuses on audience participation and non-traditional and non-hierarchic exhibition concepts, the more difficult it becomes to access for an audience that seeks identification and visual pleasure."[17] It is, then, a question of how to balance audience desires between an open program to be completed by the audience and the right to inward retreat or distance.

The voice of the institution leads and invites the viewer to look and listen. Though it can also extend an invitation to participate, this voice never fully loses its authority—and perhaps it should not because it provides an informed focus around which audiences decide for themselves how they want to react or interact. The theme of the media art institution's influence and authority eddies throughout this dissertation: as a medium in negotiations over definition of media art (chapter 1), as one that invites viewers to come see the art it gives visibility to through its program (chapter 2) and develops programs that encourage many types of participation (chapter 3), as a narrator of media art and its histories (chapter 4) and as having an acousmetric voice (chapter 5).

In order to frame the dissertation as a subjective though highly informed viewpoint based on practical experience as well as research, I have written this introduction in the first person. For the rest of this dissertation I relinquish this voice in favor of the vantage point offered by third person narrative. Like the "voice" of authority that wanders throughout the space of the institution and points to media art without putting itself forth as the main attraction, the author

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Sven-Olov Wallenstein, "Institutional Desires," in Möntmann, *Art and Its Institutions*, 115.

of a dissertation steps into the background in order to allow the reader to concentrate on what is being written rather than who is writing it.

Chapter 1

MEDIA ART UNDER NEGOTIATION

The media art institution is a medium through which negotiations over the term *media art* are held. "What is media art?" is asked by casual observers seeking a general definition of a genre unknown to them. The question is also posed by experts in the field who attempt to set terms that may play in their favor and haggle over nuance. There are no silver-bullet answers. No answer to this question can be empirically proven, but one can strive for a consensus on what media art ought to be with a view toward what that definition may achieve. The evolving answer lies between the materiality of mediums and the concepts they mediate, with negotiations being conducted by all parties involved.

New Media Art vs. Media Art

Negotiations take place when different interests and values are under competition. The creation of new technologies and the agendas of those affected by how media art is defined factor greatly into the contentious and ongoing debate on what can and cannot be categorized as media art.[18] Taking the term "new media" literally, it refers to art using new or emerging technologies as its medium. Janet Morris' introduction to the textbook *The New Media Reader* goes a step further by boiling it down to "a single new medium of representation, the digital medium," exacting it "as much a pattern of thinking and perceiving as it is a pattern of making things."[19]

This is continued in the *Reader's* second introduction by Lev Manovich, who lists eight propositions for new media (not specifically new media art) according to computer-based activities. The first five "focused on technology"

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[18] See CRUMB archived threads: "Naming/Categorizing New Media Art," April-June 2001, accessed July 21, 2012, http://www.crumbweb.org/getDownload.php?name=2001%2004-6%20%28Apr-Jun%29:%20Naming/Categorising%20New%20Media%20Art&pth=uploads/reports/20060801160127naming.rtf.zip&fromSearch=1 and "Taxonomies of New Media Art," September 2004, accessed May 8, 2012, http://www.crumbweb.org/getDownload.php?name=2004%2009%20%28Sep%29%20Taxonomies%20of%20Media%20Art&pth=uploads/reports/20071022131222004_9_Taxonomies.rtf.zip&fromSearch=1; See also Michael Rush, *New Media in Art*, World of Art (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2005).

[19] Janet Morris, "Inventing the Medium," in Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort, *The New Media Reader* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), 3.

and three "as material re-articulation, or encoding, of purely cultural tendencies—in short, as ideas rather than technologies," though they are explained using the language of technologies—algorithms, encoding, computing.[20] These alternating definitions of new media draw lines between new and old, digital and analog, inferring that the digital is the "new" and that digital media will continue to generate newness. Aside from the problem with forcing new media to be read through an interpretation of the digital, Manovich also equates new media technologies and their inventors to artworks and artists:

> Not only have new media technologies – computer programming, graphical human-computer interface, hypertext, computer multimedia, networking (both wired-based and wireless) – actualized the ideas behind projects by artists, they have also extended them much further than the artists originally imagined. As a result these technologies themselves have become the greatest art works of today. . . . Which means that those computer scientists who invented these technologies . . . are the important artists of our time, maybe the only artists who are truly important and who will be remembered from this historical period.[21]

There is nothing to be gained by this assertion that the technologies are the greatest artwork unless one wants to support technological aspects of art over the other aspects of an artwork. Definitions of media art—even the narrower *new media art*—seen this way are susceptible to being favored by artists and curators specialized in the field, the main players in defining media art, who have a stake in being the first to produce or present artwork deemed "new" due to its use of emerging technologies.

      This new-old categorization is troubling for its divisiveness, yet the media theorist Geert Lovink does recognize a productive use for it, explaining it as an encouragement for innovation:

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[20] Lev Manovich, "New Media from Borges to HTML," in Wardrip-Fruin and Montfort, 20; 16-23.
[21] Ibid., 15.

First of all they are to be used in an ironic way. We have warm, nostalgic feelings for authentic photo cameras, rusty magic lanterns and Telefunken tube radios even though they were as virtual and alienating, fascinating and global at their time. Still, we are such human, simple creatures who love to forget and are easy to impress with the "new new thing". I am the last to look down on the primal drive to curiosity. The promises of the New is tapping into amazing, undiscovered sources of libidinous energy. It is a lazy, even cynical intellectual exercise to deconstruct the New as an eternal repetition of the Old. Scientific and historical "truth" in these cases is not empowering today's tinkering subjects.[22]

The lazy "cynical" exercise Lovink refers to is presumably *remediation*, which analyses the transfer of the old into new media as an awareness of technologies.[23] Lovink shifts the spotlight to the fecundity of the promise and the spirit of the new:

I am all for a passionate form of Enlightenment which is willing to cross borders. The absolute, radical new is a deeply utopian construct, which should not be condemned because of its all too obvious shortsightedness. It is only when the mythological story telling is getting reduced to a rigid set of ideas that vigilance needs to be exercised for a belief system in the making. So, through redefining categories such as the old and new, we get a better understanding where analysis and critique could start in order to be productive.[24]

Defining the ever-shifting juncture of old and new in order to ascertain where critique is productive addresses the reciprocal intertwining of concept,

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[22] Geert Lovink, "The Art of Electronic Dialogue: A Self-Interview as introduction," *Uncanny Networks. Dialogues with the Virtual Intelligentsia* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), 7-8.
[23] Remediation studies not only the transfer of content, but users' hyper-awareness of media, see Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000).
[24] Geert Lovink, "Art of Electronic Dialogue," 7-8.

innovation and media when they formulate a utopian vision—something to aim for.

When the definition of media art is limited to technological mediums, the "art" part of media art becomes secondary and critical/historical/curatorial practices addressing new media are left to lag behind the same practices in other areas of art. New media art will be doomed to eternally re-emphasize a discussion of gadgetry, its new tricks, and an inventory of unique characteristics that cannot lead to a productive conversation on art if they remain limited to their technological skeletons. This is uncomfortably close to the marketing strategies of technology companies selling "new and improved" products. Latching on to new technologies and convincing members of the public that they need to buy the latest incremental improvement of a piece of hardware sells products off shelves, but this system hardly translates directly into anything meaningful in art. New media become relevant when they are implemented as art to, for instance, articulate a cultural moment, encapsulate a thought or make critical thinking possible that cannot be achieved in exactly the same way by other means.

The fascination with medium cuts both ways: use of the newest media represents a dynamic move into the future, but once it is old, it acquires a tinge of being historical at best, nostalgically "retro," or passé at worst. Technological reproduction may be behind the artwork losing its aura in the Benjaminian sense, but the technological device can have and may gain its own aura over time, changing or eclipsing other aspects of an artwork's content.

The *Wikipedia* definitions of new media art and *Medienkunst* ("media art" is a standard German language term) show a history of the popular method of defining media art through technology and the recent shift in specialized literature to emphasizing a baseline of content that is consistent through all of contemporary art. As a user-based encyclopedia, *Wikipedia*'s content is generated by any Internet user's input and published with the consensus of other users. However, this tool has its limitations when, for instance, a mass of users organize to input deliberately false information. *Wikipedia* itself is not designed to be responsible for its definitions because it has no editorial board as does a traditional dictionary or encyclopedia, and any definitions found on the website

may be incomplete or incorrect. This is crowdsourcing or even something of a free market approach to consensus in which, theoretically, the community of users will correct itself until agreement is achieved.[25] The facts in this fact-driven dictionary/encyclopedia are continually up for debate and using *Wikipedia* as the last word in a definition is counter to its intent. Yet it is an excellent example of the cumulative power of crowdsourcing as a barometer of evolving terms. *Wikipedia's* entries reflect where the parameters of (new) media art are being drawn and re-drawn.

In 2005 there were two separate entries for New Media Art and Media Art. The definition of New Media Art stated, "New Media Art is a generic term used to describe art related to, or created with, a technology invented or made widely available since the mid-20th Century. New Media concerns are often derived from the telecommunications, mass media and digital modes of delivery the artworks involve, with practises ranging from conceptual to virtual art, performance to installation. The term is generally applied to disciplines such as: Audio Art, Computer Art, Digital Art, Electronic Art, Generative Art, Hacktivism, Interactive Art, Internet Art, Performance Art, Robotic Art, Software Art, Video Art, Video Game Art."[26] The taxonomical list is long and technological with "concerns" rather than content. The definition for Media Art (*sans* New) is less taxonomical but more vague: "Media Art is art which uses 'the media' as known in its popular acception of the term which is television, radio and the printed press."[27] It is unclear exactly what is meant by "uses" and one assumes "uses as an artistic medium" is meant. The reference to "the printed press" is likely a nod to Walter Benjamin and his handling of mass print media in *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter der technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* or it is an implicit rejection of

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[25] In 2009, Wikipedia disclaimed: "Because Wikipedia is an ongoing work to which, in principle, anybody can contribute, it differs from a paper-based reference source in important ways. In particular, older articles tend to be more comprehensive and balanced, while newer articles more frequently contain significant misinformation, unencyclopedic content, or vandalism. Users need to be aware of this to obtain valid information and avoid misinformation that has been recently added and not yet removed (see Researching with Wikipedia for more details)." "About," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 25, 2009, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:About. By 2012 this disclaimer had evolved into a more diffuse statement that puts less emphasis on its flaws. Ibid., accessed July 21, 2012.
[26] *Wikipedia* contributors, "New Media Art," *Wikipedia*, accessed March 15, 2005, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Media_art.
[27] *Wikipedia* Contributors, "Media Art," *Wikipedia*, accessed March 16, 2005, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_art.

forcing a division between "old" and "new" media.[28] The imprecision of this entry compared to that of New Media Art is itself an indicator that "New Media Art" is the more widely-used and refined term of 2005.

In 2005 there was no entry for *Kunst mit neuen Medien* as *new media art* is generally translated and *Medienkunst* (media art) continues to be the common term. The 2005 German language entry for *Medienkunst* openly addressed the unclarities of its English language counterpart: "Das Wort Medienkunst umschreibt als Überbegriff relativ unscharf diejenigen Kunstformen, die sich der neuen und alten Medien bedienen."[29] This definition is almost a non-definition in that in encompasses every medium and suggests that it includes all content. One wonders if it was written by a *Wikipedia* user who fundamentally rejects the term.

Four years later both *Wikipedia* entries for New Media Art and *Medienkunst* emphasize new electronic, technological developments and their use as artistic media. The German language version has the following entry for *Medienkunst*: "Der Begriff der Medienkunst bezeichnet künstlerisches Arbeiten, das sich der Medien bedient, die hauptsächlich im 20./21. Jahrhundert entstanden sind, wie beispielsweise Film, Videos, Holographien, Internet, Mobiltelefonie etc. Im Englischen wird der Begriff media art dagegen teilweise synonym zu new media art verwendet. Neue Medien sind hierbei jeweils Träger bzw. Vermittler der Kunst."[30] It makes a point of defining itself as not using the word *neue* (new)—though it does list concrete examples of technological mediums—by mentioning that *media art* and *new media art* are used synonymously in English, with "Neue Medien" being the carrier/medium of the art. The German entry's de-emphasis of the *Träger* (the medium or form that

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[28] "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit," in Walter Benjamin: *Gesammelte Schriften* Band I, Werkausgabe Band 2, eds. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1980), 431–69.

[29] As a general term, the word Medienkunst (media art) encompasses those art forms that use old and new media. (my translation), *Wikipedia* contributors, "Medienkunst," *Wikipedia*, accessed March 16, 2005, http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medienkunst.

[30] The term "Medienkunst" (media art) refers to artistic work, which uses media mainly created in the 20th and 21st century such as film, videos, holography, Internet, mobile telephones, etc. In English, the term media art is sometimes used as a synonym for new media art. In this case, the new media are the artworks technical mediums or conveyors. (my translation) *Wikipedia* contributors, *Wikipedia*, accessed February 25, 2009, http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medienkunst.

carries or conveys the art) shows that the German tradition of media art is slightly less taxonomical when it comes to the mediums employed in media art. It also removes the art from the technology—a separation of content and form.

The English language entry for New Media Art of 2009 adhered to its taxonomy-based definition of 2005: "New media art is a genre that encompasses artworks created with new media technologies, including digital art, computer graphics, computer animation, virtual art, Internet art, interactive art, computer robotics, and art as biotechnology. The term differentiates itself by its resulting cultural objects and social events, which can be seen in opposition to those deriving from old visual arts (i.e. traditional painting, sculpture, etc.)."[31] Yet the technological subcategories included as new media art have changed over the span of just a few years, eliminating some art forms and including others. How is it possible that generative art, for instance, had been new media art in 2005 but was no longer in 2009? Perhaps it has been subsumed under the catchall "Internet art" or placed within a lineage of conceptual art, de- emphasizing its technological aspects. An even larger deletion has taken place by 2009 with the altogether removal of the Media Art entry. Typing in that term redirected one to New Media Art with no reference to simply Media Art whatsoever.[32] The English language crowdsourcing for *Wikipedia* has rendered the term *media art* obsolete in favor of accentuating *new*, though it is used both colloquially and for college course titles every day. *Media art* is antiquated, but this term is more useful for talking about what the genre encompasses than the time-specific *new media art.*

By May 2012 the *Wikipedia* definition of new media art had added another dimension of definition to the 2009 taxonomical list: "New Media Art often involves interaction between artist and observer or between observers and the artwork, which responds to them. Yet, as several theorists and curators have noted, such forms of interaction, social exchange, participation, and transformation do not distinguish new media art but rather serve as a common ground that has parallels in other strands of contemporary art practice. Such

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[31] *Wikipedia* contributors, "New media art," *Wikipedia*, accessed February 25, 2009 and May 8, 2012, http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=New_media_art&oldid=271674675.
[32] Change noted by this author February 25, 2009. *Wikipedia* contributors, "New media art," *Wikipedia*, old page accessed July 21, 2012.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_media_art#cite_note-2.

insights emphasize the forms of cultural practice that arise concurrently with emerging technological platforms, and question the focus on technological media, per se."[33] The definition of new media art is beginning to move away from a fixation on technological mediums and the question of what is new or old.

Whereas the boundaries of painting, sculpture, and installation art have broadened, even broken, since the 1960s to concentrate on concepts and the range of forms they can take, current definitions of (new) media art are only now beginning to depart from the exclusivity of an artwork's material manifestation. Since artists making "multimedia" art, installation art and conceptual art began removing the fortressed walls of medium-specificity from their studios, the need for solely material-specific definitions has lessened while the search for new definitions or re-definitions has increased. The technological-taxonomical aspect of the "new media" discourse has been more conservative than that of the traditional art disciplines.

Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook progress toward bridging this gap in 2010 by referring to electronic media technology and additionally list three "behaviors" as the basis of a working definition of new media art for their book on curating and media art:

> What is meant by the term *new media art* is, broadly, art that is made using electronic media technology and that displays any or all of the three behaviors of interactivity, connectivity, and computability in any combination. Hence, artworks using digital versions of analog media, such as digital photography, are rarely referred to here [in the book] and are well documented elsewhere, anyway. Likewise, artworks that may have science or technology as a theme, but that do not use electronic media technology for their production and distribution are not at the center of this book. Artworks showing these behaviors, but that may be from the wider fields of contemporary art or from life in technological times are included, however.[34]

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[33] Ibid.
[34] Graham and Cook, *Rethinking Curating*, 10.

It is worth noting that interactivity, connectivity, and computability were originally listed specifically as "distinctive characteristics of the medium" of *Net art* by the curator Steve Dietz in 1999.[35] The three "behaviors" are transferred by Graham and Cooke to the much larger category of new media art. There is a flaw here in that all media art—before and after the Internet—is now being defined through a carryover of what was previously determined to be Internet art's characteristic behaviors. The example of bio art reveals the problem: it would be a forced fit into the three behaviors even though artworks that use genetic engineering as an artistic medium are widely accepted as (new) media art.

It is understandable for the authors of *Rethinking Curating* to set parameters for their book in order to keep it from scattering in all directions, but their definition remains too narrow if the discussion to take place is about an approach to interpreting and presenting artwork "in technological times," to borrow one of their helpful descriptors. A book lays out an argument that delineates categories in its desire to make a clear case while artworks often do the opposite by blurring and exploiting classification. The institution is compelled to work as a medium in between, presenting art in a system and as a system in order to make it more understandable to the interested public. Yet it recognizes artworks' resistance to categorization with their ability to be art historically re-contextualized and re-categorized. This is an opportunity to formulate and demonstrate many perspectives of (media) art, what it is and ought to be.

The media art institution takes part in the negotiations over a definition of media art in ways both obvious and subtle. On the face of it, what is presented there falls into that category by the authority of the institution. More subtly, artworks using a certain technology (e.g. Internet art) or concept (e.g. art on the subject of surveillance) are presented and therefore begin to constitute subcategories. Yet it is impossible to "read" an institution's years-long program as closely as a piece of writing. The institution is most productive when it pursues art's inferences over its facts and broadens categories by including more

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[35] Steve Dietz, "Why Have There Been No Great Net Artists?" (Paper presented at CADRE November 30, 1999.) Critical Texts, accessed July 21, 2012, www.voyd.com/ttlg/textual/dietz.htm.

than what is "new media art" in the strictest sense. Were the Edith-Ruß-Haus entitled "for New Media Art" it would be caught circling around a discussion of new and old, constantly excluding rather than attempting to include a wide variety of artworks as an approach to art in technological times.

Toward Finding a Shared Purpose in the Term Media Art

Instead of concentrating on what is new and old or what technologies are used, an ongoing defining process should involve looking at how the term media art is wielded. What is gained from a term's usage? This approach neutralizes most divisions and puts the focus on finding a shared purpose in the term media art. The rhetorical theorist Edward Schiappa outlines a practice of formulating definitions in his introduction to *Defining Reality: Definitions and the Politics of Meaning* that provides a framework for negotiations over the definition of media art: " . . . definitional disputes should be treated less as philosophical or scientific questions of 'is' and more as sociopolitical and pragmatic questions of 'ought.' I am not advocating for the abandonment of the legitimate factual or empirical matters that acts of defining involve, but I am advocating greater emphasis on the ethical and normative ramifications of the act of defining."[36] Applied to the term "media art," Schiappa's proposal shifts the negotiations of media art's definition away from hardware and toward a pragmatic look at how the category of media art affects the understanding of contemporary art and culture (the behaviors, beliefs and characteristics of society) even when an artwork's medium is not new. To declare a work not media art because it does not use a technological or new medium, even though the subject of the work is shaped by the impact and influence of new technologies, is to separate content from form and medium.

Such an essentialist stance reconfirms the historical differentiation made between art and media as Sigrid Schade pointed out in 1999: "Die Wechselbeziehungen zwischen Kunst- und Medienentwicklung werden auch geleugnet, obwohl selbst diejenigen künstlerischen Bewegungen des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts, die sich nicht explizit, also nur indirekt oder unbewußt auf die Technik- und Mediengeschichte bezogen haben, gleichwohl

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[36] Edward Schiappa, *Defining Reality: Definitions and the Politics of Meaning* (Chicago: Southern Illinois Press, 2003), 3.

deren Spuren aufweisen."[37] The normative ramification of defining media art solely by its "factual" material mediums does not take into account the impact of media across all sections of society. It causes a separation of media art from the rest of contemporary art in exhibition venues, the art market and public discourse on art of the current time though technology and media history entwine all of these. Looking to Schiappa for a method with which to begin negotiating what is media art, one moves away from describing it as a scientific question of what it "is" in terms of material and to circle toward what art "ought" to be in a pragmatic sense. This turns to what is valued in a work of art as form, content and medium, united as viewed through its mediality.

An example of painting that falls under the term *media art* when viewed from this perspective is Marcus Huemer's *.arcadia* series. Huemer's background is as an artist who uses new technologies as artistic media. *The Rules are No Game* (1997) or *Polke's Pasadena Stones* (2000) studies the imaginary space of painting through interactive Internet installations. In 2000 he inverted this approach with the *.arcadia* series, choosing acrylic on canvas as the medium to propose the Internet as the imaginary space of contemporary society (fig. 1.1). The paintings have abstract, biomorphic forms in pale, almost neutral tones of brown, pink, gray, cool blue and silver. A fictive, explanatory text was written by Huemer for the gallery label next to each painting. The gallery label, as an object, is then part of the work, making the paintings not just about the space of painting and the Internet but gallery space, too, as imagining space. Huemer's use of gallery labels adopts a curatorial technique to convey or interpret meaning for the viewer, weakening the delineation between where the artwork's space usually ends and institutional space begins. Thus, it places the viewer in a psychological space of overlap between artwork and viewing space. One of the extensive labels reads:

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[37] The mutually influential relationship between the developments of art and media are also denied, even in those artistic movements of the twentieth century that do not explicitly but only indirectly or unknowingly refer to the history of technology and media history, although they exhibit their traces. (my translation) Sigrid Schade, "Zur verdrängten Medialität der modernen und zeitgenössischen Kunst," in *Konfigurationen: Zwischen Kunst und Medien*, eds. Sigrid Schade and Georg Christoph Tholen (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1999), 272.

Markus Huemer

".arcadia" 02 (2000)

Acrylic on Canvas, 160 x 200 cm

On the top left the chatterbot "Robbie" is shown in conversation
with an unknown stagnant macrovirus. Attention! There is a
Trojan horse going around on the left side called the "B.I.R.G.I.T.
Virus". It is on the way to "BRIAN". "BRIAN" is a chatterbot that
thinks it is an 18 year old college student from Australia. Feel free
to chat with "BRIAN" and just try to have a natural conversation.
The IP address "156.134.245.23" is chatting with an
unrecognizable macrovirus on the bottom right. The slow moving
pale spot on the top right is an indefinable worm.[38]

The accounts of the Net creatures that gallery visitors are supposedly viewing in
the paintings leaves them searching for images like a Rorschach test gone awry.
The image's inhabitants are not recognizable on canvas but placed in the mind of
the viewer by the wall label descriptions. If the viewer looks to the top left of the
painting for Robbie, the only thing to be found is a blob of grays on white. He or
she may imagine a particular mark in the painting as representing what is
written on the label, but the object of the subject remains diffuse because the
artist has painted no figurative or realist representations.

Huemer posits that the space of the Internet, like the space in the *.arcadia*
paintings, is "neither an alternative world nor a reproduction of reality or a
mirrored reflection of reality . . . Instead, it is something completely abstract.
That is why the visual equivalent to virtual space can be found in abstract
painting."[39] The choice of medium refers to painting's history as where questions
of being find form in art, simultaneously pointing to the Internet's powers of
abstraction and ontological questioning as a medium with the potential to
supersede painting.

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[38] *Avatars and Others*, eds. Rosanne Altstatt and Revolver (Frankfurt am Main and Oldenburg:
Revolver Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, 2001), 56.
[39] Rosanne Altstatt and Markus Huemer, "Markus Huemer," in Altstatt, *Avatars and Others*, 29.

One of the characteristics of the *.arcadia* series to be valued as media art is how the Net creatures described in the gallery labels—chatterbots, avatars, viruses —and those which "reside" in the World Wide Web do not exist as breathing beings, but they do as metaphors of existence and human interaction—much like the pastoral figures residing in the secluded idyll of Arcadia in Renaissance painting. These works link painting's significance as a vessel of the imagination and storing space of culture to the Internet as having an identical function. One possible—but not mandatory or exclusive—"ought" in a definition of media art, which would include the *.arcadia* acrylics, is that media art ought to have a shared purpose in the discovery of how different and evolving media influence ontological concepts of being.

One curatorial technique that complicates while it enriches negotiations over media art is to present the conceptual intersections of art that use new technologies as their artistic medium with older artworks that are historically interpreted in another category of art (e.g., conceptual art, Fluxus) and did not employ emerging media when they were first made. This develops existing threads of art history in new directions, shedding new light on older artworks and placing new artwork in a historical context that is not technology-oriented. This method complicates the negotiations over media art because it pushes for concept while maintaining media specificity by watching how medium mediates concept. It yields a shared purpose between proponents of media art and those studying all art by expanding categories and accepted norms in art in new and interesting ways.

An example of this curatorial method was demonstrated with the traveling exhibition *Generator*, which drew a lineage of "generative" artworks using new media from older, non-electronic art made before the term *generative art* existed.[40] The exhibition included the work of emerging artist-programmers such as the software art of Alex McLean or Joanna Walsh as well as a co-authored installation of scattering and re-rendering data by Stuart Brisley and Adrian Ward, an object-oriented and participatory performance piece by the Fluxus artist Yoko Ono, and a print publication as artwork by Sol LeWitt. Conceptually,

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[40] Geoffrey Cox, "Generator: the Value of Software Art," in *Issues in Curating Contemporary: Art and Performance*, eds. Judith Rugg and Michèle Sedgwick (Bristol and Chicago: intellect Ltd., 2007), 147-52.

the exhibition was unified as exhibiting "generative art," work that is "automated by the use of instructions or rules by which the artwork is executed."[41] In this exhibition, software art was brought into the company of new works by established artists and sewn with the threads of Fluxus and conceptual art. Older pieces were re-evaluated in light of contemporary theoretical developments, in this case retrospectively identifying older works' generative characteristics. This expands the definition of not just media art but the larger field of contemporary art.

At stake in defining media art is its contribution to the ongoing negotiations over all art. A case in point is Steina and Woody Vasulka's phenomenological experiments with video technology of the early 1970s. The artists explored the medium for the effects of feedback on perception, the ability to translate sound waves to video images and back again, and the implication that video is the inner-eye of the machine looking at the workings of life. Woody Vasulka recounts how the manipulation of video simultaneously generated and sidestepped the pinpointing of art:

> With video, I became an instant voyeur. When I made video feedback for the first time, I would step back, watch, and then quietly slip out of the room, knowing that the feedback was still there, that it was alive and improving itself each moment, and that it was getting more and more complex and robust. I understood the consequences this could have on the rest of my life. Even now; when I seed a bunch of dubious numbers into my computer, I watch the chaos unveil with the same fascination....Video came so fast; it was so new. We all plunged into a frenzy of handling this hot new stuff called video. There were so many things to learn in a short time: this new picture material, so mysterious and seemingly untouchable, these frames, "drawn" and suspended by a magnetic force on the face of the cathode-ray tube. But there was much more to know: the nature of image elements; the waveforms, their unity and exchangeability with sound, their mutual affinities and

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[41] Ibid., 148.

interactions; the craft of creating waveforms into primitive

aesthetic units, which would survive the critical scrutiny of art.[42]

To "survive the critical scrutiny of art" that Vasulka sees as an objective of this creation, video would require new negotiations over art's definitions. For Vasulka, the aesthetic that video technology produces on its own as a result of the feedback loop the artist put in place is the conceptual core of the work. He and Steina were driven by the newness of its "picture material" and the "craft" working with it as artistic material. As a team and individually, they proceeded to organize the chaos created in feedback loops and manipulations of electronic waves in multi-channel, stacked, monitor installations and single-channel videos. This required a rethinking of art and process as mediated by machines.

The above three approaches negotiate media art by discerning the mutually influential relationships in developments of media and art in works such as the *.arcadia* series; by reading media art through art historical traditions and, inversely, re-evaluating art history through "emerging" media; and by recognizing how the artistic exploration of media can lead to new trajectories in art are areas where negotiations to take place. Taken together, these approaches serve the shared purpose of creating, evaluating and working on the progress of media art as a joint undertaking.

Medium, Variability and Context

Variability, its limitations and mutating possibilities, also factors into negotiating media art. It encompasses questions of the functionality and meaning of artistic mediums as they age, the effects of losing or updating an artwork's medium, and media art from the standpoint of artworks created in variable mediums for variable contexts. The Variable Media Network is a "group of organizations working together to develop and refine the variable media paradigm's methodology, standards, tools, and output for the preservation of artwork of an

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[42] Woody Vasulka, "Notes on Installations: From Printed Matter to Noncentric Space," in *Steina and Woody Vasulka Machine Media*, ed. Marita Sturken (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1996), 66.

ephemeral nature."[43] This group discusses and demonstrates how artworks with variables in their execution subtly change in meaning when they migrate from medium to medium. The Variable Media Network's main focus is electronic art, though it spreads its research to artworks such as *Untitled (Public Opinion)* (1991) by Felix Gonzalex-Torres, wrapped candy that gallery visitors can take from a pile.[44] As curators and conservators, the Variable Media Network asks artists to describe the core concepts of individual artworks in order to build a foundation for their future presentation when their original technical mediums are no longer available or detract from a still-contemporary concept with dated technology.

In 2004 the Variable Media Network organized the exhibition *Seeing Double: Emulation in Theory and Practice* along with a symposium at the Guggenheim Museum and in conjunction with the Daniel Langlois Foundation.[45] The exhibition dealt with the challenges of and possible solutions to preserving inherently variable art. Historically, the hardware involved in realizing media art—television monitors, film and video projectors—as well as software programs have been considered interchangeable and not preserved as part of a video or computer artwork.[46] A museum displays a video on whatever monitor it has on hand and is acceptable to the artist, with budgets being a common reason behind the choice of hardware. As these works age and new technologies develop, artists and institutions must negotiate and decide how to preserve existing technologies or "migrate" the work to a new technology.

Conservators are increasingly aware of how a change in electronic technology is a change in medium and that this, in turn, affects content. A television is not just a screen, for instance, and when the rest of its parts contribute to the reception of an artwork's content, the original medium may not be interchangeable. A seemingly simple television piece illustrates the problem

[43] Alain Depocas, "Goals of the Variable Media Network," in *Permanence Through Change: The Variable Media Approach*, eds. Alain Depocas, Jon Ippolito, and Caitlin Jones (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2003), 66.
[44] See "case studies," in Depocas, *Permanence Through Change*, 70-114.
[45] "Seeing Double: Emulation in Theory and Practice," Variable Media Network, accessed May 8, 2012, http://www.variablemedia.net/e/welcome.html.
[46] ZKM collects antiquated video equipment and instituted the Labor für antiquierte Videosysteme in 2004. Restored video hardware is used to play historical video for transfer and viewing on current technologies. See *Record again! 40JahreVideokunst.de—Teil 2*, eds. Christoph Blase and Peter Weibel (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2010).

at its extreme: "To re-create **TV Crown** for Paik's 2000 Guggenheim retrospective, the artist's long-time collaborator Jung Sung Lee performed the same manipulation [with magnets to distort the image] with a contemporary television set to produce a result comparable to the original. This re-creation is more a migration to new hardware than an emulation of old hardware; however, if flat screens replace cathode-ray tubes in the future, the day will come when an off-the-shelf TV set will no longer permit such manipulation."[47]

It is conceivable that the interchangeable elements of *TV Crown* and any other artwork interacting with hardware specific to a certain era will become *de facto* non-interchangeable as time passes and technology evolves. That the flat screen mentioned above will "no longer permit such manipulation" is an understatement: the artwork is unrealizable if a cathode-ray tube television is absent. The medium has been changed and, in this case, the artwork incapacitated. Evidently there are limits to the variability of media in a work of (media) art.

Variability has been a strong factor in media art from early on. Rudolf Frieling notes in the essay "Form Follows Format," how "a work could be presented contextually in all kinds of new configurations: Nam June Paik's *Global Groove* transformed itself in the 1970s from a television work into a linear videotape and finally into the multiplied pictorial material for his video installation *TV Garden* – Bill Seaman presented *The Exquisite Mechanism of Shivers* in the (1991/1994) first as a videotape and then as a projected installation, finally as an interactive new configuration on CD-ROM and as a room installation. New formatting, it seems, is an essential aspect of media art."[48] There are two obvious reasons why Frieling's examples change format from one electronic medium to the next. The first is that outside of art purposes, electronic data is designed to be transferred from one device to the next. A contemporary example is how the Internet can be accessed on everything from a home entertainment system to a hand-held device.

[47] "Nam June Paik," Variable Media Network, accessed May 8, 2012, http://www.variablemedia.net/e/seeingdouble/index.html.
[48] Rudolf Frieling, "Form Follows Format: Tensions, Museums, Media Technology, and Media Art," Medienkunstnetz, 2004, accessed April 17, 2011, http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/themes/overview_of_media_art/museum/print/.

The second reason is a marketing strategy. A certain video may be better suitable for a specific exhibition if it can be modified into a multi-channel installation, while a screening demands a single-channel work. Sometimes a work can be better sold or fit into an important exhibition ("marketed" to it) if it is made in a form that fits the goals of the venue. These factors in the decision-making process of how to form and re-form an artwork are "real world" concerns and can be both positive and negative. A work of art re-formatted for better marketing can be intellectually cut back. This occurs in commercial galleries when references to a performance are sold as secondary documentary photographs; a large installation is re-made on a smaller scale with objects that do not hold together when priced individually or when a single-channel video on a monitor is blown up to a large projection without gaining anything more than square footage. However, the challenge of re-formatting in order to coax out different aspects of the work is an opportunity for an artist to highlight different aspects of the work in changing contexts.

This type of re-formatting can be seen in the computer virus *Biennale.py* (2001) by the Austrian art collective 0100101110101101.org, which was commissioned by the 43rd Venice Biennial, made public and spread from the Slovenian Pavilion. This artwork is not only harmful to computers but it is risky for the authors and an exhibiting institution because of the fear and media hysteria surrounding computer viruses, and in reformulating what can be considered art.

In this case, the Venice Biennial first lent the virus context, classifying it as an artwork. Conversely, the virus also contextualizes the art exhibition as potentially filled with risk and volatile communication. The risk here is not one of losing or stealing data. Instead, the exhibition's risk lies in finding aesthetic means of communication that challenge the norm while fulfilling a need or desire for such an articulation. The risk involved in any norm-challenging exhibition becomes apparent when an exhibition is censored, for instance.

Computer viruses awaken the fear of destruction, and putting them into the context of art makes no exception.[49] Viruses, harmful or not, are a

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[49] Funders sometimes express nervousness that their private companies would be hacked or electronically invaded if they are associated with exhibitions addressing the subject of viruses or

humanizing mark on a digital system. *Biennale.py* is not a symbol and not harmless at all to a computer system. It crashes the system it encounters.[50] By making this art virus functionally dangerous, the artists push back at the common notion that art must be "entertaining/enlightening/illuminating the world in a positive artistic way"[51] as well as the notion that an artwork can only be a representation rather than an action with direct consequences both inside and outside the realm of art. With *Biennale.py*, 0100101110101101.org points as much to the beauty of source code as to the ugliness of the frenzied manner the news media report on computer viruses, as seen with the spectacular coverage of the I Love You virus of 2000. It has been argued that the artists intended to incite a public performance of media hysteria.[52]

Part of what makes *Biennale.py* an artwork and more than simply a piece of viral code is its context and intent. What makes it a work of media art is both its form—source code—and its exploration of the relationship between society and the computer virus. Importantly, *Biennale.py* is variable and can be manifested in several different forms of presentation, not all of which are electronic. The source code is its core and exists in cyberspace (fig. 1.2). It has been printed on T-Shirts, being spread from person to person by those who read the shirt and is metaphorically related to the biological virus being passed from body to body with a cough or touch (fig. 1.3). Code printed on a T-shirt it is protected from censorship in many countries under free speech laws, politicizing the context of the Biennale as an "art Olympics" of competing national pavilions housed in the city of Venice. In an art context the T-shirt makes a connection between banning the proliferation of (viral) source code and the censorship of art. In another variation the artists load *Biennale.py* on a disk or hard drive and exhibit it on a computer "contained" under protective glass in a vitrine-like variation for gallery contexts, *Perpetual Self Dis/Infecting Machine* (2001-2004,

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hacking. This was the case during preparation of the exhibition *System Disruption* (2004) at Edith-Ruß-Haus.

[50] The "antidote" or way to patch the virus was distributed by the artists to major developers of anti-virus software like McAffee before *Biennale.py* was released. The virus is therefore harmful, but can be prevented or fixed.

[51] Graham Cluley as quoted by P.D.M. in "Art is dead, Viral Art is live and kickin' (Duchamp of course)," *Content Wire*. June 4, 2001, accessed May 8, 2012, http://www.content-wire.com/art-dead-viral-art-live-and-kickin-duchamp-course.

[52] Ibid.

fig. 1.4).[53] Each variation of form and context plays a role in renegotiating meaning. *Biennale.py* is an artwork and an event as part of the spectacle of the Venice Biennial. Unleashed by loading it from a CD onto a computer into the world demonstrates it as functionally causing malfunction outside the art context. On a T-shirt, it highlights art as speech—free speech—and communicative, while worn on the body and integrated into the wardrobe of people's lives. Housed as a computer running software under glass in a museum, it is an art object with its functional danger contained, reflecting the perceived containment of art in an institution.

The complexity of negotiating definitions with changes in exhibition context can be traced back to Duchamp's readymades. Duchamp first brings a bottle rack into his studio as a "private object" not meant for the exhibition environment in 1914. His sister, Suzanne, famously threw it out as junk after Duchamp went to the United States, which he discovered when he asked her to inscribe it for him in 1916. *Bottle Rack* was not publicly displayed until 1936 for the *Surrealist Objects* exhibition at Galerie Charles Ratton in Paris.[54] This was a moment of double re-contextualization, first from household item to artwork. *Bottle Rack* is left physically unchanged from its manufactured form with two notable exceptions: it was originally inscribed and signed by the artist. Later incarnations of *Bottle Rack* have no inscription, but Duchamp signed, dated and numbered them, making the designation of the artist the crucial determining factor in what is art. By declaring the device part of his oeuvre, Duchamp strips the bottle rack of its original function and imbues it with new meaning.

A second recontextualization is the instigation of an ongoing shift rather than immediate and wholesale change. The readymades alter the exhibition environment with enduring effect. As pointed out by Kristina Seekamp, "In the concrete context of the museum, the Readymade questions and ultimately brings about a re-examination of the sanctity of its environment. These art objects question the definition of art, the concept of authorship, and the role of the artist. . . . When analyzing Duchamp's works in a museum setting, we are forced to

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[53] B*iennale.py* took this form in the exhibition *System Disruption*.
[54] Duchamp also gave Suzanne a *Bottle Rack* replica in 1921, which was later signed. Kristina Seekamp, "Unmaking the Museum," toutfait.com, 2004, accessed July 21, 2012, http://www.toutfait.com/unmaking_the_museum/.

engage with iconoclastic artworks within the very institution that they are arguing against. . . . The tradition of the museum and the revolution of the Readymade fight against one another and the viewer becomes caught in the middle."[55] Not only is art figuratively removed from its pedestal, the exhibition environment is as well. Since the placement of the ready-made in the exhibition environment, the institution has slowly re-contextualized from sacred space to a questioning space where the nature of art is in flux at sites of cultural production. Duchamp uses context as a medium to simultaneously designate and desecrate art and exhibition environments. Without the museum context, after all, *Bottle Rack* would be just a bottle rack.

As a context-provider, the media art institution is where the popular understanding of what is media art, as reflected in *Wikipedia's* technology-specific entries, meets the more content and theory-driven approaches of scholarship as articulated in *Rethinking Curating*, for example. The two are by no means diametrically opposed, but how they fit together crystallizes when media artworks are presented in the media art institution and public forums for their discussion take place in the form of symposia, professional talks and educational programming. Underscoring all of this is how the authority inherent in a public institution legitimizes, to a degree, what it presents as media art: It is represented in an institution for media art; ergo it is media art. At the very least, the artworks presented will be scrutinized as media art by their publics just as any contemporary art museum negotiates an evolving understanding of what is art.

The artist and theorist Johanna Drucker writes of distinguishing art from the everyday: "The definition of art in an era of mass media depends on our ability to distinguish works of art from other objects or images in the spheres of media and mass visual production. Art serves no single purpose, cannot be circumscribed by agendas or beliefs. But it provides continuing space for renewing human imagination and giving expression, in any form, ephemeral or material, to that imaginative capability. Finally, the practice of art becomes independent of objects or things, even of ideas or practices. Art becomes a way of

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[55] Kristina Seekamp, introduction to "Unmaking the Museum," tout-fait.com, 2004, accessed May 8, 2012, http://www.toutfait.com/unmaking_the_museum/introduction3.html.

paying attention."[56] Art institutions mediate those ways of paying attention with their presentations, program formats and individual specializations providing context. The media art institution has its named specialty, and even the encyclopedic museum is specialized in mediating art and culture as a broad, multi-disciplinary undertaking. This holds true despite the fact that art institutions exhibit increasingly hybridized artworks and, as Dietz remarks in 2000, they are also nudged into evolving with the art they present: "I am also committed to a practice that is much more about building infrastructure and creating a hospitable (and critical) environment for new media art to take root than it is about a garden hothouse to showcase and refine an increasingly hybridized strain of art. Presumably, the needs of this environment will change over time as well."[57] The infrastructure Dietz refers to is not only a technical infrastructure, such as wiring access to galleries and having a solid budget for hardware and software. It is the institutional environment: technicians and curators versed in media, media theory and media art. It is also an institutional infrastructure that supports artworks with presentation formats beyond the exhibition as more than a "special event," an exception to the rule.

Dietz' prediction that hybridized art forms will eventually cause institutions to become more hospitable environments for such work is very slowly coming to pass, though digital art, for instance, is hardly a regular fixture in museums.[58] Still, digital, electronic media is embedded into artworks and institutions in many forms. Performance art and its longtime companion, video documentation, gained another dimension for viewers and participants when the Museum of Modern Art in New York streamed Marina Abramović' performance *The Artist is Present* (2010) on the Internet, adding the character of surveillance to a performance of two people staring at each other in a gallery when it

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[56] Johanna Drucker, "Art," in *Critical Terms for Media Studies*, eds. W.J.T. Mitchell and Mark H.B. Hansen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 13.
[57] Steve Dietz, "Curating New Media," YProductions, (paper delivered at *International Curatorial Summit,* Banff New Media Institute, August 25, 2000), "Curating New Media," YProductions, accessed July 21, 2012, http://www.yproductions.com/writing/archives/curating_new_media.html.
[58] Ironically, Walker Art Center laid off Dietz and effectively ended its New Media Initiatives program. Mary Abby, 2003, "Walker Art Center lays off 7 employees, freezes wages," *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, May 8.

extended to a global, webcam-mediated audience.[59] The performance had a purely analog forerunner in *Nightsea Crossing,* a series of twenty-two performances between 1981 and 1987 in which Abramović and her former partner, Ulay, sat across from and silently stared at each for ninety minutes.[60] *The Artist is Present* made what was Ulay's chair available to the public—anyone at the museum could wait in line to sit opposite the artist. Its Internet broadcast furthered the artworks' public availability. *The Artist is Present* fulfils the hybridity Dietz speaks of in that the museum's infrastructure supports its public expansion with the Internet.

A select number of artists have been embraced by media art institutions and other contemporary art spaces. Jenny Holzer's work has engaged public space with "truisms," whether on LED light boards, architectural projections or as an artwork using the Web as its medium. Her Internet artwork *Please Change Beliefs* (1999) can be viewed simultaneously in museums, media art institutions and online around the world. Thousands basked under Olafur Eliasson's artificial sun (*The Weather Project*, 2003) in Tate Modern's turbine hall, and in 2000 and 2001 the Neue Galerie Graz and ZKM Center for Art and Media staged Eliasson's solo exhibition *Surroundings Surrounded*.[61] Eliasson's public artwork *The New York City Waterfalls*: "four cascades ranging in height from 90 to 120 feet rising out of New York Harbor" was a monumental undertaking on view during the summer of 2008.[62] This project was a spectacle and arguably served the tourism industry as much as the pursuit of art, yet viewers will have seen parallels between the beauty in a natural force, and the power of the city as a gushing economic and cultural energy source that also consumes vast amounts of energy.

[59] "Marina Abramović. Nightsea Crossing/Conjunction. 1981-1987/1983." Museum of Modern Art Online. Accessed July 21, 2012,
http://www.moma.org/explore/multimedia/audios/190/1985.http://www.moma.org/explore/multimedia/audios/190/1985.

[60] "MARINA ABRAMOVIC & ULAY," Pomeranz Collection, accessed May 21, 2012,
 http://pomeranz-collection.com/?q=node/39.

[61] Peter Weibel, ed., *Olafur Eliasson: Surroundings Surrounded. Essays on Space and Science* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000).

[62] "MAYOR BLOOMBERG AND PUBLIC ART FUND LAUNCH THE NEW YORK CITY WATERFALLS PUBLIC ART PROJECT BY ARTIST OLAFUR ELIASSON," City of New York, Office of the Mayor (press release) June 26, 2008, accessed July 21, 2012,
http://www.nyc.gov:80/portal/site/nycgov/menuitem.c0935b9a57bb4ef3daf2f1c701c789a0/index.jsp?pageID=mayor_press_release&catID=1194&doc_name=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nyc.gov%2Fhtml%2Fom%2Fhtml%2F2008a%2Fpr248-08.html&cc=unused1978&rc=1194&ndi=1.

Despite the successes of Abramović, Holzer and Eliasson, who each established their reputations as artists outside of media art circles and certainly independent of media art institutions (though each has exhibited work in them), new media is most often found in the museum's education departments as tools for disseminating information about artworks at an electronic kiosk, on a smartphone or other gadget. New media is also jumped on by marketing departments, which use social networking devices and technologies to bring in and gather feedback from audiences.[63] Each of these uses of technology in the art institution has its place. However, an overemphasis on the use of technologies as educational and marketing tools without a critical discussion of those same technologies' impact on art and use as artistic media abdicates the institution's leadership as an arbiter of culture.

If media art were as much a topic of discussion as is technology for education and outreach tools, a momentous shift would take place in museums and art institutions to accommodate the budgetary, personnel, programming and technological infrastructures necessary to present media art in a sustained manner. Keeping Drucker's observation in mind that "the definition of art in an era of mass media depends on our ability to distinguish works of art from other objects or images in the spheres of media and mass visual production," art institutions of all stripes should be conscious of how the technologies they present as information tools are being used by the public and how those same technologies play in art. The line between art and "other objects or images" can be especially difficult to distinguish when it comes to electronic media. It is a difficult balance to achieve since it would be ridiculous for a museum to reject new technologies as marketing tools to make a statement about art. It is equally unwise to ignore art that uses them for its own purposes. *The Artist is Present* is an interesting case of a museum walking the line with mass media. The Internet is one component of the artistic media used by Abramović and it has a compatible marketing benefit for the museum (especially its marketing department) by providing publicity. The publicity aspect of the online stream does not detract from the artwork's voyeuristic content but intensifies it. The

[63] Carol Vogel, 2010, "The Spirit of Sharing: Using Social Media to Bring In the Public," *New York Times*, March 17: F1.

artwork uses for its own devices the way that marketing strategies have been built around Internet users' desire to watch from afar while it is complicit in serving those strategies. The willingness to use it for art and serve as publicity at the same time is dicey business for those who become squeamish at the thought of the commercial aspects of art in institutions. It makes one question what is to be gained and lost by either the impulse to use mass media to critique the institution's "commercial" structures or by complying with it. The latter reveals the artwork's heteronomy as part of larger contexts and systems.

Mediation

Current scholarship in media studies focuses on mediation and how media mediate (and are mediated). This is an escape from the technological determinism put forth by media theory when it is boiled down to Friedrich Kittler's statement "media determine our situation."[64] In W.J.T. Mitchell and Mark B.N. Hansen's proposal to focus on mediation, they step away from Kittler as well as the taxonomies used to describe media studies with their collection of essays in *Critical Terms for Media Studies*.[65] *Critical Terms* emphasizes broader questions such as "What role do media play in mediation?"[66] Adaptations of these questions structure the next subcategory of this chapter, but in the context of negotiating media art it is profitable to skip ahead here to the artist and media theorist Sean Cubitt, who follows up on the question of media and mediation. He enters it into the negotiations of media art in an argument that follows in the direction of Schiappa, concentrating on what media art does, rather than what it is. This shift allows the discussion of mediums in their material capacities as well as how media mediate. It is worth noting that Cubitt is not reductive, using the term *media arts*, in the plural, to encompass a plurality of mediums, concepts and histories:

> The role of media arts is to enter into mediation. They may in
> passing reveal the mediates [*sic*] nature of the message, and they

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[64] Friechrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press. 1999), xxxix.
[65] W.J.T. Mitchell and Mark B.N. Hansen, introduction to *Critical Terms*, xvii-xxii.
[66] Ibid., viii.

may well speak to the specificity of the media employed (in the
same way Beuys speaks to the specificity of felt and fat). They do
speak to the material specificity of mediation – not to some generic
and universal ether, nor to the primacy of objects over mediation.
Our age recognises the primacy of the connection over the node,
the flows that concatenate into nets, the needs and desires that
aggregate into individuals and social groups. They assert that the
mediation matters: an active verb, the becoming-material of
connectivity. They render material the natural desire of the
sunflower for the sun through photophilic biochemistry.[67]

The types of media art Cubitt opaquely refers to in this passage can be named
more clearly: Artworks that lay out how media determine the message, such as
early video art's forays into television as an artistic medium, fit into Cubitt's
description of how media arts "may in passing reveal the mediated nature of the
message." This bends Marshall McLuhan's truism "the medium is the message,"
the inspiration for much media art of the 1960s, into "mediation is the message."
Steina's single-channel video *Summer Salt* (1983, fig. 1.5)*,* in which the world
tumbles in the reflection of a video camera aimed at a mirrored ball and wielded
on a stick by the artist, reveals how visual apparatuses, even when guided by the
human hand, mediate the world through their own vision. *Summer Salt* displays
the power of imaging technology to shape a perception of the world as an
analogy of the "inner eye," distorting the human eye's view of the world while
revealing it as a constructed and subjective perspective.

　　Cubitt's reference to works that "speak to the specificity of the media
employed" is likely an allusion to media art using its specific characteristics as its
content, such as work by the art collective JODI, whose artwork *www.jodi.org*
(1997) shares a title with its URL, takes the Windows browser out of the control
of the user, opening a series of tiny pop-up windows that dart uncontrollably all

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[67] Sean Cubitt, "post-post-medium: Just dropped in to see what condition my condition was in,"
Sean Cubitt's Blog: Aphorisms and scribbled notes on the history and philosophy of media, February
11, 2011, accessed May 8, 2012, http://seancubitt.blogspot.com/2011/02/post-post-medium-
just-dropped-in-to-see.html.

over the screen.[68] The software program that makes the pop-up windows, the browser and the Internet are the mediums at play here, but even such "immaterial" mediums are material as described by Jacob Lillemose: "As a digital materiality, immateriality does not relate to physical properties; rather, it relates to human communication in the widest sense. Thus, immateriality is a kind of materiality that fundamentally transforms the relationships between human beings and materiality, and generates new, social, cultural and economic conditions."[69] The non-physical properties of immateriality must recognize that these properties are inseparable from the physical properties of a computer molded from plastics and metals necessary to activate and view the artwork or a human mind and body to act as recipient and "materialize" it. Thus www.jodi.org works with two types of materiality; the hardware of the computer and software's digital code, the latter relating to human communication in the widest sense. It is the communication of miscommunication between man and machine. Cubitt connects the discussion of media specificity to Beuys' use of felt and fat. This is a relevant comparison because Beuys starts with their inherent material properties and mythicizes them through his artistic vocabulary. JODI works similarly by breathing a life of its own into the software malfunction to give it a function as art. Watching those pop-ups skip around the screen brings joy rather than frustration—for a while—, then exasperation returns when they will not go away. What better representation of some frustrating moments in human as well as human-machine communication?

In writing of "connections," "flows," "needs," and "desires," Cubitt applies a Deleuze-and-Guattarian-approach to the concept of medium as mediating power, with the mechanics and forces of desire driving it.[70] Cubitt links this to the contemporary emphasis on networks and societal needs propelling the process of connecting, thereby reinforcing that "the mediation matters." It follows that mediation—the connecting, translating, negotiating and adapting

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[68] A related work was made for CD-Rom. *CD/***** (Mediamatic, Amsterdam, 1998), which takes over the computer upon installation.
[69] Jacob Lillemose, "Conceptual Transformations of Art: From Dematerialisation of the Object to Immateriality in Networks," in *Curating Immateriality: The work of the curator in the age of networked systems*, ed. Joasia Krysa (London: Autonomedia, 2006), 124.
[70] Cubitt's wording is reminiscent of Gilles Deleuze and Fèlix Guattari theories of "desiring-production." *L'Anti-Oedipe* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1972).

elements between and within bits of data—consists of medium and content simultaneously sending and receiving in a ceaseless flow, all dynamically influencing each other and creating a unique view of the world. The senders and receivers, for the purposes of a discussion on the institution and mediation, are all who view/participate in the artwork. This includes artist, curators, writers and all those who enter the realm of the institution and consider the artwork, thereby entering the network and adapting meaning through their subjective perspectives.

Speaking expressly of art, Cubitt posits an inclusive definition of "media arts." He writes: "Media arts insist that all art is made with media; that everything is mediate(d) (*sic*) and every process mediates. This is the only universal for the media arts."[71] Through this, media art ought to be defined as an approach to the reading of a given artwork or art history rather than as a taxonomy of materials and technologies. This is not a post-medium approach. Cubitt's assertion that media arts "speak to the material specificity of mediation . . . not to some generic and universal ether," stands against the post-medium condition that Rosalind Krauss[72] describes following the proclaimed dematerialization of the art object.[73] His continuation of the sentence with "nor to the primacy of objects over mediation" puts process on the same level as product. Cubitt's opposition to the post-medium approach is an appeal for medium specificity and the analysis of how mediation takes place, who and what is involved in mediation, as well as the effects of mediation. Any artwork is media art when viewed from the perspective of its media-specificity, of how and what it mediates. The media art institution, under this premise, does not merely showcase or house works it deems media art. It not just frames but forms the discussion of art as media and mediation.

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[71] Surely "mediated" was meant instead of "mediates." Sean Cubitt, "post-post-medium."
[72] Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000).
[73] Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1973).

A Universal Sense of Media

Mitchell and Hansen introduce *Critical Terms* with the desire to forge a new path between two traditions in media studies: The first tradition is media studies as "'empirical sciences like communication studies, sociology and economics,' which 'generally focus on Mass Media, their political, social economic and cultural role and impact in creating and distributing content to media audiences.'" The second is "'humanities like literary theory, film/video studies, cultural studies and philosophy,' which 'focus on the constitution of media and question . . . [how] they shape what is regarded as knowledge and as communicable.'"[74] Mitchell and Hansen lay out two methodological approaches to be bridged, the empirical and the interpretive.

Instead of "focusing on the *content* of this or that [media studies] program" and without "discounting the value of . . . taxonomies," they pose four key questions that take a broader stance and ask, "What is a medium? How does the concept of medium relate to the media? What role does mediation play in the operation of a medium, or of media more generally? How are media distributed across the nexus of technology, aesthetics, and society, and can they serve as points of convergence that facilitate communication among these domains?"[75] The following section reformulates these questions to make them specific to the media art institution in order to fathom out its capacity as a medium.

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[74] Mitchell and Hansen quote these two traditions from the *Wikipedia* entry on Media Studies, introduction to *Critical Terms*, viii; viii.
[75] Ibid.

What makes the (media) art institution a medium and how does the concept of medium relate to the media?

From a taxonomical standpoint, the art institution is a medium like any other "agency by means of which something is transmitted or carried on."[76] Considering its physical, technical and personnel infrastructure, it is comparable to a technological medium with "hardware" and "software." Its technical structure influences the reception of its content (the art) by restricting that content to what and how the medium is able to carry it as well as enabling the reception of the content by formulating it within the institution's presentation program. The art institution is a medium for illustrating an art historical viewpoint through its overall program and its individual presentations.

The media art institution is a medium with the ability to convey a universal sense of media as Mitchell and Hansen explain it in a delicate transfer from medium to media: "Expressed schematically, our approach calls on us to exploit the ambiguity of the concept of media—the slippage from plural to singular, from differentiated forms to overarching technical platforms and theoretical vantage points—as a third term capable of bridging, or 'mediating,' the binaries (empirical versus interpretive, form versus content, etc.) that have structured media studies until now."[77] The media art institution is a medium for bridging those binaries as it is a creative medium in the making of its programs, which simultaneously mediate art. It gives form to presentation and display while delivering more than the content of the artworks: its own theoretical content. In its actions, it provides a theoretical vantage point that articulates the mediality of society.

Mitchell and Hansen continue with what this slippage from the singular form of medium to the plural, media, means as a critical concept for media studies: "In addition to naming individual mediums at concrete points within that history, 'media,' in our view, also names a technical form or formal technics, indeed a general mediality that is constitutive of the human as a 'biotechnical' form of life."[78] With this, Mitchell and Hansen see "media" as an underlying structure upon which interpretation can be built and humanity investigated. The

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[76] *The Concise American Heritage Dictionary*, Revised Edition, "medium."
[77] Mitchell and Hansen, *Critical Terms*, viii.
[78] Ibid., viii-ix.

art institution can be named as one of those concrete, taxonomical points as a medium for telling a multifaceted story of art. Additionally, the specialized media art institution structures humanity through art and cultural production from the viewpoint of their mediality.

Art made with and influenced by electronic technologies, and how such technologies affect human interaction and perception are usually the starting point for work presented in the media art institution. Yet the program as a whole has the capacity to go even further by conveying art and society as shaped by a synthesis of many forms of media. It is a meta-medium for the formation, the interpretation and the facilitation of the reception of culture through the filter of culture's mediality. The institution gives contour to this sense of mediality through the ways in which it displays, presents and shapes art and audiences' encounters with it.

An indication of how this works can be found in the continuation of Mitchell and Hansen's theory: "Though a distinct innovation, this general concept of mediality that we are proposing reveals thinkers from Aristotle to Walter Benjamin to have been media theorists all along. Sophocles had no concept of the Oedipus complex, but after Freud it becomes difficult to think about Greek tragedy without reference to psychoanalytic categories. Shakespeare had no concept of media, but his plays may be profitably studied as specific syntheses of varied technical, architectural, and literary practices."[79] Mitchell and Hansen's re-making of figures with defining roles in their own respective disciplines into media theorists is a little cheeky, but their point remains that their "general concept of mediality" emphasizes a synthetical approach to viewing history and culture through media in its various forms. The media art institution can be analyzed through a general concept of mediality, for instance, in its synthesis of technical, architectural and art historical practices: its program as it fits into several artworld circles and networks of distribution; its architecture as a traditional, onsite presentation space and the use of those facilities as a "plug-in" for activity that emanates beyond that site; and by regularly expanding traditional presentational and storytelling practices of art to incorporate technological distribution media as both an artwork's medium and its medium of

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[79] Ibid., ix.

distribution. A by-product of the media art institution's study of media art is its use and understanding of the art institution's agency as media.

What role does mediation play in the operation of the media art institution as a medium?

The exhibition *Total Überzogen* at the Edith-Ruß-Haus in 2002-2003 demonstrates the role of mediation in the operation of the media art institution. In its entirety, *Total Überzogen* reveals the institution's role in mediation as more than an interpreter between art and its publics, but as a creative medium with its own agency.

Total Überzogen was a perspective on the intersection of art and advertizing aesthetics; it was outwardly a billboard and an exercise in institutional self-critique. For this project, artists, funders and culture-jamming activists were invited to contribute their artwork, corporate logo or signature protest design to be printed on banners hung on the exterior of the exhibition hall. The invited artists and activists were chosen based on their practice of using the aesthetic language of advertising alongside the institution's sponsors and funders who also contributed their logos. All of the designs were puzzled together by the institution onto banners, which covered all four sides of the building (figs. 1.6-1.7).

The individual artists' designs are sometimes critical, as seen in the banner by the British group Inventory. It is a photograph of an illuminated sign reading "COMPLY" down a factory's smokestack (*Comply,* 2002, fig. 1.7). Others are complicit, as is Swetlana Heger's image *Playtime* (2002, fig. 1.6), co-credited with the luxury goods company Hermès, which originally commissioned her. Jenny Holzer's truism *IF YOU CAN'T LEAVE YOUR MARK GIVE UP* (1978-1983/2003, fig. 1.6) invokes the cynicism of advertising by using stark words of advice that read as a command. Lise Harlev uses signals from advertising that trigger a trained emotional, associative response from the public employ visual tropes to readjust the cadences of advertising copy and to show hidden complexities. *I Sometimes Feel Ashamed* (2002, fig. 1.6) replicates the sunset-behind-palm trees image, which has made billions for the travel industry. The artist's copy reads: "I sometimes feel ashamed of

finding him exotic since I am really against focusing on people of color." This banner and the related stickers exhibited inside the exhibition hall were produced at a time when public service announcements on German television warned against being infected by HIV/AIDS infection while vacationing in southern hotspots. The announcement also features a postcard showing a tropical sunset on the water. Harlev's artwork brings to the surface what the public service announcement does not address outright: the uneasy relationships between race, exoticism, desire and fear.

Alongside the banners, even the building's profusion of windows was covered with the artist Urs Breitenstein's collection of "house signs" (*Hauszeichen*, 1995/2002, figs. 1.6-1.7). A large space on the façade reserved for the institution's self-promotion features an enormous replication of the city's marketing logo. Amongst the artists's works hung the logos of the Edith-Ruß-Haus's sponsors and supporters. Inside the main building was a display of artworks hung or projected on the walls, makeshift booths and tables with political activists' work as well as video and Internet art utilizing the visual language of advertising. The front lawn was populated with Julian Opie's street signs of *Escaped Animals* (2001, fig. 1.6). In *Total Überzogen*'s discussion mode, a symposium with artists and activists on the subject of representation through artistic-aesthetic strategies took place on January 19, 2003.[80]

Total Überzogen was disseminated beyond the grounds of the Edith-Ruß-Haus: Inventory took to the airwaves with programs on oldenburg eins radio (*Life is Not Enough*, 2003), and video from the exhibition was broadcast on the television station during *Video Visions*. Another communication and distribution format is the newspaper that serves as the exhibition publication and symposium guide. It was designed with an advertising aesthetic, has short articles, and a section for the symposium's abstracts. Similar to the banners, the images and headlines compete but are linked into a single flowing impression of text and imagery.

In German, *Total Überzogen* is a double entendre translated as both "Totally Covered" (as in the banners covering the building) and "Totally

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[80] "Representation through Artistic-Aesthetic Strategies" or "Activists Engage Artists, Artists Engage Activists, Companies Engage Art Spaces, Art Spaces Engage Them All," in Altstatt, *total überzogen*, 14-15.

Overdone," and the seed for the exhibition's concept was planted when the artist Helene von Oldenburg remarked that the Edith-Ruß-Haus should be covered with sponsors' logos as an art project.[81] This idea was a response to regional sponsors' increasing demands for prominent placement of their logos, so much so that a local museum temporarily replaced its street entrance flags carrying the institution's name with flags flying a sponsoring bank's logo. Passers-by must have wondered whether the museum had been replaced by a bank affiliate. Out of this state of affairs arose a concept for *Total Überzogen* that addresses how advertising and its aesthetics impact society's view of culture, the role of cultural institutions in society, and their activity as agents of promotion.

Part of the reason why private sponsors are able to secure the exterior space of an art institution is because art worlds and the worlds of private companies have very different views of what is valuable "real estate" in the institution. The area with the highest visibility, where thousands of cars drive by per day, is coveted by the company and, usually, this is not where the art is presented. Hanging a sponsor's logo outside might not seem as much of an infringement upon the institution because it does not disturb the composition of the presentation on the interior where art is usually displayed. The interior space is traditionally the curator's most valuable real estate. The institution's "sacred space" where visitors pay admission to enter is valued most by the curator/director because this is where the dramaturgy of the display is set and there is generally less willingness or at least more sensitivity to the application of a sponsor's logo amidst the works of an exhibition.

The interior space is the most valuable real estate for the parties that use admissions as a metric of success and would like to see a certain percentage of running costs balanced out with ticket sales. Viewers who see the exterior of the building from the street can be calculated in the same way a billboard's viewers can be calculated for advertising budgets. If this is calculated into the visitor statistics of an art institution when its art is displayed to the street, do those numbers carry the same value as admissions?

By creating an exhibition that uses the facilities as a creative medium to state its case and reflect upon its subject with additional events for public

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[81] Helene von Oldenburg in conversation with this author, November 2001.

discussion, the Edith-Ruß-Haus took an empirical-formal-constitutive approach to studying media. As a whole, the exhibition's empiricism lies in self-advertising by demonstrating that the exterior of the building is the most valuable asset of the building in a financial sense and that "advertising" works: the banners drive up attendance figures and media attention.[82] This bleeds into the formal approach of using the building (including related facilities and the use of the radio and television) as a purveyor of mass media. *Total Überzogen* is constitutive in that it focuses on how the building, the banners, magazines, posters, Internet and video works employ their respective media to convey messages on art, product, cultural sponsorship and protest, all shaped by a common set of advertising aesthetics.

The media art institution's role in mediation is the use of itself as a creative medium to make differing interests of those "speaking" the same language of advertising aesthetics butt up against each other in a visual rivalry for attention. The competitive dynamic between sponsor representation, art representation and special interest representation is literally brought to the surface (of the building). At the same time, the competition for viewer attention creates a single impression that is held together by a common, clashing aesthetic. The façade's surface levels no judgment as to which banner is most important or which type of institutional space (exterior or interior) is most sacred or valuable. "Surface" can also be extended to the website where banner.org locates itself or Inventory's television and radio spots, which in other contexts might be considered interventions in mass media, but here they are advertising programming with art content, serving as art but also advertisements for the exhibition. All of this is part of the media art institution's mediation through its physical facility, as a broadcaster, as a "multiplier" (to purloin a marketing term for an individual who communicates information on a product, event or service free-of-charge) and as part of a community network.

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[82] See Edith-Ruß-Haus press portfolio and comparative visitor statistics, City of Oldenburg Pressebüro.

How does the institution distribute media across the nexus of technology, aesthetics, and society, and can it serve as a point of convergence that facilitates communication among these domains?

Mitchell and Hansen consider their concept of media a "collective attentiveness to [a] deep, technoanthropological universal sense of media that allows us to range across divides (characteristically triangulated) that are normally left unbroached in media studies: society-technology-aesthetics, empirical-formal-constitutive, social-historical-experiential."[83] When looking at the media art institution through their concept of media, how it functions across such divides can be analyzed as simultaneously articulating a universal sense of media through the individual elements that comprise it. The following breakdown of individual examples from *Total Überzogen* show how the media art institution is an example of Mitchell and Hansen's nexus. It has a special ability to convey a universal sense of media within a synergy of societal, aesthetic, and technological approaches.

In an analytical approach to the impact of media on society, *Total Überzogen* brings to the table the subject of how advertising media have penetrated the "sacred space" of art, for better or for worse, by linking the show to another immediate question of the sanctity of space. In addition to the building being used as a medium, the institution's marketing budget for *Total Überzogen* was used as a medium with the purchase of an advertisement on the Evangelisch-Lutheranishe Christuskirche in Harpstedt, which sells space on banners to cover its scaffolding and pay for renovations. The church's project mirrors *Total Überzogen* (or vice versa) in their questioning of where "sacred" space and "profane" space ends and begins.

In the spirit of reciprocity, the Edith-Ruß-Haus bought space on the church and hung a banner advertising *Total Überzogen,* which helped sponsor the church's renovation (fig. 1.8). A photograph of the scaffolded church hung with the Edith-Ruß-Haus banner is published in the *Total Überzogen* publication, which is designed in a newspaper format. This photograph is used in the paper to "advertise" a conversation held between the church's pastor and the media art institution's artistic director about the successes and pitfalls of both projects,

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[83] Mitchell and Hansen, *Critical Terms*, viii.

sponsoring issues and representation in public, cultural and sacred spaces. Tellingly, he is also a journalist and communications expert. Selling advertising for church fundraising by comparing it to the notion that it is like an art project put his special skill set to good use. With this project, the institution used its agency as a medium to create ties between the church's discussion, the physical installation of the exhibition's advertisement on the church, the photograph in the newspaper and public conversation with the pastor as part of the exhibition's program.

The issues the Christuskirche and its parishioners dealt with are similar to those facing the art institution. How can the art institution be a place to pull back and reflect upon the world or the spirit if it draws no line between the two? Is this separation at all desirable today or can the art institution be in the thick of it as part of the entertainment economy and a marketplace of ideas (and gift shop trinkets) while retaining the ability to analyze contemporary art and culture? Whereas the Christuskirche kept advertising limited to its exterior and its interior untouched, the media art institution mixes in what would be its "sacred objects" (artworks) with the advertising logos. Inside the galleries art, advertising and promotion are presented as sometimes having intentionally inseparable aesthetics.

In a technological approach to this conflation of aesthetics, Banner Art Collective uses the medium of commercial Web banners to replace advertising space with commercial Web space with art space or as a space for personal expression. The website is a space where anyone can make, design and upload his or her own Web banner and users are encouraged to replace the advertising blocks one finds on Web pages with Banner Art Collective works. Only here, one is encouraged to make an artwork instead of a product advertisement. All of the banners on the site can be downloaded for one's personal website, and they can be ordered as stickers that were distributed in the exhibition hall where visitors could also make their own Web banners. The Collective, in which any banner contributor becomes a member, uses the Web's unique aesthetic, dictated by software design, to critique the commercialization of every aspect of the Internet as it partakes in self-promotion by participating in the exhibition and handing out its free stickers as products.

Works from the *Group Portrait* series (2001) by the artist Candice Breitz were hung in the same gallery where Banner Art Collective was accessible. Yet instead of creating an "adertisement," *Group Portraits* reveal product placement by erasing it. The artist removes the branding from magazine advertisements by painting over them in white. An ad for Tommy Hilfiger clothing is reduced to a floating set of multicultural faces in a sea of white blotches. A Clinique clique of beautiful people jump for joy over what? The source of their excitement is made no longer apparent[84] (fig. 1.9). Breitz dissects mass media—the magazine ad— by appropriating and nullifying it.

At the nexus that is the institution and, specifically, *Total Überzogen* is the public protest aesthetics of Deportation Class by the grassroots human rights organization Kein Mensch ist Illegal (No Person is Illegal), which was formed at *documenta X* in Kassel. Its manifesto advocates for immigrants with illegal residency status.[85] The Deportation Class campaign began in 2000, spawned by the outrage over the death of the Sudanese refugee Mohamed Aamir Ageep during his deportation on a commercial Lufthansa flight.[86] According to Kein Mensch ist Illegal, Lufthansa, like several government-affiliated airlines, flies Germany's deportees out on commercial flights along with paying passengers. By 2002 four people had died on separate Lufthansa flights because they had struggled against being deported and were taped to their seats so tightly they suffocated as paying passengers literally sat by.[87]

Kein Mensch ist Illegal was invited to present its Deportation Class campaign with a booth in the exhibition hall, an exterior banner and a speaking engagement at the *Total Überzogen* symposium. The campaign latches onto Lufthansa's corporate and advertising aesthetic to effectively protest its

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[84] Rosanne Altstatt, "Candice Breitz," in Altstatt, *total überzogen*, 5.
[85] "Manifest," Kein Mensch ist Illegal, 1997, accessed June 18, 2012, http://www5.kmii-koeln.de/manifest-1997. Florian Schneider is sometimes named as the founder of Kein Mensch ist Illegal, but the group emphasizes that "[f]rom its very beginning at Documenta X, the political aims of the campaign were accompanied and supported by the various artists and media activists." "Kein Mensch Ist Illegal / No One Is Illegal," nettime.org, February 5, 1999, accessed June 18, 2012, http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-9902/msg00028.html. That neither his name nor any other appears on the Kein Mensch ist Illegal website testifies to the fact that this is not an artist-centered project, but a human rights campaign. This may also help shield individuals from legal threats by those trying to stop the group's actions.
[86] "Wanderausstellung Deportation Class," Kein Mensch ist Illegal, accessed June 18, 2012, http://www5.kmii-koeln.de/wanderausstellung-deportationclass.
[87] Ibid.

deportation practices. Kein Mensch ist Illegal uses Lufthansa's lettering; signature blue, white and yellow colors; its iconic outlined figures and even the stork in a circle logo, but instead of advertising a vacation getaway, a helmeted and restrained deportee is surrounded by a full cabin of flyers (fig. 1.10).

The Deportation Class aesthetic is a moment of "culture jamming"—using a company's marketing aesthetic against it in order to brand its flaws instead of its advantages—to hit a public relations nerve and bring the campaign broad attention. Kein Mensch ist Illegal has conducted performances in which members of the group dress up as flight attendants, pull up to the Frankfurt International Airport in a van painted as one of the Lufthansa fleet and publicly drag "deportees" (actors) away. Members buy shares of Lufthansa stock and take the podium at shareholder meetings in their "flight attendant" costumes to speak out against the company's practice of deportation.[88]

A comparative example of similar actions that are discussed in the realm of art is the work of the group The Yes Men, who use tactics from culture jamming by impersonating business representatives from, for instance, the World Trade Organization, developing fake newspapers and bogus products that insinuate themselves into the forums of big business, where they make a ruckus and then disappear.[89] Documentation of their hoaxes resurfaces in exhibitions, at festival screenings and in publications, but The Yes Men's projects have negligible impact outside the artworld. From their website and their books, The Yes Men are clearly proud to be posers and adhere to the spectacle of the representation of activism.

Kein Mensch ist Illegal, shows how effective the combination of art and activism can be when the goal is real change. Kein Mensch ist Illegal combines the representational power of art with the concrete goal to end a specific practice and its members take actions with real consequences. Its culture jamming is accompanied by grassroots and traditional protest techniques such as a letter writing campaign and by the political lobbying of Lufthansa to make it end this practice. The group educates the public: during a *Total Überzogen* symposium, a member of the group explained what to do to prevent a

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[88] Ibid.
[89] See The Yes Men, *The Yes Men: The True Story of the End of the World Trade Organization* (New York: The Disinformation Company, 2004).

deportation if one finds oneself on a plane with deportees. This campaign has stopped several passenger plane deportations and caused Lufthansa to revise its deportation procedures to be more humane.[90]

From the point of view of the activists, the institution is a medium to communicate their campaign. It is not being used as a single form like its website on the Internet, for instance, but as an aggregator of several types of media. Kein Mensch ist Illegal utilizes the art institution as a billboard, a megaphone, a lecture hall and a teach-in during the symposium, a venue for its cause. The Edith-Ruß-Haus' budget is put into play for the production of the banner, the symposium speakers' travel expenses, the installation of all materials in the exhibition hall, its section in the *Total Überzogen* newspaper publication and Kein Mensch ist Illegal's inclusion in outside advertising for the show. The campaign is aided by the City of Oldenburg's resources (such as the press office) to promote the exhibition, which leads back to the campaign. Through *Total Überzogen* the campaign is broadcast on television, online and seen in newspaper accounts. The institution's resources ultimately become the activist's resources, as they are distributed equally to all of the participants in *Total Überzogen*. The group is not motivated to be part of the exhibition because it is interested in its premise. For Kein Mensch ist Illegal, *Total Überzogen* provides the means for an entirely different discussion than the one art institutions and artists are accustomed to holding. The activists join the media art institution for its properties as a social, aesthetic and technological medium of communication.

This nexus is where communication takes place as a *mashup,* the term being borrowed here from Web development as a combination of data, presentation and functionality from several sources to create enriched results that were not necessarily the original reason for producing the raw source data. The main characteristics of the mashup are combination, visualization, and aggregation.[91] The works presented at the institution are like the "raw source data" of the mashup. Their original reason and intended meanings are not lost in

[90] "Deportation Class," Kein Mensch ist Illegal – Koeln, accessed May 21, 2012, http://www5.kmii-koeln.de/. The details of Deportation Class were explained by representatives of the group during their talk at the symposium. January 19, 2003.
[91] This definition is modified from the *Wikipedia* entry. *Wikipedia* contributors, "Mashup (Web Application Hybrid)." *Wikipedia*, accessed July 21, 2012, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mashup_(web_application_hybrid).

the institution. Instead, the mashup adds meaning with the institution as a point of convergence that facilitates communication between distinct domains. It does this through presentations that combine artworks in spatial and theoretical relationships; that visualize artworks and art historical theories; and that aggregate individual concepts into a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. The media art institution fosters a universal sense of media that bridges Mitchell and Hansen's divide between the empirical and the theoretical; the divergent perspectives on media. In doing this, the media art institution is a space where the shifting grounds for negotiating what media art ought to be are defined.

Chapter 2

CAN YOU SEE ME NOW – OLDENBURG?

The media art institution is a site where media art is put "on the map."
The locative media artwork *Can You See Me Now – Oldenburg?* is used here as a
lens through which to view where and how the Edith-Ruß-Haus is located,
positioned and "made visible" for local audiences and beyond.

From July 4 through July 6, 2003 the artist group Blast Theory in
collaboration with the Mixed Reality Lab at the University of Nottingham staged
Can You See Me Now – Oldenburg? (*CYSMN-O*) at the Edith-Ruß-Haus. It is an
artwork and a game, that took place in an online Oldenburg as well as in the
actual streets of the city.[92] Members of the public could log on to the Internet to
play *CYSMN-O* and move as avatars through a virtual model of a downtown
section of Oldenburg, which had been recreated with photographs and computer
graphics. Live "runners" (performers trained for the game) equipped with Wifi,
GPS receivers and PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants, pre-dating smartphones),
which display the location of all real and virtual participants on screen, ran
through the city's streets in an attempt to capture the avatars they "chase" by
following their movements in the game on screen. The object of the game was for
the avatars on screen to avoid being "seen" by the running performers in the
streets.

The runners spoke with each other through walkie-talkies and streamed
sound online while players listened and communicate back to the performers as
well as each other through a text-based chat forum set up at the bottom of the
screen. A temporary community of online players, users on site at the Edith-Ruß-
Haus and performers who shared stories, strategies and taunts developed over
three days of play.

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[92] For an in depth technical description of the work as it was staged in several different cities see
Steve Benford, Andy Crabtree, Martin Flintha, Adam Drozd, Rob Anastasi, Mark Paxton (Mixed
Reality Laboratory) and Nick Tandavanitj, Matt Adams, and Ju Row-Farr (Blast Theory), "Can You
See Me Now?" ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction, vol. 13, 1, (2006): 100-33.

Addressing Geographical and Cultural Maps

The authors of this game characterize their central concern as "the relationship between online virtual spaces and actual physical spaces."[93] The Edith-Ruß-Haus is the address where these spaces intersected and their relationships explored. More precisely, during the game the Edith-Ruß-Haus is the "address" because it is the host and headquarters of the game in the City of Oldenburg while its online presence contained the URL address to play the game as a portal to virtual Oldenburg.

The virtual space alluded to here can be found on a map of Oldenburg that Blast Theory and the Mixed Reality Lab created for the Internet, but it is another type of virtual map that is of interest for the discussion of an institution's position for an audience: a map of cultural institutions' visibility and standing. This is a metaphorical map and less easily charted than the geographical map. They relate to each other much like the real and the virtual spaces Blast Theory explores. The artists work with these concepts of space as less a matter of a dichotomy between the literal versus the virtual than the literal and the virtual as an overlap and reciprocal influence. The result of the *CYSMN-O* experiment is two versions of Oldenburg—online and actual—collapsing in the player's mind during an adrenalized moment of the chase. Similarly, the dual "locations" of the Edith-Ruß-Haus have an enriching effect upon each other when the art institution's program energizes visitors' geographically on-site experience of art.

The geographical map indicates a physical site where media art is presented. The city or country where a museum and its collection are located or where a *Kunsthalle*'s exhibition halls stand is a reference to this geographical map. The Edith-Ruß-Haus is located in the German city of Oldenburg (Oldenburg) in the state of Lower Saxony, relatively far from any large cultural or population centers.[94] Its physical location requires it to serve a rather small, local

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[93] Steve Benford, Andy Crabtree, Martin Flintha, Duncan Rowland, (Mixed Reality Laboratory: Univ. of Nottingham) Bill Gaver (Interaction Design Research Sutdio, Royal College of Art), Matt Adams, Ju Row-Farr, Nick Tandavanitj (Blast Theory), Amanda Oldroyd, Jon Sutton (BTexact), workshop abstract, "Provoking Reflection Through Artistic Games," 2003: 2, Accessed July 21, 2012. http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/bt/research.html.

[94] Bremen is the closest large city and within traveling distance for the motivated, but hardly the casual visitor. Oldenburg's population was 158,340 in 2003. "Entwicklung der Einwohnerzahlen 1702 – 2009" Landesbetrieb für Statistik und Kommunikationstechnologie (LSKN), accessed December 27, 2010, http://www.oldenburg.de/stadtol/index.php?id=4122.

population, though the artists and artworks it presents make its program necessarily international as they are often based on models and technologies of digital media, and thus predisposed to extend wherever and toward whomever communication media reach.

CYSMN-O is used here to describe the institution's geographical and virtual maps, yet there is another kind of map, a cultural one, that is more abstract and less tangible. An institution is positioned on this type of map according to the program it instates, the resonance it receives and the network it builds. The cultural map of contemporary art institutions exists for and is charted by those acutely interested in art and culture. This usage of the term *cultural map* is an adaptation of the practice of cultural mapping that UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) engages in. The methods behind cultural mapping were described during its 1995 symposium "Cultural Mapping Symposium and Workshop," UNESCO's perspective is a starting point:

> Cultural mapping involves a community identifying and documenting local cultural resources. Through this research cultural elements are recorded – the tangibles like galleries, craft industries, distinctive landmarks, local events and industries, as well as the intangibles like memories, personal histories, attitudes and values. After researching the elements that make a community unique, cultural mapping involves initiating a range of community activities or projects, to record, conserve and use these elements.[95]

The research methodology of chronicling artisan "tangibles" and cultural-memory "intangibles" is used here to describe a cultural map of contemporary art institutions that is continually being drawn and re-drawn by those who participate in them. The "tangibles" are the institutions themselves with the programs and activities they devise. The "intangibles" are the memories,

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[95] Clark, Sutherland and Young, (keynote speech at the Cultural Mapping Symposium and Workshop, Australia, 1995). Quoted in UNESCO's answer to FAQ: "What is cultural mapping?" Original hyperlink to speech and attendant author information lost; UNESCO, accessed January 18, 2011, http://www.unescobkk.org/culture/cultural-diversity/cultural-mapping/.

personal histories, attitudes and values held by those who take part in their programs as well as those who view from a distance, incorporating information generated by the program into their own lives or cultural work. Whereas UNESCO's cultural mapping is associated mainly with preservation and its intangibles are viewed primarily toward heritage; institutions that produce, select and display contemporary art explore a recent past of cultural moments and developments toward the future.

"Cultural mapping" takes place in art critique, reporting, catalogue documentation, publicity conducted by the institutions and even informal discussions between those who follow contemporary art and culture. The UNESCO has its own community of researchers (cited in the first line of the above quotation) while the community mapping contemporary art institutions and arranging projects can be counted amongst the tangibles. Members include artists, curators and art institution directors, art writers and editors, gallerists, auction house agents and collectors. Those actively taking part in shaping culture draw the cultural map and determine which art institutions are "visible" on it. Not least, the inhabitants of the location where the art institution resides, in this case Oldenburg, who want to experience and develop culture take part in creating this particular map and working the tangibles and intangible associated with their experience with the institution into their own lives.

The cultural map is neither literally drawn nor wholly visible, but it still exists as a subjective network of proximities in perceptions of good standing. Some of the data used to generate such a cultural map lies in the *Kunstkompass* (art compass) report, which was first compiled in the business magazine *Capitol* in 1971 and has appeared in *manager magazin* since 2007.[96] *Kunstkompass* ranks artists based on their solo exhibitions, group exhibitions and reviews in art journals. A secret list of curators and critics, presumably drawn up by the report's author Linda Rohr-Bongard, awards points, intending to direct the compass toward "true north," the artist whose works have the highest market value. There is no public list of the exhibitions in the institutions that act as the basis of the rankings, but, tellingly, the gallery representation of the artists are

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[96] The methods and history of *Kunstkompass* are discussed in a profile of its compiler, Linda Rohr-Bongard. Eva Müller, "Wegweiserin," *manager magazin*, 11/2008: 215-17.

named. The point system is primarily based on the artists' exhibitions, yet the fact that *Kunstkompass* is published in a business magazine and the list is accompanied by articles on the investment value of the artists' work shows that this part of the cultural map is oriented toward the art market, though auction and gallery prices are not factored into the rankings.

Kunstkompass is only one indicator of the "cultural map." Others are subtler, such as which art institutions publish with more prestigious publishing houses of art books and catalogues. Visitor statistics can be an indicator of standing, but specialized art institutions can rarely compare with general or encyclopedic institutions, and an institution entertaining crowds with a "safe" program will have little standing with cartographers who are looking for cultural innovation. Perhaps the metaphorical cultural map should be marked with different symbols—perhaps one icon for institutions with more traditional programs and another for those with more experimental offerings. Specialized art institutions also have specialized networks. Thus, a media art institution will have a network of artists and theorists who work in media art festivals, university media art departments, trade journals and similar institutions. These work largely outside the art market, but their programs intersect at times with traditional institutions that have close art market ties. There are many variables involved in the cultural map, keeping it from being a set of fixed points.

The cultural map is part network and part ranking. The Germans frequently use the expression "(k)eine gute Adresse" [a (bad or) good address] when talking about an art institution's standing and since this dissertation is based on a case study of a German media art institution, it is appropriate to relate a German idiom to the Edith-Ruß-Haus' sense of place. To be considered "keine gute Adresse" is to be in the worst standing, while a reputation as "eine gute Adresse" opens an institution's access to artists who have climbed high on the ladders of their careers, makes funding for the institution more likely and provides more freedom to build the program according to what is envisioned rather than what a skeletal budget will support. Most importantly, through its cultural contributions an institution considered "a good address" helps draw and re-draw another evolving map that describes the shifting contours of art and culture.

In English, one would say whether the institution is "on the map," its visibility or invisibility in terms of perception and standing on this cultural map determining its very existence. When the Edith-Ruß-Haus first opened in 2000, it was hardly visible on the cultural map. The institution is located in a region far from Germany's news media centers and entered the stage with little fanfare beyond Oldenburg's borders.[97] Oldenburg had no annual festival of media art out of which the institution grew as did the Ars Electronica in Linz,[98] no local group of artists or curators working in new media and preparing for 17 years to found an institution such as the ZKM in Karlsruhe,[99] and no private commercial interest like NTT behind the InterCommunication Center [ICC] in Tokyo.[100]

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[97] See Edith-Ruß-Haus press portfolio. Stadt Oldenburg Pressebüro.

[98] Ars Electronica's history shows that it started small, but grew with political support and investment from the beginning: "Die Linzer Veranstaltungsgesellschaft mbH und das Landesstudio Oberösterreich des ORF wollen damit nicht nur einen Beitrag zum Ausbau des Internationalen Brucknerfestes leisten, sondern gleichzeitig einen Impuls für die Richtung dieser Entwicklung setzen: in Linz, im Rahmen des Internationalen Brucknerfestes, ein Zentrum für elektronische Kunst, einen spezifischen, aber sehr entscheidenden Bereich der Avantgarde, ins Leben zu rufen.

Mit der Absichtserklärung der Veranstalter, ARS ELECTRONICA als ständige Einrichtung zu etablieren, wurde für die Realisierung dieser Idee bereits ein markanter Grundstein gelegt." Hannes Leopoldseder, foreword to *Ars Electronica,* ed. Hannes Leopoldseder (Linz: Linzer Veranstaltungsgesellschaft mbH, 1979), accessed July 21, 2012, *Vorwort* to Ars Electronica, http://90.146.8.18/de/archives/festival_archive/festival_catalogs/festival_artikel.asp?iProjectID =9503; It began with the public art and concert piece Klangwolke (sound cloud) as part of the international Bruckner Festival in 1979. This was coupled with a conference for specialists and live demonstrations of experimental electronic art. Ars Electronica Center Ltd. was formed and state-owned in 1995, opened its own building in 1996 and became a year-round enterprise with, among other things, a "Museum of the Future" and the "Futurelab," which includes an artists-in-residence program as well as independent research and development projects for industry. The Ars Electronica Campus, specializing in media art education, opened in 2001 at the University of Art and Industrial Design in Linz. See Christine Schöpf, "The Making of…," in *Ars Electronica 1979-2004: The Network for Art, Technology and Society: The First 25 Years*, eds. Hannes Leopoldseder, Christine Schöpf, Gerfried Stocker (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2004), 18-25.

[99] ZKM was conceived in 1980, and in 1986 "a project group had been organized, consisting of local politicians and representatives of the university, the State Music Academy, the Center for Nuclear Research and other institutions in Karlsruhe." In 1988 the ZKM foundation was incorporated under public law; its first director named in 1989. Between that time and when the Center opened its building in a renovated munitions factory in 1997, events such as the "ZKM in the Factory" series and the Multimediale festival, including the Siemens Media Arts Award, had taken place. By 2012 ZKM had several departments including the Museum for Contemporary Art, the Media Museum, the Institute for Visual Media, the Institute for Music and Acoustics, The Institute for Basic Research, the Institute for Media and Economics, the Mediathek, and the Film Institute. In addition, the ZKM works closely—both intellectually and in physical proximity— with the State Academy for Design Karlsruhe. "ZKM_Beginnings," ZKM Online.

[100] The Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation announced its plan to build "a museum for the 21st Century" to commemorate NTT's 100th anniversary of telephone service in 1989. A project room for media art was launched in 1991 and moved to a different space almost every year. During that time ICC had a diverse program on art and the electronic information age, which included symposia, workshops and events. Its quarterly journal *InterCommunication* began in 1992. Permanent facilities opened at the Tokyo Opera City Tower in 1997, housing a

What media art in Oldenburg had predating the Edith-Ruß-Haus is an actively engaged municipal Department of Culture. Four years earlier, when the City of Oldenburg was negotiating how to use Edith Ruß' small fortune for cultural purposes as her will directed, its Department of Culture promoted an investigation of the growing influence of the Internet in the form of a series of events from May 28 to June 8, 1996 entitled, "Klick: Kultur im Internet" (Click, Culture in the Internet). The events were geared toward a large range of demographics and pull together very different cultural institutions such as a local puppet theater, the city's Office of Women, Office of Literature and a public school. The Internet was approached from several sides: sessions on how to send email took place for people over the age of fifty, lectures on the creative potential of the Internet and how it is changing culture are delivered, democracy and the Internet was discussed by the internationally renowned theorist Geert Lovink, and women in cyberspace was a topic as was literature in the Internet. "Art on the Web" is also shown.[101] This series is the forerunner for what would become the Edith-Ruß-Haus für Medienkunst.

Oldenburg's new media art institution opened on January 22, 2000—a date with dual symbolism: January 22 is Edith Ruß' birthday, whose endowment provided the capital for the building after her death in 1993.[102] The year 2000 was widely heralded as the dawn of a new millennium and the City of Oldenburg was attuned to the changes coming with a developing digital era. During an inaugural greeting for the new institution's first exhibition, Oldenburg's Lord Mayor positioned the Edith-Ruß-Haus on his city's cultural map as a new resource for the local contemporary art scene:

> Oldenburg verfügt über eine vielseitige, lebendige Kunstszene, und
> das Spektrum der aktuellen Kunstproduktionen ist ein wichtiger
> Aktivposten in unserer städtischen Angebotspalette. Mit der

collection of media art, reference library for the public and changing exhibitions. "Past Exhibition and Event Webpage," ICC Online, May 21, 2012, http://www.ntticc.or.jp/Archive/1989_93/index.html.

[101] *Klick: Kultur im Internet*, Oldenburger Kulturamt (Oldenburg: Stadt Oldenburg, 1996.) Edith-Ruß-Haus archive.

[102] See Paula von Sydow, *Ich wollte immer das Geld für die Allgemeinheit verwenden*, ed. Stadt Oldenburg (Oldenburg: Isensee Verlag, 2000).

Eröffnung des Edith-Ruß-Hauses für Medienkunst erweitern sich diese reichen kulturellen Ressourcen. Die grundlegend neuen Möglichkeiten künstlerischer Produktionen und die neue Sprache der Künste, entstanden durch die neuen Medien, rücken hier in den Mittelpunkt.

Das ist eine Chance und eine Herausforderung zugleich für unsere städtische Kulturarbeit, die damit sowohl eine zusätzliche inhaltliche Dimension als auch eine neue Vermittlungsaufgabe erhält. In einer Zeit des kulturellen Umbruchs wird das Edith-Ruß-Haus sicher auch dazu beitragen können, Anstöße für eine kreative, intellektuelle Debatte über die Künste zu geben.[103]

The mayor cites new media as the cause for new artistic production and a new language of the arts, and thus an additional responsibility of the city to educate/convey (Vermittlungsaufgabe) culture. This corresponds with Carol Duncan's assessment that the state uses public museums to make itself "look good: progressive, concerned about the spiritual life of its citizens, a preserver of past achievements and a provider for the common good."[104] Duncan's cynical tone goes too far because it denies sincerity on the side of the state, as if it can only act to "look good" instead of do good. The two are not mutually exclusive. In the mayor's speech emphasis is put on the Edith-Ruß-Haus not as a "preserver of past achievement," but one with a view forward. He positions the Edith-Ruß-Haus as a contributor to the fulfillment of that charge during this "time of cultural upheaval." With the Edith-Ruß-Haus, the city positions itself as actively engaged in cultural mapping: contributing to and ascertaining what is on and

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[103] Oldenburg possesses a multi-faceted, lively art scene and the spectrum of current art production is an important active post in the palette our city has to offer. The opening of the Edith-Ruß-Haus for Media Art expands these rich cultural resources. The fundamental, new possibilities of artistic production and the new language of the arts, which have been generated by new media, now move to the center. That is both a chance and a challenge for our city's cultural work, which has acquired another dimension in terms of content as well as a new educational duty. During this cultural upheaval, the Edith-Ruß-Haus will surely also be able to provide impulses for a creative, intellectual debate on the arts. (my translation) Dr. Jürgen Poeschel, greeting for *reality checkpoint – körperszenarien*, eds. Stadt Oldenburg and Kulturamt (Oldenburg, Stadt Oldenburg, 2000), unnumbered.

[104] Carol Duncan, "Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship," in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 93.

what is missing from the local map ("a multi-faceted, lively art scene"). At this time new media is seen as central to the cultural shift referred to here. Correspondingly, and with a whiff of technical ingenuity and creativity, the Edith-Ruß-Haus is to put Oldenburg at the center of a realigned cultural paradigm, not left behind on the periphery.

In another greeting found in the same catalogue published on the occasion of the opening of the Edith-Ruß-Haus, Lower Saxony's Minister of Science and Culture declares: "Die Ausstellung *reality checkpoint – körperszenarien* gibt nicht nur Ausblick auf das zukünftige Ausstellungskonzept des neuen Hauses für Medienkunst in Oldenburg, sondern will im mehrfachen Sinn Ortsbestimmung und Zäsur im kulturellen Umbruch sein."[105] Minister Oppermann views the media art institution's first exhibition as more than a taste of what is to come: "In many senses, it also wants to be a declaration of a position/location (Ortsbestimmung) and a caesura during this cultural upheaval." The minister's choice of the word "Ortsbestimmung" ties the exhibition to the identification of a location because it shows how closely cultural activity and a sense of place lie on the map.

What Minister Opperman ascribes to the ambition of the exhibition extends as an inference to the ambition of the Edith-Ruß-Haus and the city to position itself as a location that breaks with the old and embraces the new, a caesura. In this instance, the *reality checkpoint* exhibition examines how the body is physically and psychologically altered by technology. The "cultural upheaval" of both greetings is caused by advancing technologies re-shaping how the world is perceived. The Edith-Ruß-Haus is the demonstration that Oldenburg thinks beyond provincial and conservative notions of art and culture by actively engaging this cultural upheaval. These politicians' words also reflected a belief that media art had such standing that an entire institution with permanent facilities and ongoing financing should be invested in it. It is an investment in the

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[105] The exhibition *reality checkpoint – body scenarios* not only provides a forecast for the Edith-Ruß-Haus for Media Art's future exhibition concept. In many senses, it also wants to be a declaration of a position/location and a caesura during this cultural upheaval. (my translation) Thomas Oppermann, greetings and official remarks for *reality checkpoint – körperszenarien*, unnumbered.

belief that media art will make both the institution and the City of Oldenburg "eine gute Adresse."

Putting the Edith-Ruß-Haus on the map is a rocky endeavor despite the political efforts of the state. The articulation of a new institution featuring an art form not yet showcased in that area of the geographical map and under-defined for many people needs to be carefully planned and publicly promoted. At its opening Edith-Ruß-Haus had neither a programming nor a marketing plan and was curated by committee. It is exceedingly difficult to position an institution and create its profile without a singular director responsible for the development of a program. Advocates drawn from the community plus the director of the city's Department of Culture were named by the Lord Mayor in mid-1998 to form an advisory committee that planned the program for the first six months.[106] An artistic director was appointed, Hedwig Vavra-Sibum, who was drawn from the existing staff at the Department of Culture. She has no written contribution included in the Edith-Ruß-Haus' first catalogue, which indicates the status of her position. Vavra-Sibum is listed as the catalogue's editor and the Edith-Ruß-Haus' artistic director, but her name is nowhere amongst the official greetings, introduction to the institution or descriptive texts of the artworks. The exhibition concept is attributed to the five individuals in the advisory committee and, set one line apart in the colophon, Vavra-Sibum.[107] Once she left on maternity leave (never to return), the advisory committee worked with a six-month temporary director, Sabina Maria Schmidt, during the second half of 2000. After that contract ended, the committee stepped in to plan the first months of 2001 until a new and permanent artistic director was hired. No permanent director was budgeted or put in place until this author began on April 1, 2001. Until the advisory board disbanded later in 2001, it was unclear who had the final authority to choose the artists, exhibitions, workshops, and events—is the program curated by committee or by the artistic director? Only once the

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[106] The Artistic Advisory Committee in January 2000 consisted of Eckart Beinke, composer; Dr. Irmtraud Rippel-Manß, Director of the Department of Culture; Dr. Helene von Oldenburg, Media Artist; Prof. Dr. Jens Thiele, Media Scholar (Carl von Ossietzky Universität; Jürgen Weichardt, Art Critic. *reality checkpoint – körperszenarien*, last page, unnumbered.
[107] Ibid.

programming authority is made clear can the media art institution decide how to develop its position on the map.

Infrastructure and Positioning

An institution's infrastructure in terms of personnel, facilities and other resources is a determining factor in how it will position itself on its cultural maps. In 2001, the Edith-Ruß-Haus' personnel consisted of the artistic director, who is also responsible for fundraising and sponsorship and who reports to a financial director overseeing all of Oldenburg's municipal "museums." The artistic director is actually a dual position including Curator with the support of a full-time research assistant and two part-time preparators.

The building facilities have a 3-unit guesthouse with a small lecture hall and it is joined to the exhibition hall by an underground stairwell, as is a third building with administrative space for the Office of Culture, where the Edith-Ruß-Haus offices reside. The exhibition hall is the centerpiece and public entrance. It is a two-level building that is flooded with natural light, high ceilings and an open staircase between the floors. Such architecture may be well suited for artworks that need natural light, but it is less than ideal for artwork dependent upon light and sound control. Projections, for instance, are sensitive to light and sound travels through the open interior. According to Helene von Oldenburg, a media artist and member of the original advisory board, the architectural plans were drawn up and building construction was already underway before it was decided Edith Ruß' endowment would be dedicated to media art.[108]

The technical infrastructure includes basics for a media art institution such as Internet connectivity. The City of Oldenburg provides a small budget for capitol acquisitions (computers and projectors, but not software), "exhibitions" (meaning the program, be it exhibitions or other formats) and the operational overhead. Being a municipal institution, the Edith-Ruß-Haus has access to the city government's resources, such as groundskeepers and its press office. It is part of the "big ship" that is the city government, with all of the advantages and disadvantages of a bureaucracy. In sum, Oldenburg—relatively far from Europe's

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[108] The author in conversation with Helene von Oldenburg, April 2000.

cultural centers and with little experience in media art—puts its modest resources toward what it considers a twenty-first century development in culture.

The next step after the institution's opening was to establish a profile for media art at the current time. When media art institutions were being conceived in the 1980s and early 1990s, the face of this new category of art was big and spectacular à la Otto Piene's sky art; large scale, public projections of Krzystof Wodiczko or bombastic, multi-channel monitor installations by Marie-Jo Lafontaine.[109] Even Nam June Paik moved away from his Fluxus and television experiments of the 1960s and 70s in favor of stacked video sculptures, seen by many as museum foyer "greeters" well into the 90s.[110] In the mid- to late 1990s, single-channel video installations made possible by less expensive and better quality projectors would mimic the size of large scale painting or small scale film. Such installations carry a strong physical relationship to gallery space similar to the way that installation art incorporates the entire space of the white cube.

The Edith-Ruß-Haus' light infrastructure makes the grandiloquence of the 1980s almost impossible as such artworks demand considerable resources. Single-channel video installation is exhibited, but enacting a program that relies too heavily on this medium would quickly become redundant and hardly set the Edith-Ruß-Haus apart from the many video-heavy contemporary art museum exhibitions and biennials. As limiting as it is, having few resources forcibly turns the institution's attention away from the overtly spectacular and toward a reflection on electronic media's continuing evolution from enormous, room-filling computers to miniature chips and the digital cloud, now looking to ubiquitous computing when the entire world is networked and computers are no longer physically perceptible. Adjusting the template of everyday life from top-down hierarchy to networks connected by nodes of activity, electronic media affect life in a way that is all-encompassing in their pervasiveness: how all

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[109] See Otto Piene, *Otto Piene: Sky art; 1968-1996* (Köln: Wienand, 1999); Krzysztof Wodiczko and Peter W. Boswell, eds., *Public Address: Krzysztof Wodiczko* (Minneapolis, Walker Art Center, 1992); Marie-Jo Lafontaine, ed. *Marie-Jo Lafontaine* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 1999).
[110] On the evolution of Paik's work see Edith Decker, *Paik Video* (Köln: DuMont, 1988). On the prominent placement of video sculpture in museum lobbies but not in galleries and collections, see Ulrike Lehmann, "Anmerkungen zur Musealisierung von Videokunst," *Videonale 6*, Rosanne Altstatt, Catrin Backhaus, Petra Unnützer and Andreas Denk (Bonn: Videonale e.V, 1994), 82-96.

elements of society connect, transfer and share information. The Edith-Ruß-Haus would find its niche and positions itself on the cultural map by modeling its program loosely on the ways in which low-cost, smart and personal technologies affect art and culture.

A Glocal Network

The artwork *CYSMN-O* is extensive in scope, but not bombastic in tone. It connected the individual to a greater system as part of both a local and global event through activity in the actual streets of Oldenburg being extended beyond those borders through a virtual and interactive map. It is a glocal artwork that incorporated the institution, the city and its inhabitants. It is global because players log on through the Internet to play from anywhere in the world. Its local elements are the live performance on Oldenburg's streets, the transformation of the Edith-Ruß-Haus' exhibition hall as headquarters. One way to experience the game was to walk through Oldenburg's pedestrian zone as three black-clad runners round up and entrap the blips on their screen in back alleys and dead end streets, talking with the online players through a written chat and audio stream. Another way was to play or follow the action from a computer at home. To experience a bit of both the performative and the surveillant in an inversion of the virtual encounter with the real, one could go where the global and local elements of the artwork intersect: the Edith-Ruß-Haus' lecture hall. This was temporarily transformed into an Internet café for gamers to play online, talk over energy drinks and watch the performers run in and out of the control room that is their headquarters.

The activity in the lecture hall cum Internet café demonstrates the glocalization of a community at the Edith-Ruß-Haus as described by the sociologists Barry Wellman and Keith Hampton. In their paper "Living Networked On and Offline," the authors argue that "the Internet both provides a ramp onto the global information highway and strengthens local links within neighborhoods and households."[111] This happens because people not only unite

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[111] Barry Wellman and Keith Hampton, "Living Networked On and Offline," *Contemporary Sociology*, 28, 6 (1999): 648-54, accessed December 27, 2010 from Research Library Core. (Document ID: 47509677).

in, for instance, a global political campaign, but because they also communicate online and through email about neighborhood events.

  CYSMN-O functioned as Wellman and Hampton describe: it was part of the *Oldenburger Kultursommer*, an annual summer series of cultural events to which many of the city's cultural institutions contribute, and is thus a local event. Most of the participants were local, though players log on from as far away from Oldenburg as the United States.[112] Many who had played the game on the first days logged on later and chatted with each other about what happened earlier and inquired about those they met while playing in the Edith-Ruß-Haus gaming lounge.[113] *CYSMN-O* strengthened the local community of viewers/participants/visitors taking a growing interest in the media art institution. Through *CYSMN-O,* local participants could chat beyond their geographic location through the Internet while standing firmly within it to meet those with a common interest in gaming culture.

  Players near and far virtually ran through the streets either alone and in silence or chatting and strategizing with other players. For most, the common interest was in gaming culture. Some play the game because of a general interest in contemporary art, and they are now exposed to gaming through the Edith-Ruß-Haus. Others were citizens of Oldenburg who with an interest in seeing their city in a new way—who want to experience their city rendered virtually and take part in re-imagining the local.

A Confluence in Addressing the Audience

As the title of an artwork, "Can You See Me Now?" is not a straightforward question but a confluence of the artwork and the institution addressing the audience. Who is asking? Who is being asked? What does "see" mean? Hanging Oldenburg onto the end of the question can be thought of as more than a

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[112] Players' remote locations are monitored by Blast Theory and the Mixed-Reality Lab through in the ISP addresses logging into the system. The author in conversation with Matt Adams, July 6, 2003.
[113] The entire Oldenburg game was digitally archived and on view at the Edith-Ruß-Haus until August 3, 2003 as part of the documentation of the game. It was exhibited in Linz later that year when *CYSMN?* was awarded the Golden Nica for Interactive Art at Prix Ars Electronica. The chat could be followed on this documentation, though the entire replay of the game is inaccessible because the software is now outdated. See note 225.

practical means to tell apart multiple versions of the game in different cities.[114]
Thought of more broadly, one can ask whether the inhabitants of Oldenburg are
addressed or whether the city itself is being referred to as a location. Each part of
the question has more than one possible answer with varying implications when
thought of in terms of the relationship between the art institution, artists and
audience.

On the surface, the title is a simple take-off on a highly successful
advertising campaign which shows a product tester for Verizon Wireless
roaming the far reaches of the country with his cell phone to ask, "Can you hear
me now?" His answer, "good," verifies the network's reliability.[115] By changing
"hear" to "see," the authors of the title wryly point to the roaming, wireless
aspect of their game and turn around the user's desire to be heard at all times by
creating a game in which the user/player tries her best not to be "seen."

The question can be rephrased as "Can you see me now, as an avatar, in
the game located in virtual Oldenburg?" This sentence can be directed two ways.
First, as the player (me) taunting the runners (you) in a cat and mouse game in
which the player does not want to be caught but does want to thumb her nose at
her pursuer like Jerry would whistle for Tom to pursue him into a trap. Secondly,
and outside the strategy of the game but within the game's social space, the
players (me) do want to see their own avatars on screen, to participate and
communicate with others (you) logged on to the game: "Can you see me now,
playing this game with you in virtual Oldenburg?"

If the question is being posed by the Edith-Ruß-Haus as narrator
"speaking" to its audience, it becomes one of an institution asking whether it is
visible on the cultural map. "Can you (world) see me (Edith-Ruß-Haus and those
participating in the game) now? We're in Oldenburg!" The question from this
perspective is also a playful overture toward the inhabitants of Oldenburg—and
the rest of the world for that matter—asking if they want to take part in the
program it has to offer. "Can you (audience) see me (Edith-Ruß-Haus)? Am I

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[114] The game is first played in Sheffield (2001) and Rotterdam (2003) before Oldenburg. For
venues after Oldenburg: "Can You See Me Now?" Blast Theory, accessed May 21, 2012,
http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/bt/work_cysmn.html.
[115] Teresa Howard, "Can you hear me now?" "Advertising and Marketing," *USA Today*. Posted
online February 22, 2004, accessed May 21, 2012,
http://www.usatoday.com/money/advertising/adtrack/2004-02-22-track-verizon_x.htm.

visible to you, my potential audience, and do you want to play? I've been developing some interesting programs for you and I'd like you to take notice and take part. Do you see me NOW?"

More than what stands behind "you" or "me" in the title, it is the word "see" that Blast Theory questions. "See" is used loosely, in favor of "caught," and this is mentioned in the artists' own description of the game: "Specifically, if a runner gets to within five virtual meters of an online player, the player is caught (although, we deliberately used the more open and ambiguous term 'seen') and is out of the game."[116] There are several ambiguities in the use of "see." The artists may be using "see" as a euphemism for "caught" in order to downplay the aggressiveness of pursuit common in many first-person shooter games.

The first actions a player takes in the game is to enter a name for his or her avatar and then enter the name of someone he or she has not seen in a long time. This aspect of the game is likely an attempt to soften the antagonism pursuit infers, but the relationship between two people who know each other and one looking for the other is never picked up again during the game. The runners do not go after the avatars in order to catch up to them and interact. Once the avatar has been "seen" it disappears from the screen. The players/avatars consciously run away and try to stay in the game—or stay alive in the game—as long as possible. The concept of two people meeting again after a long separation does not quite fit.

Another, more fruitful, reading of the ambiguity in the word "see" is as a reference to what it means to see anything at all in a virtual world. The runners see a blip on the screen in the shape of a human silhouette. Really, they neither catch nor see anything on that spot of pavement in Oldenburg. Likewise, the players only literally see the runners when they watch them at the Edith-Ruß-Haus going in an out of the exhibition space serving as Blast Theory's headquarters. A player in Japan will never know what her avatar's pursuer on the actual street looks like. Yet a meeting takes place and when an avatar is "seen" the protagonist and antagonist might engage through the chat text and walkie-talkie. This type of "seeing" in a virtual world is about the encounter.

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[116] Steve Benford et. al, "Can You See Me Now?" 100-33.

Where *CYSMN-O* ends is where the Edith-Ruß-Haus as an institution begins. Oldenburg loses its characteristics as just a place on the geographic map when it becomes virtual; culturally "on the map." It becomes differently visible as a space in which people convene or a space they access virtually. "Seeing" is then encountering Oldenburg as a city and the Edith-Ruß-Haus as a place to encounter and engage with art.

Blast Theory and the Edith-Ruß-Haus ask the world to play, but the question applies universally to every event and exhibition. "Can you SEE me?" is posed to the elusive avatar that is the audience, which must be out there and whose attention the Edith-Ruß-Haus wants to catch with enticing programs. The art institution works to facilitate encounters with and through art and the question of visibility is a constant subtext to its endeavors. This is not simply a matter of marketing but one of how to make media art "visible" to institution's publics. The artist Boris Groys theorizes that the surface of "museum items" are made visible to the public with an institution's material support, but what is behind their surfaces remains obscured and invisible by the institution's necessity for their conservation.[117] During *CYSMN-O* there was no "item" made visible but action made possible by the institution's infrastructural support and though what happens in the technology headquarters was not visible to the public, participatory engagement is the point of the game. The artists, participating audience members and the institution are all made variably visible.

The institution raises the visibility of media art as a genre. Where it may be subsumed into the general category of media art in a general museum, in the media art institution it is the main perspective and attraction. A glocal perspective enables the media art institution to build its audience and standing as "eine gute Adresse" while exploring locative art with those seeking the encounter with media art.

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[117] Boris Groys, "On the New," *#ArtNodes*, December 2002, accessed May 18, 2012, http://www.uoc.edu/artnodes/espai/eng/art/groys1002/groys1002.html.

Chapter 3

FORMING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The media art institution is indebted to a history of non-media specific museums as well as extremely specific venues such as media art festivals. A wide-ranging field of practices for building ties between audiences, artists and the institution has developed from these different sources. This has opened a number of paths for the media art institution to develop techniques that encourage artists and members of the local audience to participate in activities and conversations surrounding media art. This chapter outlines ways in which the media art institution can participate in an existing network of local cultural institutions, can update the artist's residency to suit collaboration-driven forms of art that result in different types of community encounters, and employs strategies for generating the participation of audiences as they have been discussed under the terms of relational art and aesthetics.

Types of participation in participatory artworks have been notably discussed by theorist Claire Bishop (on the wider field of contemporary art) and Beryl Graham (specifically on new media art).[118] Bishop's arguments began with an initial rally against curator Nicolas Bourriaud's concept of *relational aesthetics* (discussed further below as they pertain to media art and the institution) in "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics" with the skeptical query of "what *types* of relations are being produced, for whom, and why?"[119] Graham and Cooke pick up this question in the "Participative Systems" chapter of *Rethinking Curating* by pointing out that Bourriaud is "vague" as to whom or what relational aesthetics is building relationships.[120] In "What kind of participative system? Critical vocabularies from new media art," Graham gets down to brass tacks and outlines how interaction, participation and collaboration have been finely honed and distinguished in new media art "because they are different 'systems' and because

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[118] Claire Bishop, "Participation and Spectacle: Where Are We Now?" in Nato Thompson, ed., *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2001* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2012), 24-45; Beryl Graham, "What kind of participative system? Critical vocabularies from new media art," in *The 'Do-it-Yourself' Artwork: Participation from Fluxus to New Media*, ed. Anna Dezeuze (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 281-305.

[119] Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 67; See also Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2002).

[120] Graham and Cooke, *Rethinking Curating*, 111-43.

of the question applicable to all three terms – 'between what/whom'? The behaviours are very different, dependent upon whether the action takes place between people, between human and computer/programmed artwork, or between machines."[121] This is a starting point from which to address those sections of the media art institution's program that are designed to be interactive, participatory and collaborative—not necessarily at the same time.

The types of relations being produced vary from artwork to artwork and project to project. The audiences vary as well. They are local, international, well-versed in art or barely at all, and sometimes their categorizations overlap. Without a demographic survey of who and what groups take part in a media art institution's program as well as a qualitative analysis of how and why they do or do not it is impossible to parse them with accuracy. It would be presumptuous here to speak for the many individuals who constitute an institution's audiences. An obvious unifying factor, however, is that they have an interest in (media) art. Why are relations being produced in the institution? It is to include and cultivate those audiences, the *whom*, through shared experience in the understanding and shaping of what media art ought to be.

One might suspect that the institution's desire to include audiences is economic and hegemonic; that the institution believes it can serve droves of audiences that demand to be animated by art and consume an experience rather than engage in critical reflection—as if the two were diametrically opposed. The curatorial program's formats can promote relations between people, between human and artwork or between "machines," which are in this case institutions with the ultimate goal of serving interested publics. Participation and collaboration in a program designed to bring audiences deeper into an artwork or a discussion on art as a way of simultaneously creating and reflecting upon the subject at hand build not only relationships but meaning in that subject. Furthermore, it remains to be shown how curatorial program formats that foster audience participation and reflect the sociability of contemporary communication media are economically beneficial to the institution. The decline of new institutionalism (see Introduction) speaks against the notion that there is an economic benefit to fluidity, discursivity, participation and production. This

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[121] Graham, "What kind of participative system?" 299.

leads to the conclusion that what brings masses of people and solid funding into the art institution is a "traditional" exhibition program that can be coordinated with regional marketing organizations which, for instance, launch advertising campaigns and schedule buses of tourists to stream through the show and pick up a souvenir in the gift shop. This is not to disavow the ability of the tourist to gain something poignant from an exhibition, but it is not participative in the sense of contribution and exchange.

Measuring the degree of participation in an artwork in order to judge its effectiveness or whether it is keeping a promise of interactivity has its limits. Bishop points out in "Participation and Spectacle: Where Are We Now?" that many have applied Sherry Arnstein's "Ladder of Citizen Participation," a model from city planning, as a guideline for measuring the participatory quotient of an artwork and that while it "provides us with helpful and nuanced differences between forms of civic participation, it falls short of corresponding to the complexity of artistic gestures."[122] When the model is transferred to artwork, low participation rests on the bottom rungs of non-participation (manipulation and therapy), modest inclusion is tokenism (informing, consultation and placation) and the highest of the eight rungs is citizen power (partnership, delegated power and citizen control).[123] Yet artworks that aim for the low or middle rungs of participation should not automatically be placed on a low artistic value scale as well. After all, a viewer may find great value in encountering an artwork that requires "minimal" participation or to stand back and watch.

This applies not only to artworks but to institutions as well. As they design their program formats, it is important to keep in mind that there are different types and qualities of audience participation and audience members' *desire* to become active in the individual participatory units of a program. In the discourse on new institutionalism and its penchant for participatory projects, Jan Verwoert has argued for "the right of the viewer and critic to freely negotiate the terms of proximity and distance in relation to a work or exhibition."[124] In this light, programming strategies that aim for interaction, participation and

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[122] Bishop, "Participation and Spectacle," 41; See Sherry R. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation*," Journal of the American Planning Association*, 35:4 (July 1969): 216-24.
[123] Arnstein, "Ladder of Citizen Participation," 217.
[124] Jan Verwoert, "This Is Not an Exhibition," in Möntmann, *Art and Its Institutions*, 139.

collaboration do well to invite audiences to become participants, even entice them, while allowing them to "negotiate the terms of proximity and distance" by offering a wide palette of opportunities for engagement.

The combined factors of which strategies for building sociality are put forward, their pertinence to media art and its institutions, and how they are reconfigured at those sites maximizes the media art institution as an agent for communication with and through art. The artist who makes an artwork and the institution that designs a program may sound an opening note that will lead audiences, but if they are attentive they will each learn from and with audiences through participation, collaboration and discussion. This is not art education in the classical sense, but it is educational in that it develops knowledge—for everyone participating in the artist, artwork, audience, institution equation.

Entering and Reshaping Local Networks[125]

A media art institution that is new to a local community puts more than a building on the map; it brings new perspectives to it. It does this not as an autonomous entity but in a landscape of loosely networked cultural activity that has already taken shape. That shape is continually changing according to the activities of each point on the map, how they work together and how they approach their audiences. Part of how the institution shapes the encounter with its potential audiences is determined by the pre-existing local cultural map on which it lands. Even small localities take part, for instance, in international museum days when local museum networks act together to offer special events. In Oldenburg, citywide projects such as the *Oldenburger Kultursommer* have a long tradition and large audience appeal. In its first years, the Edith-Ruß-Haus positioned itself on Oldenburg's cultural map with its own independent programs but it also integrated itself into existing cultural community networks.

Media art's strong relationship to communication technologies pulls the institution toward local broadcast media stations. Media art's history as and on television dates to 1968, when Otto Piene and Aldo Tambelini produced *Black*

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[125] The essay "Wie man ein örtliches Publikum für internationale Medienkusnt interessiert—ein Letifaden für Benutzer" sketches ways in which the Edith-Ruß-Haus binds itself to the local cultural infrastructure. Rosanne Altstatt, *Digitale Transformationen*, eds. Monika Fleischmann and Ulrike Reinhard (Heidelberg: Whois Verlags- und Vertriebsgesellschaft, 2004), 176-84.

Gate Cologne for WDRIII.[126] This ushered in an intense phase of artists working not just with video technology but with television crews to produce art for television.[127] More recently art institutions use the Internet as their own broadcasting venues with written blogs, video blogs and podcasts. At first these were individual initiatives, but institutions now often pool together with other art institutions on one consolidated website.[128] Yet the Internet is not yet a replacement for community radio and television, which reach a more targeted regional audience than the World Wide Web. The tradition of art and television is revived with the media art institution as a standing cooperative partner that brings artists's work to the local station.

Several open access radio and television stations dot the map of Lower Saxony, including the oldenburg eins television and radio stations. In 2001 the Edith-Ruß-Haus began a monthly, thirty-minute program titled *Video Visions*. It featured video art from the exhibition program as well as artworks brought to Oldenburg for the sole purpose of televised broadcast. The radio station was also enlisted as a sometimes extension of activities at Edith-Ruß-Haus. An example is *Two-Channel Zapping* (2004) by Călin Dan, a 2004 residency artist. For his project the artist broadcasted Romanian music and Romanian video art. His audience simultaneously tuned in to the radio and television stations for an at-home, multi-media performance.[129]

Universities and other institutions with an emphasis on research and education have a surface commonality with the media art institution in that

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[126] ". . . the very first TV artwork to be broadcast—and this pre-dates the activities of WGBH in Boston—was Black Gate Cologne by Otto Piene and Aldo Tambelini, screened on August 30, 1968, by WDR III." Wulf Herzogenrath, "Video Art and Institutions: The First Fifteen Years," in *40YearsVideoArt.de—Part I*, eds. Rudolf Frieling and Wulf Herzogenrath (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2004), 23.

[127] The history of video art on open access cable television dates to 1969, when Gerry Schum worked with the Berlin open access television station SFB to produce his "Fernseh Galerie" and "Land Art" project for ARD's Channel 1. Ibid., 24. Nam June Paik first broadcast *The Medium is the Medium* on the public television station WGBH in March 1969. "Die im März 1969 ausgestrahlte Sendung stellte für Amerika die Premiere eines von Künstlern gestalteten Programms dar." Decker, *Paik Video*, 150.

[128] The video blog (vlog) *ArtBabble* was begun by the Indianapolis Museum of Art and has expanded into a vlog with several museum partners. "ArtBabble was conceived, initiated, designed, built, sculpted, programmed, shot, edited, painted and launched by a cross-departmental collection of individuals at the Indianapolis Museum of Art (IMA). It is intended to showcase video art [*sic*] content in high quality format from a variety of sources and perspectives." "About Us," *ArtBabbl*e, accessed July 21, 2012, http://www.artbabble.org/about. The vlog does not actually feature video art, but videos about art.

[129] Himmelsbach, *Produced@,* 130-33.

they each study culture. In Oldenburg the Carl-von-Ossietzky Universität and the Edith-Ruß-Haus entered into a formal cooperation when the media art institution opened, offering students from the university's Art and Media Studies program two workshops per year.[130] Finding a mutually beneficial format for interaction is a difficult task because the structures of these two types of institutions differ greatly. Most art institutions are focused on presentating to publics that want to see art by artists who have a fully developed artistic practice, while universities generally institute closed forums where students can learn and experiment without the pressure of public scrutiny. Common ground may be found in a workshop-exhibition format, leading to a unique model for students and a broader public.

Jordan Crandall was invited to the Edith-Ruß-Haus in 2002 to conduct *Trigger Project,* a "workshop-exhibition" that concentrated equally on production, discussion and presentation to combine the educational workshop with the solo exhibition in order to open up both formats to interaction with art's publics. This is not without precedence as the workshop resembles the laboratory approach found in all areas of visual and performing arts that desire to "deal with process rather than object, with participant rather than audience, or with production rather than exhibition."[131] In media art, the lab is often an interdisciplinary undertaking in which artists and scientists meet or technology such as software is taught to artists.[132] The open studio, in which the artist has an on-site studio open to the public, is another precedent and the most similar to the *Trigger Project* workshop/exhibition combination.

Jordan Crandall proposed *Trigger Project* to the Edith-Ruß-Haus as an undertaking that would use the institution as a classroom, a pre-production site, a screening room, a lecture hall and an exhibition gallery (figs. 3.1-3.2). *Trigger Project* was one phase of Crandall's multi-part production plan for the dual projection video *Trigger*, which revolves around the intimate distance of two

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[130] This contract was renegotiated after 2005 with new terms.
[131] Graham and Cooke, *Rethinking Curating*, 235.
[132] For an analysis of experimental, interdisciplinary and research-led lab models in curating new media, see Ibid., 234-42.

figures watching and warring against each other as they view their opposite though the crosshairs of an unseen military ocular device.

Stage sets were built for *Trigger Project* in the gallery upon Crandall's request and video equipment was brought in. The set was the site of the workshop where students would develop, act out and record part of the draft production of *Trigger.* Crandall traveled to Oldenburg with a storyboard made in New York and readings on the subject of violence, voyeurism and military technologies. Students from the university used this material to develop and shoot a mock-up of the video installation. This action began before the exhibition opened to the public and continued for a few days into the public exhibition. At the opening reception the upper gallery was a film studio as exhibition: sets and props remained in place, the storyboard was tacked to the walls next to a work table, scenes from the student's draft video are projected onto the walls, post-it notes were scattered across everything. For *Trigger Project*, the aesthetic was derived from the state of process, as a workshop that the participants just left for a break but will be back soon, which was exactly the case. Opening night featured a public lecture by the artist on the seeping of military technology into private, civilian society. After that event, certain hours during the remaining days of the workshop were designated for public observation and discuss the work with Crandall and the students. Rounding out the exhibition element of *Trigger Project* was Crandall's multi-channel video installation *Drive* (1998-2000) in the lower gallery and in later weeks the film *Peeping Tom* (1960) was screened, a feature film that depicts an anthropomorphized, weapon-like camera shot to make the link between desires of sex, violence and vision technologies. An Edith-Ruß-Haus reader was published on Jordan Crandall as a venue for his theoretical essays, several of his drawings and an interview with him.

This education/presentation model is not an easy encounter for most visitors to the daily exhibition. While the traditional projected display of the video installation *Drive* in the lower gallery anchored the visitor in the well-known solo exhibition format, the pre-production of *Trigger* as work-in-progress could throw those off who come to the Edith-Ruß-Haus in search of completed works of art to be critically observed and experienced at a distance. Bishop critiques the closely related laboratory model as making it

difficult to "discer[n] a work whose identity is willfully unstable" (which seems to be the point of a work-in-progress), too easily "marketable as a space of leisure and entertainment" and part of an "experience economy" (though it is short-sighted of Bishop to consider this an automatic negative), and that it is unclear what the viewer should gain from this experience.[133] Her first point essentially means that since there are no known parameters for critiquing this work it is automatically bad. On the contrary, parameters are developed over time and must be applied in order to fully validate a work or condemn it. The second point denies the art institution's traditional function as space of leisure as well as the potential value and quality of experiential activity. The last point relates to the first in that the critic lacks an ability to articulate a basis of expectation.

To ask what the viewer should gain from the experience is to envision the intentional behavior of the artist as belonging exclusively to him or her: as one who presents finished "solutions" rather than open artistic "problems"—or problems only when they can be seen as solved within the finished work. In this case, Crandall came to Oldenburg with drawn sketches and the artistic problem of developing these into moving images. He opened this to the workshop participants and the public. He spread the intentional behavior of the artist to others.

In *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures*, art historian Michael Baxandall notes that intention is not static but changes with each brushstroke in the making of a picture.[134] This idea can be carried over into the development of an artwork in any medium. Hence, the "brushstrokes" of participants in the process of making *Trigger* are those who push the thought process of "making" in discussions of the art and those who take part in developing the scenes. Further in the text Baxandall proceeds to account for the tension between the artist as one who finds a solution and the observer as one who views the artist as a problem-solver. With the workshop-exhibition format, visitors are invited to simultaneously

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[133] Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics": 50; 50; 50; 50.
[134] Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 62.

become participants in developing the intention of an artwork and observers of the aesthetics of process, and vice versa.[135]

Trigger Project promoted group and one-on-one discussion, pushing the exhibition toward a social encounter that not only let the workshop participants explain their activity but generated meaning for them and for visitors as they explored the themes set forth by Crandall. The workshop-exhibition format asks that viewers think their way into the production by reading notes, following storyboards and speaking with the artist or workshop participants if they are available. The bar for engagement is high and this is a very different kind of engagement than being a silent viewer. If a visitor is not willing to become a participant in this way, the effect can be similar to standing in front of an artwork that is out-of-order, a familiar complaint of media art in museums that do not engage in good presentation practices. However, this does not mean there is no value in this format. One may reject "participating" in a painting by passing it by after a quick look-over and judging it "not to my taste" or because it does not speak to a viewer's state of mind at the time. Another person who chooses to engage it may find it has great value. If that artwork is not presented or ventured, nothing can be gained for anyone.

This workshop-exhibition experiment, if nothing else, educated its students and demystified the artistic process. Trigger Project pushed against the solo exhibition model in which a (male) artist is presented as a heroic figure and did this by showing him as part of a larger collaboration with other individuals and institutions during production and exhibition. This in itself is a statement against the notion of the autonomous artist or even the autonomous institution. It shapes the perception of an institution's as well as of art's encounters with audiences and with each other as part of an ongoing process and dialogue, though the right balance is difficult to reach.

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[135] Ibid., 68-72.

Directing Artist Residencies

Toward Artist-Institution-Community Interaction

There is generally a quick turnover of individual presentations at an institution because it gives audiences new reasons to visit while building up a multi-faceted understanding of media art. Each segment of the program contributes over time to a larger picture and long-term, this acts as a survey to create breadth and even depth of knowledge as an audience ideally becomes better versed in the types of questions being raised about media art and culture. Another type of depth can be achieved through longer initiatives that provide a counterbalance to short-term programs. An artist residency program that encourages community interaction is an example.

At the Edith-Ruß-Haus an apartment, financing, gallery space and an emphasis on the presentation of art make the artist residency an opportunity for artists to connect with a hosting institution and spend longer periods of time with its audiences, sometimes even offering an audience to become a collaborative partner. "Residency" implies that the artist resides and works on-site and within the community, and many residency programs require long periods of attendance to ensure, in theory, that the facilities are being used and artists temporarily become part of the community.[136] Providing space, time, funding and an institution that works with the public, however, is no guarantee that a resident artist will connect with the public.

Two elements are necessary for a residency program to integrate its artists into the community if that is desired. The institution must stipulate that artists seek encounters with the public and it must invest time as well as personnel into assisting resident artists to carry out their proposals—much as though it were an artist's production studio. Otherwise, artists may easily slip into an extended staccato of the short-lived encounter, spending their time at the

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[136] Attendance is taken for the residency program at Deutschen Akademie Rom Villa Massimo and there are consequences when more than 50 days are spent away from the site: "Die Studiengäste verpflichten sich, während der Dauer der Studienzeit in der Deutschen Akademie Rom präsent zu sein. Sind sie bei ihrem 11monatigen Studienaufenthalt in Rom länger als insgesamt 50 Tage abwesend, wird das Stipendium entsprechend gekürzt. Bei dringenden persönlichen Gründen kann die Direktion im Benehmen mit dem Beauftragten der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien über Ausnahmen entscheiden. Übersteigt die Abwesenheit insgesamt 81 Tage, gilt der Studienaufenthalt als abgebrochen. Eine Wiederaufnahme oder Wiederholung ist nicht möglich." Statuten Villa Massimo, § 3 Paragraph 5.

institution as preparation for an exhibition with the community encounter limited to the finished "product" of the residency. An artist's studio time in a temporary new location is valuable, but the residency is an opportunity for a deeper relationship with a place and a community that is more than an atmospheric influence (though this alone may have value). This is less of a problem for programs that are strictly artist residencies and not tied to an exhibiting institution with a main focus on audiences. Yet for institutions primarily serving the public, a different model can be formed. Institutions want residencies to support artists, but all three parties—artist, institution, community—must be taken into account for mutual and sustained support.

One difficulty in achieving a balance of support between artist, institution and audiences is that the myth of the artist-genius as a sole creator of art has colored the perception of artists' needs—and this has shaped the artist residency until recently. The stereotype dictates that the artist as genius hones his (rarely her) craft until struck by the light of inspiration, then paints his vision. Such an artist needs solitude for this to happen, a place where he is undisturbed by the everyday distractions that preoccupy those who are not geniuses—perhaps a place outside the city where he can be rejuvenated (*plein air* painting) or awestruck (the Romantic picturesque) and find inspiration for his work. Thus, the myth extends; an artist residency in a remote, idyllic location is the right environment to induce a state of mind for creating art.[137]

Theoretically, society has long moved on from the artist-genius myth to recognize the making of art as social and collaborative. Thirty years ago, Howard S. Becker envisioned art worlds as cooperative networks of people who, alongside the artist, each have a necessary role in the production of works of art.[138] A feminist analysis of the artist-genius has been invaluable to deconstructing its myth, with the writing of Griselda Pollock a leading example in

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[137] A review of the picture book Deutsche Akademie Rom. Villa Massimo perpetuates this ideal. The article is headed by a description of Villa Massimo as an "arkadischer Ort." (arcadian place) Dirk Schümer, "Ein Raumschiff aus Ruhe und Konzentration," 2011. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 30, no. 228: 34.

[138] Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1982).

the 1980s.[139] In the 1990s, Pierre Bourdieu studied the structures of social relations within which art is produced and received.[140]

A historiographic analysis of the artist-genius myth by Catherine M. Soussloff discusses how art history has been built on the artist's *vita* as the source material for a lineage of individuals and objects. This perpetuates the myth of the "absolute artist" as working outside all cultural conditions "in a state of pure being between the knower and the known."[141] Oskar Bätschmann traces this back to the late eighteenth century and the emerging need for artists to legitimize themselves when they were being "liberated" from court residency (now lacking that seal of approval), financially independent (mostly poor) and their genius "freed" from the demands of the nobility (given no direction, for better or for worse). Bätschmann describes the position thus created: "The attempt to legitimate art solely on the grounds of genius or the life of the artist made the problem insoluble. The consequences are to be seen in insecurity, self-doubt, paralysis and melancholy. The problem of legitimization found expression in the emphatic proclamation of the 'true' or 'genuine' artist, and a life lived unconditionally for art became the test of how 'genuine' an artist was."[142] This ultimately produces the image of the absolute artist Soussloff characterizes, isolated by the burden of his genius.

The genius myth is far from the networked, collaborative mode in which artists necessarily work, as it was described by Becker. In the art worlds he analyzes, no artwork is created by any one person. The artwork exists as a cumulative result of efforts by those involved in the production and distribution of an artwork, whether they provide technical assistance, deliver the coffee or host an exhibition, whether an individual is credited or not.[143] Still, the myth of the singular, absolute artist as reflected in the *Kunstkompass* art analysis discussed in the previous chapter is alive and well.

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[139] Griselda Pollock, "Artists, Mythologies and Media – Genius, Madness and Art History," *Screen*, 21 (1980): 55-96. *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988).

[140] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genius and the structure of the literary field* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1996).

[141] Catherine M. Soussloff, *The Absolute Artist: The Historiography of Context* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1997), 5.

[142] Oskar Bätschmann, *The artist in the modern world: the conflict between market and self-expression* (Köln: DuMont Buchverlag, 1997), 66-67.

[143] Becker, *Art Worlds*, xxiv.

The *image* of the residency merges both the absolute artist as the chosen recipient of an awarded stipend and the court artist, recapturing the glow of a prestigious institution's patronage. As an aside in his research on the *Hofkünstler* (court artist), Martin Warnke reinforces this image when he classifies the residency as a holdover from the days of kings and courts: "Auch die Restformen der höfischen Kunstorganisation, welche überlebt haben – das Stipendienwesen, die Akademien, die freie Preisbildung –, vermochten das Vakuum, welches der Verlust höfischer Zuwendung und Funktionen hinterließ, nicht auszufüllen."[144] The residency could never come close to "filling the vacuum left behind by the end of court attention and functions" because the reality of the artist's residency is not remotely like court patronage.

The residency is not a lifestyle or a career but a certain lifestyle or career path is conducive to an artist's ability to take advantage of a residency: unattached to place or family, able to pack up and follow where a stipend is offered. It is a temporary station and always a break from the routine. The thought of getting away from the administrative end of being an artist—answering email, arranging artwork to be shipped, making travel arrangements for installing exhibitions, chasing after reimbursements—to concentrate solely on the development of one's own ideas would be enticing to anyone, but actually leaving for an extended residency can be difficult. Contemporary artists frequently travel to be with their collaborators, from technicians to fabricators and exhibition venues. Even "emerging" artists spend a great deal of time in travel to serve the short-term institutional programming model described above. The Internet has made communication and collaboration easier from afar, enabling more biennials, conferences, and exhibitions in faraway places. Yet this may end up being more time and resource-consuming since exhibiting internationally usually requires on-site visits as well as the now-standard artist talks, workshops and temporary teaching assignments. The world is smaller when it comes to communication, but it has arguably grown with the expectancy of global activity.

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[144] Also the leftover forms of the court's art organization that have survived—residencies, academies, prizes—are unable to fill the vacuum left behind by the loss of court attention and functions. Martin Warnke, *Hofkünstler: Zur Vorgeschichte des modernen Künstlers* (Köln: DuMont Buchverlag, 1985), 12.

To leave a primary residence for a guest residency may mean that an artist must leave his or her "day job." Extremely few artists support themselves solely from the sale of their work.[145] Even though an artist usually receives funds during the residency with a stipend, she may not have a day job to come back to once the residency is over and the rent at home will still have to be paid while she is away. Families are a concern, too. The artist-genius myth envisions the artist as solo, unattached to partners and offspring. Residency programs provide neither daycare nor enrollment for school-age children. Women, who are more likely to be the primary caregiver for their children, are particularly disadvantaged by the tradition of residencies in which long stretches of attendance are required.[146] A residency is a mark of distinction on the *curriculum vitae* and a sign of achievement for an artist's past work as well as encouragement for future work. Not leading a lifestyle conducive to picking up and leaving for a residency limits an artist's ability to take advantage of what this kind of engagement can offer for artistic and professional development. The contemporary image of the artist is as nomad and, as Nina Möntmann has observed, is closely tied to the neoliberal economic order and its related terms: "Mobilität, Flexibilität, 'Self-promotion' oder Vernetzung."[147] Those who do not fit the image of the nomad are disadvantaged by the traditional residency because it is difficult to relocate and those who do are not assisted by a residency that ties them down.

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[145] U.S. government statistics state that 60% of artists (including such areas as advertising art directors and "multimedia artists and animators" who "create special effects, animation, or other visual images on film, on video, or with computers or other electronic media" and are counted separately from fine artists) are self-employed. The data analysis is vague: "Earnings for self-employed artists vary widely. Some charge only a nominal fee while they gain experience and build a reputation for their work. Others, such as well-established freelance fine artists and illustrators, can earn more than salaried artists. Many, however, find it difficult to rely solely on income earned from selling paintings or other works of art." "Craft and Fine Artists," *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-11 Edition*, Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 29, 2012. Accessed July 21, 2012. http://www.bls.gov/ooh/arts-and-design/craft-and-fine-artists.htm#tab-1.

[146] Künstlerinnenhof Die Höge, an artist-in-residence program in Lower Saxony from 1998-2004, was for female artist only, but its attendance requirement did not reflect the reality of supporting women. Solving this problem was under discussion when this author was a member of its advisory committee.

[147] "mobility, flexibility, self-promotion or connection," (my translation) Nina Möntmann, "Das Verlassen des Atleiers," in *Topos Atelier: Werkstatt und Wissensform*, eds. Michael Diers and Monika Wagner (Berlin: Akademieverlag, 2010), 196.

Residency programs need to be rethought if they are to provide real support to artists working today, rather than trying to perpetuate the idea of the artists' colony in which artists leave the city to live and work together communally in rural isolation. An example of the pitfalls of this traditional residency is found in the defunct residency program in Worpswede, which looked to its history as the site of its famous artist colony of German impressionists and expressionists.[148] Though the (art) world was a very different place from when the original colony was founded in 1889, in 1971 apartments with studios for artists were built in order to give them long-term residencies in the relative isolation of the Teufelsmoor. The description of Künstlerhäuser Worpswede on its still-standing website emphasizes a period of undisturbed work in a quiet environment: "Im Zentrum der von Martin Kausche gegründeten Atelierhäuser Worpswede stand die Idee, dass Künstler über eine gewisse Periode ungestört in einer ruhigen Umgebung arbeiten können."[149] Electronic connectivity, easy travel, and the dominance of an urban art market and discourse have made true remoteness hardly possible and mostly undesirable for the artist who wants to be "in the game." The website's description cites the large number of artists with a permanent residence in Worpswede as a source of connection to the town, but there was no requirement or other formal system of engagement between the city and residents of Worpswede and the residency program.[150]

In 2009 the State of Lower Saxony ended its support of the Worpswede residencies and the program folded. That same year, Lower Saxony announced a 54.2 million Euro investment in the Leuphana Universität Lüneburg[151] and its intention to restructure the state's artist residencies.[152] Leuphana received

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[148] See Guido Boulboulle and Michael Zeiss, *Worpswede. Kulturgeschichte eines Künstlerdorfes*, DuMont Dokumente (Köln: DuMont Buchverlag, 1989).
[149] The idea that artists could work undisturbed in a quiet environment for a certain period of time stood at the center of the Worpswede studios, which were founded by Martin Kausche. "Geschichte," Künstlerhäuser Worpswede, accessed March 2, 2012, http://www.kuenstlerhaeuser-worpswede.de/khw/index.php?Geschichte.
[150] Ibid.
[151] "Leupana Universitat Lüneburg Hohe Steigerung der Landesmittel," Lower Saxony Ministry of Science and Culture (press release) June 24, 2008.
[152] "Neues Profil für internationale Künstlerförderung des Landes," Lower Saxony Ministry of Science and Culture (press release) March 3, 2009.

support for ten new residencies/fellowships.[153] The state clearly shifted its emphasis from the image of the artist working in an isolated colony in the moor to being a member of a university's research network. A watchful eye must be cast upon this particular shift as it sounds suspiciously like funds for art are being reallocated to education, possibly pushing instructive duties, for instance, onto the residency and limiting the freedom of a resident's artistic activity. Still, the fundamental concept of the artist as part of a larger collaborative network recognizes the heteronomy of artistic production and the need for a forum where it comes together.

The media art institution need only look to the art it presents in order to find a collaborative model for a program of artist residencies. Media artists are frequently practitioners of collaboration in the research and production of art as the digital art curator Christiane Paul has observed:

> The collaborative model also is a crucial concept when it comes to the artistic process itself. New media works in general often require a complex collaboration between artists, programmers, researchers, designers or scientists, whose role may range from that of a consultant to a full collaborator. This work process is fundamentally different from the scenario where artists hire people to build or create components for their work according to instructions, since collaborators in new media practice are often very much involved in aesthetic decisions. New media art tends to demand expertise in various fields, which one individual alone can hardly acquire.[154]

The artistic process as the "complex collaboration" of experts Paul writes of is precisely the point where the artist residency at a media art institution can be set. Artists who use new media often have an established network of research

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[153] *Wikipedia* contributors, "Leuphana Universität Lüneburg," *Wikipedia*, accessed July 21, 2012, http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leuphana_Universität_Lüneburg.
[154] Christine Paul, "Flexible Contexts, Democratic Filtering and Computer-aided Curating: Models for online curatorial practice," in Kysia, *Immateriality: The work of the curator in the age of network systems*, 88.

and design collaborators. The media art institution's strongest suit is its expertise in presentation and communication with its publics, and (aside from the financial support of a stipend) this is what it can best offer artists in a residency. The first residency collaborator, after all, is the institution, which is attuned to drawing in a local community as participants and supporters of the artist's work. The artist residency is an opportunity for collaboration or exchange to take place between artists and audiences with the artwork or its production as the meeting point.

The "low-residency" grant (few or no number of required days in attendance) lends financial and institutional support to artists, encouraging them to work with the community without leaving their established networks behind. During the Edith-Ruß-Haus residency program from 2002 to 2004 artists were required to interact with the public three times over a six month period. Artists would be free to choose how they create this contact: exhibitions, presentations, workshops, collaboration, film nights or any other format was open. Presence within the residency was not calculated by attendance in the City of Oldenburg but encouraged by a system designed to bring the artist in contact with its citizens. Dave Allen's projects for his 2003 residency, for instance, were a series of collaborations that reached into the community at differing depths. His major activity was *Electro-Edu-Collab-Proj,* which operated as an exchange of knowledge: Allen knows a great deal about experimental music of the twentieth century but is of a pre-computer-at-school generation and can hardly keep up with new technologies for composing and making new, experimental music. He offered this knowledge to kids who work in their bedrooms and basements making music with the latest computer programs, but who know little of the history of experimental music.

Allen asked the Edith-Ruß-Haus to locate teenagers with these skills who would be willing to meet with him regularly in a trans-generational approach to creating experimental music. This request reveals that even the specialized media art institution cannot possibly hold complete expertise on every aspect of the rapidly changing technologies used to make art. Given enough resources it can outsource the necessary expertise, and Allen surely could have afforded this himself with the residency's stipend, yet his proposal had a different aim. Allen

activated the institution into going on a mission of discovery in the community, looking for youth with a do-it-yourself attitude toward making electronic music. The discovery also extends into the type of music and technologies the community collaborators happen to be using. Allen had no requirements as to which programs he wanted to learn or what type of sound potential collaborators were generating at home. His project accepts what can be found in the community and searches for a way to connect it with the knowledge he has to offer.

For *Electro-Edu-Collab-Proj*, the Edith-Ruß-Haus located Tobias and Michael, 15- and 16-year-old boys, through Oldenburg's Cadillac Jugendkulturzentrum (Cadillac Youth Cultural Center), and they met with Allen repeatedly over the course of three weeks at the Edith-Ruß-Haus in order to teach each other and to collaborate on a new musical production. It culminated in a fifty-minute improvisation of "looped samples, live keyboard, drum machine and live guitar . . . processing the sound through a mixer with various effects"[155] performed at the reception for the 2003 residency exhibition (fig. 3.3).[156]

During his residency Allen also connected with Oldenburg institutions outside the Edith-Ruß-Haus. He worked with oh ton, a music society and ensemble in Oldenburg dedicated to contemporary classical music (*Neue Musik*) to create *Inverted Oh-Ton*. This performance art piece manipulates the recordings of three of oh ton's music compositions: *Piano Piece #4* by Frederic Rzewski, *da* by Eckart Beinke and *Siebenschlaf* by Kirsten Reese. Allen inverted and transfered these sound tracks to a vinyl LP and during the performance he attempts to synchronize the inversion with the original on dual turntables in order to create silence during a performance. Theoretically, the performance is an analog noise cancellation system, with the music on each record cancelling out the other's "noise."[157] *Inverted Oh-Ton* premiered in Oldenburg on January 18, 2004 in celebration of Edith Ruß' birthday and continues to be performed all

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[155] Email from Allen to Altstatt, May 20, 2011.
[156] Workshop: November 4-30, 2003. Edith-Ruß-Haus Archive.
[157] For a description of Inverted Oh-Ton and all other Edith-Ruß-Haus stipend projects from 2001-2011, see Himmelsbach, *Produced@*.

over Europe.[158] The fact that Allen takes this artwork outside the original location of its production undermines the notion of a residency program as a one-way street for artists to bring new ideas to Oldenburg. He honors artistic initiatives taking place in smaller regional settings that produce high quality work by referencing them outside of the local context. The oh ton ensemble is well-known locally and respected outside Oldenburg by experts in its field, but Allen brings it another level of exposure and acknowledgement each time he "samples" its work as an inversion, adding a second sound experiment to oh ton's initial musical experiments.

Community participation during an artist residency hovers between the complex collaboration of technical experts and the input of those with an interest to learn. Another residency artist, Naomi Ben-Shahar, worked with the community by inviting residents to take part in a performance that then became the formulation of her own artwork, *Oldenburg Candles (Oldenburg)* (2003, fig. 3.4). The resultant artwork can be interpreted as an illustration for the dynamics of individuals in the process of collaboration and exchange. Ben-Shahar held a workshop and video shoot at the Edith-Ruß-Haus, which was attended by Carl von Ossietzky Universität students as well as technically qualified local residents.[159] She brought the artist and software developer Jeremy Bernstein to Oldenburg as a collaborator in order to co-instruct the workshop by teaching a software program. Once the workshop was completed, members of the course as well as other interested community residents were invited to participate as performers in making the single-channel video *Oldenburg Candles (Oldenburg)* on site. The software recorded the performance as digital sounds and images generated by the movement of the participants and the software taught in the workshop. The role of the performers fit Paul's description of the traditional type of collaborative partners who fulfill the artist's instructions. Yet the educational component contains a spirit of contribution to the community on the part of the artist.

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[158] Maastricht and Istanbul (2004), Toronto (2005), Stockholm (2006, 2011), Malmö (2007), Vancouver (2008), Bregenz (2009), Munich (2010). Email listing performance dates from Allen to Altstatt, May 20, 2011.
[159] November 19 to 22, 2003. Edith-Ruß-Haus Archive.

Ben-Shahar's video is a representation of how even short meetings can make intense connections. It was shot in the dark. Participants wore small lights on their heads and held a lit candle while walking a pattern the artist had mapped on the floor of the Edith-Ruß-Haus' exhibition hall. The light glowed brighter in the spots were individuals's paths intersected and movement paused when walkers exchanged candles. The camera hung straight down from the ceiling for a flat, overhead view and picked up only the trails of light, tracing the participants' movement and meetings.

Sounds adds another layer to the representation of collaboration. Ben-Shahar describes the process:

> [The software uses] the movement and clustering of people (lights) on the screen to create live music. This illustrated a more complex relationship between the event and the video – a mutual influence and a higher level of awareness. We gave the computer initially a "palette" of sounds, which was based on an early music piece from the 17th century by John Dowland, titled "Mrs. Nichols Almand" (written in 1603 – 4). Jeremy "spliced" Dowland's music into 4 horizontal layers that correspond with the four corners of the room. The software, which was designed in Max/Jitter, played the different layers of the music in certain ways that respond to the degree of lightness in the different corners of the room.[160]

The music is influenced by the velocity of movements and the intensity of the light where the walkers cluster. During the production, the ethereal jingling and quietly ambulant participants being guided by candlelight brought to mind the simulation of a lost, sacred rite. Walkers slowly moved toward each other, looked into each other's eyes when they met (as Ben-Shahar directed) and proceeded to the next intersection. The video traces constant flow and contact. Once a walker made 18 candle-exchanges, he or she followed the path to the center of the

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[160] Martin Wenke, "Naomi Ben-Shahar: selected video works," March 3, 2004. Unpublished email interview.

space.[161] The result is a single-channel video with circles of light moving in the dark as though stars would suddenly begin to wander along the lines of their constellations, all bundling into one central spot in the darkest hours of the night.

The participants are visible on screen as bodies of light, a representation of the light inside themselves. As a symbol of the soul, intensifying in brilliance when individuals meet, the light suggests that a spiritual exchange takes place no matter how brief the encounter. If interpreted as the light of knowledge, the video traces a trail of individual experiences being passed on to each other. As the visualization of a spark that ignites when an idea strikes, *Candles Oldenburg (Oldenburg)* would portray the essence of individual and community collaboration as a dynamic, combustible action that is sometimes abstract, yet sometimes dazzling.

The artist (or the institution) seeking collaborative partners presents a manifestation of personal creativity in search of a response is an act of giving to strangers. It can solicit judgment, critique and praise, and may start a dialogue but often meets silence. Whether the silence is a mute spark enlightening a person's mind or the quiet death of silent disapproval, one never knows for certain. The subtext of interacting with the public this way reads, "Do you like my ideas?" A positive answer means a connection has been made and an opportunity has opened for good ideas to be expanded by another person. When the presentation of an artwork is mediated through an art institution, the question becomes a collaboration between artist and institution in the hope of generating a connection and ultimately a public conversation.

The question "Do you like my ideas?" can be read quite clearly between the lines of an artist's residency application, peeking out from behind the documentation of artwork realized in the past and a proposal for a new project to be worked on during the residency in collaboration with the hosting institution. The answer is blunt and binary as it comes in the form of either a letter of acceptance or rejection. Artists are not the only ones in this position. Art institutions also pose this question to potential funders in order to make their program possible in the first place. Before the residency program could begin, Stiftung Niedersachsen was asked by the Edith-Ruß-Haus in 2001 whether it

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[161] Ibid. I was also present for the performance and confirm the account.

liked the concept of a low-residency program and it answered "yes" by granting a three-year round of funding.[162]

In 2002, Dagmar Keller and Martin Wittwer pointed out the commonalities in artists and institutions pursuing funding with good ideas by elevating "Do you like my ideas?" as a subtext of a project proposal to the title of an artwork for the exhibition *Totally Covered* (Total Überzogen).[163] In the proposal, the Edith-Ruß-Haus would solicit companies to participate in the artwork by sponsoring letters in the sentence with letters from their logos. "Do you like my ideas?" would be written on the exhibition hall's façade and asked in the illuminated letters commonly seen on buildings that advertise the name of their bank or store. The golden arches of the McDonalds "M," the "S" with a dot beneath it from Sparkasse: all of IKEA's logo could conceivably be used to fill four of the letters in "do you lIKE my ideAs?" (fig. 3.5).[164]

The artists proposed that each letter cost EUR 1,250. Whether or not this is a good financial value is one question the artwork *DO YOU LIKE MY IDEAS?* raises. It is a tiny fraction of a company's marketing budget for a sign visible from one of the busiest streets in town, and the press coverage a highly visible collaboration between artists, institutions and sponsors would receive can be added to the value.[165]

Keller/Wittwer addressed an additional value for potential funders in a pre-formulated solicitation to be sent to potential sponsors. Companies were pushed to literally show their colors: "Der Schriftzug an der Fassade des Edith-Ruß-Hauses richtet aber mit all seinen Logos und Schriftzeichen die Frage auch an die Betrachter auf der Straße. Ihre Firma und Ihr Engagement für die Kultur in der Region stellt sich so einer öffentlichen Diskussion und steigert damit Ihre Bekanntheit sowie Ihr Ansehen als ein Unternehmen, das sich in der Region für die Region engagiert."[166] The proposal makes the connection between

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[162] Altstatt, "Do You Like My Ideas?" in Himmelsbach, *Produced@*, 36.

[163] Ideas of community building and this artwork were sketched out in the essay "Do You Like My Ideas?" Ibid., 36-41.

[164] Proposal to sponsors, Edith-Ruß-Haus Archive.

[165] News coverage of the exhibition was extensive on national television, newspapers and appeared in international journals. City of Oldenburg press archive.

[166] The lettering on the façade of the Edith-Ruß-Haus, with all its logos and characters, directs its question to the viewer on the street. Your firm and your engagement for regional culture is thus posed for public discussion and increases your profile as well as your reputation as a company

institution, sponsor and viewer as elements of a cultural (and marketing) region, asking that a company show how it values regional, cultural engagement and the support of the local populace.

The artists made it explicit that this question is a decision for a sponsor to align itself with the Edith-Ruß-Haus: "Die Frage DO YOU LIKE MY IDEAS ist in der Entscheidungsfindung zu einer Partnerschaft im Rahmen eines Sponsorings zentral. So wird natürlich auch dieses Projekt von Ihrer Seite einer Prüfung unterzogen und untersucht, inwieweit sich Ihre Ideen mit der unseren zur Deckung bringen lassen."[167] Partnering with the Edith-Ruß-Haus would make their brand identifiable with the art institution. It is not only a matter of the sponsor affirming that it likes the artist's and institution's proposal, it asks the viewers on the street in essence: "Do you like that we are sponsoring the Edith-Ruß-Haus?" Simultaneously, the Edith-Ruß-Haus asks, "Do you like that we are being sponsored by these companies?" Subtly, and perhaps not calculated by the proposal, potential sponsors were being asked if they agree to being in the companionship of other firms that commit their letters to the project, for the sentence is to be made up of letters from many signs. Marketing departments would have no control over whether a competitor or other possibly undesirable logos fill the remaining letters of the question.

According to the original concept, any letters without a sponsor were to be rendered in a simple, white font and financed by the Edith-Ruß-Haus. Disappointingly, but not unexpectedly, too few letters were found to complete the work and the Edith-Ruß-Haus could not produce the missing letters because the production of large-scale artworks stands and falls with funding (that was still missing)—be it what an artist receives through a residency or an institution raises. A strict adherence to Keller/Wittwer's original concept leads to the conclusion that the solicited firms did not like our ideas. And it was by this time *our* ideas since the voice of the artists and the institution had joined in the asking. The proposal, after all, was sent out on the institution's letterhead. The

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that is actively engaged n the region and for the region. (my translation) Proposal to sponsors, Edith-Ruß-Haus Archive.
[167] The question DO YOU LIKE ME IDEAS is central in the decision-making process to form a partnership in the framework of sponsoring. Thus this project is also naturally a test, from your side, as to how much your ideas can be brought to overlap with ours. (my translation) Ibid.

solicitors were left to ask, "Did they really not like our ideas or was the fundraising period too short, our team too skeletal, powers of persuasion too weak, the sentence too long and ambitious (few logos feature a question mark!) or could their marketing teams just not envision it?" The short answer is, "They're just not that into you," but like so many silent rejections, it will never be fully known what reasons were behind the rejections. Minds were sparked in the few companies that supported the idea and willing to sponsor a letter, but the others' silence was enough to stop the project in its tracks.

In honor of the original proposal and because the hosting institution did like the artists' ideas, the space on the building reserved for the sign was left empty, a glaring irregularity amidst the symmetrically aligned banners covering the exterior walls of the exhibition hall for *Totally Covered*. (fig. 1.6). The original proposal for *DO YOU LIKE MY IDEAS?* is printed in *total überzogen*, the exhibition's publication in the format of an in-house newspaper.[168] The artists produced a single-channel video, which takes the letter-by-letter sponsoring of Los Angeles' famed HOLLYWOOD sign as its subject, revealing it as an idea Keller/Wittwer like and fold into their work.

The rejections are de facto a type of participation in the project since they answer the question even if in the negative. Though the proposal can be seen as a main conceptual component, the artwork cannot be considered complete because the man on the street (literally) never sees the work and is, therefore, never asked the question unless he finds out about it through the exhibition's publication or takes a tour of the exhibition when the blank space on the building is explained. Only those who received the proposal were given the chance to build on the idea in much the same way as the artists were inspired by the HOLLYWOOD sign's fundraiser. Had the work been produced for the façade in the end, it would have mutually engaged the artists, institution, sponsors and the viewers in different types of participation and collaboration.[169]

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[168] Rosanne Altstatt, ed. *total überzogen* (Oldenburg: Stadt Oldenburg, 2010), 10.
[169] Keller/Wittwer engaged the public with several other projects with a public presentation of their residency proposal, later exhibiting the completed video installation *Ruhe im Schatten* (2002) at Edith-Ruß-Haus and screening the Todd Haynes film *Safe* (1995) for the public in their guest house apartment. Edith-Ruß-Haus Archive.

Relational Spaces of Participation

Creating relational spaces of social participation for audiences, the media art institution functions as a site for participatory artworks grounded equally in global communication technologies and face-to-face interaction. *Cellular Trans_Actions*, Victoria Vesna's 2001 group performance and interactive installation provides a useful example of how the media art institution embraces network technologies as relational. It also raises questions of how we are to think about the social collective that is wrought through its performance. The discussion here will be framed within and against Bourriaud's relational aesthetics. This term was coined in Bourriaud's book of the same name, *Relational Aesthetics*, to describe participatory artistic practices that produce "relations between people and the world, by way of aesthetic objects."[170] In devising a theoretical framework for artists that populated many of his exhibitions, Bourriaud pushed forward critical discussion of art's social turn even if he is mainly a foil in a discourse that has too many turns to be fully recounted here.[171] In order to remain with the task at hand, critique of relational aesthetics and its influence in the artworld is dispersed at relevant points throughout this chapter. The lure of Bourriaud's theory owes itself to the paradoxical and even flawed nature of its argument. Bourriaud helpfully brings attention to the artwork as an enabler of sociality and it is this aspect of the relational in media art and the institution that is focused on here.

The participatory practices of media artists and institutions working in the 1990s and early 2000s coincide with the rise of relational aesthetics. These developments were influenced as much by socially conscious, community

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[170] Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 42.

[171] Theoretically summarizing books and essays on relational aesthetics and the social turn include Bourriaud, *Esthétique relationnelle* (Dijon: Les presses du reel, 1998); Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction* (New York: Lukas & Sternbeg, 2002); Lars Bang Larsen, "Social Aesthetics: 11 examples to begin with, in the light of parallel history," *Afterall*, London, no. 1, (1999): 77-87; Nina Möntmann, *Kunst als sozialer Raum*, Kunstwissenschaftliche Bibliothek, Band 18 (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2002); Jackson, *Social Works*, 2011; Thompson, *Living as Form*, 2012. Jacques Rancière pointedly critiques relational art in *Malaise dans l'esthétique* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2004) with the relevant excerpt reprinted in the English language as "Problems and Transformations in Critical Art" in *Participation*, ed. Claire Bishop (London and Cambridge, MA: Whitechapel and The MIT Press, 2006.) The critique of relational aesthetics in particular has been spearheaded in the English speaking audience by Claire Bishop with "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics,": 51-79 and "The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents," *Artforum International*, (February 2006): 178-85. Jackson critiques Bishop in *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 34-69.

oriented projects such as *Food*, the restaurant-as-art project co-founded by Gordon Matta-Clark and Caroline Goodden in 1971[172] as by a new era of participatory, networked communication technologies.[173] Vested in a direct dialogue with the public that was equally enabled and formed by communicative models of network technologies, media art and its institutions were heavily involved in art's social turn. Yet theoretical discussion about artists, artworks, and curatorial projects working within this contour of the contemporary art landscape make scant reference to artworks that use digital platforms and technologies as artistic media.[174]

Though *Relational Aesthetics* does not explicitly discount art that uses mass media technologies as artistic mediums, it shuts out such art by not addressing it directly. This rejection of electronic communication media has annoyed those who work with media art.[175] Technology emerges in Bourriaud's discussion only negatively, within reactionary metaphors in which the human being, for example, becomes the equivalent of a rat caught in a labyrinth of "communication superhighways . . . doomed to an inexorable itinerary in its cage, littered with chunks of cheese. . . . reduced to the condition of a consumer of time and space."[176] He celebrates artists who create "the space of interaction, the space of openness that ushers in all dialogue. . . . What they produce are relational space-time elements, inter-human experiences trying to rid themselves of the straitjacket of the ideology of mass communications."[177] The reader is led to understand that art using these technologies as their medium is complicit with the socially destructive forces of electronic communication.

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[172] Gordon Matta-Clark, Markus Muller, and Paul Ha, *Food* (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, 2001).

[173] This integrative narrative in the history of participatory art was told in the 2008 exhibition *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now* at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Rudolf Frieling, ed., *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2008).

[174] *Art of Participation* took a corrective approach. Ibid.

[175] Edward Schanken writes that during a panel discussion with Peter Weibel, Bourriaud and Michael Joaquin at Art Basel 2010, Weibel deemed Bourriaud's rejection of the direct influence of technology on art in favor of its indirect influence "media injustice." Edward A. Shanken, "New Media, Art-Science and Contemporary Art: Towards a Hybrid Discourse?" *Artnodes*, no. 11 (2011), 65-116, accessed July 19, 2012, http://artnodes.uoc.edu/ojs/index.php/artnodes/article/view/artnodes-n11-shanken/artnodes-n11-new-media-art-science-and-contemporary-art-eng.

[176] Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 19.

[177] Ibid., 44.

Yet Bourriaud's crucial description of artists who produce "relational space-time elements" applies equally to media art and artists working with networked, participatory and time-based media. Moreover Bourriaud's discussion overlooks the way artists since Nam June Paik[178] have peeled away the consumerist ideologies of mass communications by seizing upon those technologies in order to dissect, manipulate and utilize them as artistic media. Though Bourriaud introduces technology as one of the forces bearing upon the artwork, his emphasis remains on what he calls the "inexorable itinerary" of subjects hemmed in by communicative technologies. He describes art that strives to make repairs in the "social bond," which he characterizes as having been broken by the increasing dominance of communication technologies.[179] This vantage point neglects the capacity for art in any medium to strengthen a social bond—or even to exploit that bond's weaknesses if this is an objective of the artwork. No choice must be made as to whether artworks must function entirely outside or inside communication "superhighways" in order for meaningful communication to take place. Contemporary society exists inside, outside and surrounded by an information society fed by media that have the potential to open shared experiences between human beings that are electronically mediated, face-to-face or both.

A comparison between a sculptural-architectural installation by Rirkrit Tiravanija, whose work Bourriaud repeatedly references, and a cell phone performance by Victoria Vesna highlights the relational characteristics of media artwork. At the end of his residency with the Kölnischer Kunstverein in 1996 Tiravanija created the exhibition *Untitled* (*tomorrow is another day)*. The work is a full-scale architectural model of Tiravanija's New York apartment built inside the Kunstverein's gallery and furnished with everything he had to buy for the apartment he stayed in during his six-months in Cologne.[180] The exhibition was made free and open to the public twenty-four hours a day, six days a week—

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[178] See Decker, *Paik Video*, 62-66.

[179] Bourriaud describes art that strives to make repairs in the "social bond," which he characterizes as having been broken by the increasing dominance of communication technologies. *Relational Aesthetics*, 8-9. Bishop is highly critical of the do-gooder imperative she sees in relational art and social practices, see "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," 51-79 and "The Social Turn," 178-85.

[180] *Rirkrit Tiravanija: Untitled, 2002 (the raw and the cooked)*, eds. Kataoka Mami and Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, cat. no. 11 (Tokyo: Tokyo Opera City Cultural Foundation, 2002), 22.

closed on Sunday in accordance with German labor laws. Visitors used the "apartment" as their own: cooking in the kitchen, washing the dishes, sleeping in the bedroom and congregating in its temporary rooms. It was a gathering spot within the gathering spot of the gallery, emphasizing and multiplying the art institution's function as social space (fig. 3.6).

Tiravanija's work at Kölnischer Kunstverein is exemplary in Bourriaud's description of relational aesthetics: it invites interaction and dialogue (the apartment setting) and produces relational space-time elements (living space as a 24-hour situation, interestingly crossed with institutional space and legal constraints). Whether or not Tiravanija is consciously countering "the ideology of mass communications" is not explicit (nor is the ideology), but *tomorrow is another day* sets the stage for "inter-human" experiences that are mediated through no such technology.

Victoria Vesna's cell phone performance *Cellular Trans_Actions* at the Edith-Ruß-Haus also centered on person-to-person interaction and creating a social space for participation, but it employed both technology and people as two mediums of the artwork (fig. 3.7-3.9).[181] As visitors entered the building on September 14, opening night of the exhibition *Avatars and Others* in 2001, they were asked to write their cell phone numbers on pieces of paper. This was the first year when more people in a room had a cell phone than those who did not, and extra phones were made available to those who need them. Vesna delivered a short talk in English comparing the hexagonal structure of the satellite communication network to a beehive. She related the buzzing of the hive to human activity taking place in the cell phone network and spoke of this behavior as performative: private telephone conversations are made very public with cell phones, with people gesticulating, possessing a faraway look in the eyes, becoming louder, and more emphatic. The initial subject of Vesna's talk was the emergence of a new type of "performing" public.

When the artist finished speaking the audience's cell phone numbers were randomly re-distributed and those who wanted to actively participate

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[181] This author was present at this performance and this description is based the preparations with the artist, memory of the performance as well as the installation, and documentation found in the reader: Rosanne Altstatt and Victoria Vesna, "Victoria Vesna," in Altstatt and Revolver, *Avatars and Others*, English language pages 10-12; 38-45.

(now the performers) called the number they had received. Vesna encouraged the performers to talk about the private effects of a very public event—the only subject on most people's minds at the time, the fall of New York's Twin Towers, an attack that is both lethally successful and a media coup for Al Qaida. The hall became a conversation space as people talked on the phone, rose to move around and eventually found the person they were talking to while a few stood back to watch the happenings or chose to talk to each other without the phone. Taking place within that limbo of vulnerability people experience with tragedy, the conversations were intensely personal, with the telephone erecting a thin scrim of anonymity behind which people feel freer to speak, and the participants took the opportunity to do so through the medium of the performance.

The performance disregarded the customary conditions and purpose of its technology—the enabling of conversation between two parties at a physical distance—by taking place in a single location. The cell phone network was used instead to overcome emotional distance and the inhibition to talk to strangers. This is not to say Vesna takes a utopian view of connectivity. On the contrary, in her talk and in an interview for the catalogue, Vesna underlined the changing etiquette of now public phone conversations, the possibility of danger from radiation and a dehumanizing aspect of technology.[182] In the interview she adds the remark that "we can't help ourselves. We are ultimately social animals and the urge to be available and connected is too strong."[183] Vesna critiques the negative social and physical effects of mass communication technologies but does not reject them, which would be truly utopian. Instead, *Cellular Trans_Actions* catalyzes cell phone technology's power as a tool to initiate a social collective. The audience forms a temporary community that soon leaves the artist mostly outside of the action because the public/private conversations are conducted in German.[184] Though she designs and initiates the performance, how it proceeds and what the participants say or do is beyond the artist's control. Eventually everyone identified the person on the other end of the line, walks over to meet, and puts down the phone. If cell phone technology has an

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[182] Ibid., 41-45.
[183] Ibid., 41.
[184] "Cellular Trans_Actions," Victoria Vesna, 2001, accessed February 24, 2012, http://notime.arts.ucla.edu/cellular/main.htm.

ideological "straightjacket," it fit very loosely in this performance. The technology in one's pocket was implemented as a catalyst for connections between people, extracting and intensifying participation in a social event of public talkers. It produced relational space-time elements by maximizing the sociality of the time and space the institution sets aside to open an exhibition, harnessing the "see and be seen" energy of that night.

If the focus of relational art is, according to Bourriaud, on the production of "relations between people and the world, by way of aesthetic objects," *Cellular Trans_Actions* is in sync with the socializing spirit of the aesthetic while using an aesthetic of the digital media art "object." Whereas Tiravanija's object is the architecture and housewares of his installation, Vesna's performance is the architecture of the satellite network and the device used to interface through it, the telephone. Her performance is both "dematerialized" and highly material: cell phones, their towers, a network of satellites relaying data, the bodies of those speaking, the infinitesimal delay between speaking and being heard when the interlocutor stands only a few feet away, the projector and screen prompting questions, Vesna's microphone and the gathering space of the gallery where conversation takes place. The entire network of material and transferred information is not so much dematerialized as it is dispersed. Another "object" of the performance may be what Vesna calls people's "urge to be available," which she says underlies their status as social and political animals. The performance of *Cellular Trans_Actions* demonstrates how a social collective coalesces through its simultaneous availability (and susceptibility, vulnerability) to distant events: not only to what unfolded in New York and Washington on 9/11 but to the orbiting satellites and the transmission towers that underpin every cellular phone call.

Vesna created a second work, a durational installation for *Avatars and Others*. It is not performance documentation but a second artwork with elements of the first folded into it. *Cellular Trans_Actions: 091101* was conceived and constructed during the week Vesna was in Oldenburg (fig. 3.10). Much of the world was glued to the television set, looking at images of the Twin Towers crashing to the ground. Vesna digitally degraded the quality of images captured from the news media. "The [images] could be from any part of the world that has suffered the same kind of violence," explains Vesna in an artist's statement, "a

person standing in front of this backdrop is mirrored by the camera streaming their reflection on the Internet."[185] The mirror image is fed back to another screen, but its speed is delayed depending upon the speed of Internet traffic. Like Dan Graham's *Time-Delay* installations, one of which was presented in *Avatars and Others*, it reflects a participant's actions back to herself (and anyone else who may be watching) on a closed-circuit. This scenario evokes Lacan's theory of the mirror stage—the dual relationship between the Ego and the body, which is also between the imaginary and the actual.[186] As in Lacan's analysis, Vesna's project underscores the discrepancies or lag between these poles. Like the performance, the installation incorporates behavior, only here it is more individual than communal. It sustains not only "inter-human" relations but "inner-human" relations, mediated via artwork that is system of digital technologies as aesthetic object.

Questions from the performance are projected onto the third screen of the installation. The conversations on opening night were streamed live and recorded for later access on the website that accompanies the installation. A telephone is installed in the gallery and a number provided, which one can call when looking at the installation's website to address the installation's questions or from one's cell phone in the gallery. The public's answers to the questions are streamed live from the installation and made available to anyone who calls its voicemail with the access code provided in the gallery and online. The translucent video screens are installed to form an enclosure, beyond which the visitor can walk and fall into the webcam's view. The interior is a semi-private space within a public space that registers the collective trauma of the attacks of September 11, a trauma both public and private in its impact.

Vesna's Oldenburg artworks not only foster the "inter" between individuals but the "trans" that moves through individuals in groups and as groups. "Transaction" is an exchange and a communicative action that happens within groups and across them in an environment that is undeniably shaped by media, events and media events. The *Cellular Trans_Actions* artworks generate

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[185] "Cellular Trans_Actions: 091101," Victoria Vesna, 2001, accessed February 24, 2012, http://www.notime.arts.ucla.edu/091101/01statement/statement.html
[186] See Jacques Lacan, "Some Reflections on the Ego," *International Journal of Psychoanalsis* 34 (1953): 11-17.

communication through networked, digital media as a part of the *Lebenswelt*; between individuals in a group at the performance and in the public/private space of the installation. They also demonstrate that the media art institution is a physical gathering spot that envisions itself as an active part of the permeating, worldwide media environment. The *Cellular Trans_Actions* works filter and register a mediated cultural and political event, mediating it again through their use of mass communications technologies as artistic mediums as well as through the performer's/participant's contributions via telephone and webcam. This is an example of media art that puts forth and enacts models of sociality and human relations that do not exist inside or outside the media environment but as an inescapable part of its current.

Relational Program Formats

The relational aspects of many media artworks that include the public in the realization of the work can be reflected in the curatorial formats of the media art institution's program. Such formats capture the communicative, hospitable and participative attitude associated with relational aesthetics. The activity of creating a social space in the institution to talk about art, which has traditionally been within the purview of the curator, was raised by Bourriaud to being part of an aesthetic—and aesthetics lie traditionally in the realm of artists. That aesthetic, if one does accept the idea of *the relational* as an aesthetic, dwells in the enabling of communication around and through the "object," with and between audiences.

The jostling of positions within the field of art has caused some anguish about the specific roles of artist and curator. The curator Lynne Cooke notes the impact relational art has had on curatorial practice and views it as misguided competition: "Subject to many of the same pressures that have produced what is termed an 'experience economy', institutions too are ever more committed to the staging of a series of interconnected leisure attractions which supplement and enhance the exhibition experience. As if in self-protection, curators, when faced with such potential constrains on their areas of competence, have appropriated methodologies employed by artists involved with what has come to be called 'relational aesthetics' – and compete with them in delving into the

social/institutional domain in order to construct experiences."[187] Cooke is certainly correct in pointing out that the trend toward an experience economy and the simultaneous emergence of artists whose work has relational aspects is not coincidental. It has led to a new perspective on curatorial practice as relational and as an activity that bumps up against artistic practice. Here it is helpful to interrogate the assumptions that underlie Cooke's reasoning as to why curators use methodologies strongly associated with those used by artists.

Creating formats that encourage discussion on and around art is a fundamental part of the curator's outreach to the institution's publics. In this sense, there is an inherent connection between curatorial work and artists's strategies for creating communication around and through art as it has been articulated with relational aesthetics. This involves not merely the accommodation of relational art by, for instance, opening the institution for twenty-four hours when an artwork's concept demands it, but the insertion of a relational principle into the way institutions drive communication to and between audiences.

Used with thought and precision, relational strategies have been employed by institutions to invite publics to explore media art and to develop an audience that feels comfortable in participating in the discourse that is highlighted by the institution and the art it selects. The "relational" aspect funnels the discussion directly through and with the artwork while supporting interconnectedness of artists, audiences and institution. This sets it apart from an institution's education program of classes, lectures and tours, which is traditionally designed to teach in one direction from master to students with the art object contemplated from a distance. A curatorial sense of the relational marks a consciousness toward audiences through inclusion that is related to the tradition of civic "bürgerliche" institutions such as the Kunstverein in which citizens, including artists, form an association to publicly present, discuss and debate art. Those who participate in the program at an art institution will be like-minded in that they are interested in art, but this like-mindedness must by no means extend to complete agreement on any subject in question at the art

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[187] Lynne Cooke, "In Lieu of Higher Ground," in *What Makes a Great Exhibition?* ed. Paula Marincola (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), 33.

institution or even whether to participate in a project or program when participation is offered. The media art institution invites to participation and collaboration in many ways, walking a tightrope to involve and build its audiences but also to let them reflect on media art in whatever form it may take—concrete and abstract, collaborative and individual (and those that allow for both).

Although it is highly collaborative, media art contends with the stereotype of being a cold enterprise, devoid of the human signature: data flow, technical systems, artificial intelligence, machine over man. This perception is a barrier for individuals who may be either intimidated by the encounter with it or who desire a socio-cultural exploration of art and do not immediately see the "human" in electronic media. In order to create an atmosphere that places media art in the realm of human and every-day lived experience, the media art institution is well-served by creating an atmosphere of hospitality toward its potential audiences. Strategies such as creating program formats that encourage meeting and discussion around a bowl of soup instead of only providing conditions for anonymous viewing cast the event as a living room conversation rather than a cathedral sermon.

The simple act of cooking and serving soup, strategically placed in the timeline of a one-night event, is a creative misinterpretation and re-application of relational aesthetics. With this act, the task of creating a social space within the institution went from being a curatorial duty administered by artists who serve meals as part of an artwork to being re-appropriated as a curatorial activity.[188] This type of appropriation, of an activity as an aesthetic, transpiring between different parties (artists and curators) within the same field and even in the same types of spaces (galleries) gained speed and prominence with the digital culture of sampling, file-sharing, and creating a collaborative atmosphere. As ideas and strategies circulate, originals and origins become increasingly unascertainable in favor of the relevance of the work at hand.

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[188] At his 1992 exhibition for 303 Gallery in New York, for instance, Rirkrit Tiravanija put all the contents of the gallery in one room and had food cooking in another. There was always something to eat during the "exhibition." For more of his early "culinary" artworks, see Mami, *Rirkrit Tiravanija,* 2002. In his preface to the second edition of *Postproduction* Bourriaud laments that *Relational Aesthetics* "generated a sort of caricatured vulgate" of artists who serve soup at the opening. 7.

Media art is often conceived as an activity or event, as *CYSMN-O* shows in chapter 2. It is also well served in discussion events and presentations that build an ongoing conversation within the institution's audiences about media art that often accentuates the "new" of technology. To demonstrate the priority of the event series as equal to the traditional exhibition, in 2001 the Edith-Ruß-Haus began its first of several three-part series of lectures and screenings unified by a single theme. The series *Medienkunst Aktuell* was the first presentation made to the Edith-Ruß-Haus' audience under a new director and was deliberately not an exhibition. At the time a few other curators and directors were pre-programming for institutions that were under renovation or not yet formally open, but in this case the galleries were open.[189] The goal was to signal early on how the institution would position itself and media art as evolving. The series *Medienkunst Aktuell* at Edith-Ruß-Haus was designed to put an equal emphasis on process and discussion. Having this take place in the cleared-out exhibition building, one installment per week over three weeks time, is a relational strategy applied to program formatting that positions the institution as a meeting place for concentration on one artwork and one conversation at a time. It also supports the process of constantly building and revising what media art ought to be, which was discussed in chapter 1.

Before each event the Edith-Ruß-Haus staff cooked soup together with the artist/presenter. During the cooking session a timeline for the evening was created, which includes having food available when people walk in, but also specifically used an intermission after the initial talk as an opportunity for the audience to eat. This was time for audience members to initiate independent discussions about what they have seen during the first half of the program, and it readied them for more discussion with the guest performer or speaker in the second half.

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[189] Rita Kersting held *Eingang Links*, a series of one-night events, at the Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen in Düsseldorf while the building was in the midst of renovation and at the beginning of her tenure as director in 2001. "Archiv 2001," Kunstverein, accessed February 25, 2012, http://archiv.kunstverein-duesseldorf.de/lang-de/ausstellungen-/rueckblick/archiv/archiv-2001.html. As part of Tate Modern's pre-opening program in 1999, the artist Mark Dion was commissioned for *Tate Thames Dig* (1999), a walk with local volunteers to comb the riverbed across from the museum for artifacts, which are now part of an installation and in the permanent collection. "Tate Thames Dig," Tate Learning, accessed July 21, 2012. http://www.tate.org.uk/learning/thamesdig/flash.htm.

For the first *Medienkunst Aktuell* event the artist Vuk Ćosić presented a history of Internet art and where it currently stood. He did this by projecting artworks "live" online into the corner of the exhibition hall, across two walls. This act accomplished two things: Ćosić "moulded" the artworks into his own aesthetic and he demonstrated to audience members that anyone can manipulate Internet artworks without having to understand code because their visibility is dependent upon more than what is inside the computer. Unlike a painting hung on the museum wall, Internet art is accessible whenever there is connectivity. Whether this art is without copyrights is another matter, but its variability across technical platforms as well as public and private spaces gives viewers/users room to make their own aesthetic choices as to how the work will be "materialized." Ćosić's presentation asked how Internet art's institutionalization changed the art form as artists began aiming for the museum audience as well as the private audience. An example of changes in form is how Internet art in gallery space is often projected on to a wall so that several people can view the work at once. In this, imagery takes a dominant role over text as viewers gather images quickly while walking through an exhibition as opposed to spending longer periods of time seated and reading text at a station. Projected display usually means one person has control of interaction with the artwork while everyone else watches and waits for a turn. Ćosić' Oldenburg projection of Internet artworks demonstrated how the change or extension of the intended audience from private surfer to gathered audience affected the form in which it is displayed and ultimately received as a passive or active experience, a chance online individual discovery or a curated and led communal event.

During his talk Ćosić gesticulated with a piece of bread in his hand, from which he occasionally bit off a mouthful between sentences. The product placement encouraged a run for the food at intermission and that time was also an opportunity for the audience to catch the speaker for a moment and deliver one-on-one questions about the first half of the presentation. The hospitality shown by the soup created an atmosphere of inclusion for the artist (who cooked it with the staff) and for the audience that dined together.

The soup break was worked into every event of the thematic event series from 2001 to 2004 and was planned in advance with the artist as a strategy of

formatting the presentation that evening. For the series *Outside, Inside and In Between*, Lisl Ponger devised a "surprise" double-screening. Her film *déjà vu* (1999) is a montage of Super-8 footage of Westerners' travels to foreign continents that Ponger found while browsing Viennese flea markets. She spliced the footage together and dubbed it with new, true stories of experiences with colonialism. Several narrators tell their own stories in their native African, European or Asian languages and it is highly unlikely that any one viewer is able to understand all of the many languages spoken. Therefore, no audience member understands all of the stories in the film and every viewer is in some way a foreigner to what is being heard. Contrarily, the gaze of the various original amateur filmmakers toward the foreign and exotic "other" is at once familiar as the footage of tourists. These two elements clash, creating endless streams of associations driven by media and cultural stereotypes within the images, the pieces of language one might understand, the frustration of missing information and the space this opens for new meaning.

The framing questions for the audience watching *déjà vu* are, "What were the narrators saying?" and "What do all of these stretches of film put together end-on-end mean as a whole?" Instead of leaving audience members to figure it out for themselves or limit people to a few minutes of questions and answers, Ponger screened the twenty-three minute film once, the staff served soup, and the artist then began a discussion with the audience. The questions started with the soup. As Ponger must have surmised it would, each question led to several more and the need arose to watch this very dense film again, in search of more meaning. Ponger offered to screen the film a second time and another discussion ensued. This looped back to the first screening, first discussion and the development of the audience's perception of the film after the first discussion period and the second screening. Though Ponger acted toward the audience as though the second screening were a spur of the moment decision, she had planned it in advance and shared this information with the series' curator, Paula von Sydow. The event was part screening, part discussion and part performance, which specifically contributed to the audience's evolving experience of how it views and perceives film. The course of events Ponger developed for her double screening and double discussion was woven into the Edith-Ruß-Haus one-night

event of soup and intermission—a relational format formed by the institution and re-shaped by the artist.

The soup break was an intermission of sorts, but not one in which the audience removes itself to the lobby, returns to watch the show and then leave. Service was in the gallery space and the artist remained with the audience. After the second half of every presentation, there was a question and answer period for which the soup break had been a warm up. The situation would become more intimate, audience questions and comments would gestate while the soup was digested and almost everyone had something to say to the presenter or to the rest of the group. This is, perhaps, where the difference between an intermission at the theater and the soup break at the Edith-Ruß-Haus lies. In the latter, the anonymous audience coheres into a social group with individuals engaged in an exchange of thought.

Serving soup, that homegrown staple of a communal meal, so easily transfers into the conviviality of an art gathering that its importance in a presentation format and attitude toward an overall institutional "aesthetic" is easily overlooked. Sometimes the smallest invitation to join the table is the one that stabilizes a visitor in uncertain terrain.

The institution creates, in other words, a "feel-good position," exactly that which Bishop levels critique against Bourriaud for creating a model of subjectivity based upon a "fictitious whole subject of harmonious community" instead of reflecting the real-life fractured and incomplete subject.[190] By structuring one of its programs in this way, the media art institution creates a space where subjects can come together to discuss or experience that fractured or incomplete state, for instance, as well as any other state.

Artists using relational methods steer institutions toward their mission to convey art to the public and put an exclamation point on it by combining the infrastructure of the artwork with the infrastructure of the institution. Setting up a video lounge with comfortable chairs, sofas and a bar instead of exhibiting videos as monitors on pedestals or in a stuffy screening room is a strategy taken from the relational method of creating social spaces in which visitors want to linger. This has its forerunners in media art, most notably the semi-private

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[190] Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," 79.

viewing cubes of Dan Graham's *Interior Design Space for Showing Videos* (1986) and the on-demand video lounges of media art festivals.[191] Artists later associated with relational aesthetics foregrounded the creation of a communicative viewing atmosphere. For instance, Angela Bulloch's *Bean Bag Set* (1996) in the exhibition *PopVideo* at Kölnischer Kunstverein consisted of red bean bag chairs placed around monitors so that viewers could sit comfortably, move them around and talk while viewing music videos.[192] This was an alternative to standard modes of display that force viewers to stand while watching videos on a pedestal, rest shortly on a hard bench or follow cinema etiquette in a dark, communal screening room. Until this time, the attempts at creating communicative, social spaces for video art were few and far between. The debate surrounding the installation of Internet art and browser art at *documenta X* widened the scope of discussion on how exhibition display formats influence the reception of media art.[193] The *documenta X* office setting of desks and monitors created a very different viewing experience than, for instance, a lounge would have established. Increased technological display options and the evolving viewing habits of the general population led artists and curators alike to re-think how to make media space into a more communicative space for those who come together in an art space. Curators and artists have mutually benefited from the situation in which art with relational aspects fits into an institutional need and the infrastructure of the institution supports the artist's relational projects.

This reveals that Cooke's assertion that curators "compete" with artists is an overstatement. She perpetuates the fallacy that artists and curators have assigned and discrete roles, as if two creative practices exclude each other on principle. Ideas and methods that float throughout art worlds, to use Becker's term, are creatively misinterpreted and tweaked to suit other purposes. Toward the end of her essay Cooke pinpoints the relational aspects of two artists'

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[191] Frieling, *Form Follows Format*, 2004.
[192] Kölnischer Kunstverein Archive.
[193] See Huffmann, "WebSite of documenta x," August 8, 1997; Tilman Baumgaertel, August 28, 1997, accessed August 27, 2012, "Interview with Jodi," Nettime, http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-9708/msg00112.html.

projects she described earlier in the text and draws a line in the sand to demarcate where the curator may not tread:

> In different ways Coleman's and Pardo's projects could be said to privilege the discursive while yet embedding it in a compelling materialist guise, since each involves an interrogative discussion, collaboration, and negotiation far removed from the typically consensual interaction generated under the older modes. If in these instances the artist has strayed into the terrain once traditionally accorded the curator, then this has been at her invitation, at her behest. This is, and should remain, a one-way process: the curator should no more flirt with the notion of becoming an artist than fancy herself in the shoes of the patron. Instead, through such a collaboration, she may gain a partner who, like herself, also wishes to play by other rules - and to devise other paradigms.[194]

Though Cooke's description of a collaborative partnership between artist and curator implies a principle of even exchange, her dismay that a curator would "flirt with the notion of becoming an artist" truncates curatorial creativity in favor of an unbalanced relationship. Furthermore, it makes one wonder what are the "other rules" by which curator and artist are playing and who writes them. Since she offers no concrete examples of curators crossing the invisible artist-curator line, it is impossible to ascertain where that line is drawn or why one party may cross it and the other cannot when she states "this is, and should remain, a one-way process."

The looping process of appropriating methods is also part of the discussion of institutional critique's influence upon artists and institutions. Julia Bryan-Wilson introduces the critic into the debate as she notes that positions in the field of art are not distinct:

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[194] Cooke, "In Lieu of Higher Ground," 43.

[The] vector of influence [should not only run] in one direction, whereby the language of institutional critique is first invented by artists, then picked up by critics, and finally, in a move that some might consider co-optation, mouthed by the institution itself. On the contrary, its syntax continues to evolve in multiple directions and within a complex nest of identifications . . . artist, critic, and curator are not distinct positions. . . . And far from the museum system being the endpoint of the interpretive chain, it is also productive, exerting pressures and affording opportunities that artists respond to.[195]

The "multiple directions" that the language of institutional critique takes as it travels through art worlds is recognized by Bryan-Wilson as productive, not a zero sum game in which one profession stands above and represses all others. Instead each profession picks up on the other and generates more: more art, more discourse, more ideas. This accumulation of influence includes the critic/audience member as part of the group.

The institution is part of an overall aesthetic of "stagecraft" that creates a space of participation. To put it in the terms of theater, the institution stages a production. A piece of theater is the work neither of a playwright, director, actors, crew nor the box office alone. It is, as Shannon Jackson describes it in *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics*, a heteronomy: "For those of us identified with performance, the language of autonomy is a conflicted one, as the art form's inter-dependence with ensembles, technologies, and audiences has always been hard to disavow. But to bemoan the compromises of performance's aesthetic interdependence is also to assume a clear division between the autonomous performance event and its heteronomous environment."[196] The interdependence of the production belies autonomy, whether it be staged in the theater or installed in the art institution. This division between an artwork and the infrastructure that "visualizes" it is anything but clear.

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[195] Julia Bryan-Wilson, "A Curriculum for Institutional Critique, or the Professionalisation of Conceptual Art," in Ekeberg, *New Institutionalism*, 91.
[196] Jackson, *Social Works*, 15.

The discussion is at this point reminiscent of Becker and his configuration of an interdependent art world rather than the artist as an autonomous figure. Jackson further de-centralizes this system with an emphasis on infrastructural support and the inclusion of the audience in her description of what it takes to materialize the ephemeral performance: "It is here, in imagining what it takes to gather but to limit the people, what it means to secure a space and specify a time, what it means to be one of the limited people who will make the effort to get to that space at that time, that we begin to acknowledge the material relations that support the de-materialized act."[197] The visualization of the artwork is not only related to the institution's infrastructure of labor and material, but to the labor of those who "make the effort to get to that space at that time" to see it. The audience that supports the institution, the artist and the artwork is part of the infrastructure, the "material relations" of any production, ephemeral or not.

The real impact of relational aesthetics and the "the social turn" in art is as a reminder to institutions about audiences. It is not that institutions ever completely forgot them. Rather, institutions have been compelled to evolve with audiences' growing sense of themselves as part of a participatory and flexible network, modeled through networked media of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Many art institutions in turn embraced these models and attitudes toward inclusive heteronomy, and media art institutions are among them. It is tempting to make the argument that media art institutions develop infrastructures and programs that mimic networked technologies in the ways they address audiences and build a community around media art, but the process is multi-directional—more influenced than imitative.

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[197] Ibid., 38-39.

Chapter 4

NARRATING MEDIA ART

The history of media art is synthetic, its various fibers overlapping with histories of art, technology, counter-culture and high culture, to weave, in the end, not a single history, but many histories. The endless variability and combination of these factors makes it seemingly impossible if not undesirable to narrate a single story of media art's heritages and trajectories. Yet this is what institutions cannot help doing because they literally bring what they present under one roof, homogenizing to some degree through the filter of the institution. The media art institution can at best aim to tell a hybrid narrative of art, one that preserves different histories without glossing them over. The institution's "narrative machinery" operates on two basic lines that work together: through non-verbal demonstration within its apparatus (the visualization of artworks in carefully selected contexts and format) and through the more conventional definition of narration in writing (from press releases, publications, and websites).[198]

Narrating Hybrid History

As Oliver Grau has pointed out, portions of the history of media art are in danger of being lost.[199] Especially those artworks that exist outside the institution suffer from spotty documentation or outright omission from the traditional museum narrative that mainly focuses on the singular itinerary of art from the artist's studio to the gallery, the "white cube" of the institutional presentation space in which art is most diligently recorded and preserved.[200]

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[198] Tony Bennett describes how "new pasts" are reconstructed through the "narrative machinery" of the museum and its historical exhibits. He argues that culture is "an assemblage of technologies which shape forms of thought and behaviour in ways that are dependent on the apparatus-like qualities of their mechanisms." Thus the concept of a cultural institution's narrative machinery not only applies to the reconstruction of history but the evaluation and formation of the present. *The Birth of the Museum* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995,), 179.

[199] See Oliver Grau, "Renewing knowledge structures for media art," eds. Alan Seal, Jonathan P. Bowen, Kia Ng, *EVA'10 Proceedings of the 2010 International Conference on Electronic Visualisation and the Arts* (Swinton: British Computer Society, 2010), 286-95.

[200] A biannual media art history conference takes place to combat the loss of these histories: *Refresh* (2005), *re:place* (2007), *Re:live* (2009), *REWIRE* (2011), "Media Art History," Media Art History, accessed November 21, 2012, http://www.mediaarthistory.org/.

The situation seemed quite different in 2001 when media art's presence in mainstream U.S.-American art institutions had markedly increased, though it was not yet fully negotiated.[201] However, the momentum soon slowed in 2003, the year in which Walker Art Center massively scaled down its New Media Initiatives program, leaving "[t]he new media arts community . . . shocked, outraged, frustrated, appalled and disappointed."[202] A prominent voice for media art in mainstream institutions, Walker Art Center had presented a diverse spectrum of work, from locative media art with strong ties to the research lab to video based on new manga comic book characters by artists working in the more conceptual mode of the art academy.[203] Walker Art Center's decision to lower its voice when speaking about media art meant that new media's storylines were not indispensible to the narrative of a prominent contemporary art institution.

Graham and Cook have described how one task of media art institutions is to present histories that are not narrated elsewhere:

> There is the danger that the history, meaning, and ethics of [media art's] original technological context and process may not be understood. . . . The desire for institutions that understand the meaning of both art and technology has led to a growing number of specialist media art institutions, such as FACT in Liverpool and ZKM in Karlsruhe – the former without and the latter with a collection. Beyond the task of providing buildings with the right facilities for new media, these institutions bear the burden of exhibiting, historicizing, and discussing the critical subdivisions

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[201] The Rockefeller Foundation even commissioned the report "Museums and New Media Art" to assess the development. It charts the presence and difficulties of media art in major institutions such as the Guggenheim in New York, Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, Museum of Modern Art New York, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Tate London and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Susan Morris, October 2001, accessed June 16, 2012, http://www.cs.vu.nl/~eliens/archive/refs/Museums_and_New_Media_Art.pdf

[202] Sarah Cook's letter of protest and its 689 cosigners can be viewed alongside the response of the former director of Walker Art Center the former Curator of New Media Initiatives "Open Letter to Kathy Halbreich, Director, Walker Art Center," MT Enterprises WorldWide, accessed July 21, 2012, http://www.mteww.com/walker_letter/.

[203] A view into the current program and archive on its website shows how media art's presence has since declined at that institution. Walker Art Center, accessed June 12, 2012, walkerart.org.

within the field, including the division between video and other new media.[204]

In order to perform these functions, media art institutions are called upon to map out the art historical lineage of media art and provide a permeable boundary in which its hybrid activity can transpire both within and outside gallery space.

A prominent example of artwork with a dual lineage of artists and scientists is the collaborations between artists and engineers from Bell Laboratories as Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T) in 1967, the archive of which is now available through the Getty Research Institute. An exhibition of photographs and written documentation organized by Billy Klüver, an engineer and one of the founders of E.A.T, toured mainly to university galleries from 2001 to 2008. When it was presented in 2004 at the Tokyo media art institution ICC it was "expanded with a number of object/artifacts and documents and E.A.T. posters, as well as works of art that Klüver and E.A.T. were involved in."[205] The developed ICC's version of the show went to Norrköping Museum of Art in Sweden that same year, directly contributing a media art institution's specialized perspective to Norrköping Museum of Art's story on this area of art. It has yet to be seen what insights a museum that owns more works by the artists involved in E.A.T. such as Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, Jean Tinguely, John Cage and Jasper Johns might yield if those works from their collection were added to an E.A.T. exhibition. Perhaps new insights to their collections would be gained by their visualization within the context of E.A.T. This is one example of how stories of art are narrated through the format of the exhibition, but that story alters when other narrative forms are employed.

Making art visible in the curatorial presentation format of an exhibition is the means by which museums most commonly deliver their narration of the stories of art. Yet while the exhibition is the most common mode of visualizing contemporary art, its dominance has the effect of promoting gallery-compatible stories while suppressing others. The media art institution that desires to

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[204] Graham and Cook, *Rethinking Curating*, 190.
[205] *Wikipedia* contributors, "Experiments in Art and Technology," *Wikipedia*, accessed November 1, 2011, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Experiments_in_Art_and_Technology.

narrate stories with multiple lineages can develop alternative or hybrid formats that reflect these histories. It can also decentralize the exhibition, moving it from being the main agency of communication to one of many. Chapter 3 of this dissertation focuses on program format from the perspective of how it contributes to the interaction between the institution, artists, artworks and publics. This foundation is expanded upon here to address the challenges of the gallery exhibition as the main agency of visualization and communication when it comes to media art.

In his 1996 essay "Exhibition Rhetorics," art historian Bruce Ferguson theorizes that the exhibition is "the medium of contemporary art in the sense of being its main agency of communication—the body and voice from which an authoritative character emerges. Exhibitions are the central speaking subjects in the standard stories about art which institutions and curators often tell to themselves and to us."[206] Ferguson rightly affirms that the exhibition usually takes the spotlight among all other presentation formats in the institution. He positions this using a linguistic metaphor: "like an utterance or a set of utterances, in a chain of signification, it can be considered to be the speech act of an institution."[207] Other modes of presentation in institutions are peripheral to "the speech act" (in linguistics, a performative utterance that serves a function in communication such as promising, ordering, greeting, warning or inviting) in Ferguson's metaphor. The Fergusonian "speech act" is uttered by the "central speaking subject," the exhibition. Consequently, this locates the gallery where the exhibition takes place as the site where the main storylines of contemporary art are performatively uttered over time in a continual series of speech acts that do not just tell stories of art but narrate them. To tell a story is to describe a sequence of developments while the narrative is the flow of events used to relate a certain theme. The rhetorical form in which the story is told, which aspects of it are emphasized, and the vocabulary used to relate it are all parts of the narrative. Museum gallery space—the order of works installed, sequence of galleries to

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[206] Bruce Ferguson, "Exhibition Rhetorics: Material Speech and Utter Sense," in *Thinking About Exhibitons*, eds. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 126.
[207] Ibid., 131.

walk through—is the engine of its narrative machinery. An institution's choice of presentation format in its central galleries—exhibition, event series, conference, workshop, educational programming, festival and so on—is crucial to the narration of the stories it tells.

Traditionally, the gallery is the focus of presentation where the institution's narrative plays out as exhibitions and, eating its tail like the serpent Ourobos, art seeking this context is then made for such spaces, as artist Daniel Buren explained in 1970.[208] As the recognized central speaking subject the exhibition relegates stories told through other agents of articulation to the status of subplots in art history. But media artworks, especially those that deal with process or open systems, can challenge the limits of the white cube/black box context and operate primarily outside that site. Media art is inclined to reach a critical mass of forms in its institutions that outstretch the exhibition format, challenging it as the main medium of communication. In order to place "extra-exhibition" art firmly within the institution's narrative as well as the different histories of presentation they may have, it is necessary to re-think how to utilize the gallery's prominence as the narrative source.

Modeled on the museum/*Kunstverein* institutional and architectural structure, the galleries of media art institutions are usually the featured element when the visitor walks in the door.[209] The source of the tradition of cultural prominence that museums enjoy, gallery space significantly drives attendance; visibility; and, consequently, funding. It must also be recognized that while generalized museums feature their exhibition galleries, they too are constantly evolving with contemporary art to include and emphasize programs that reach outside of the exhibition format. Yet the exhibition still stands as the unchallenged central driver of the institution.

The gallery space in the media art institution is a double-edged sword. It is a permanent presentation space—something media art does not often have and may or may not always want—and a central meeting ground, but there can

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[208] Daniel Buren, "Function of the Museum," In *Theories of Contemporary Art*, ed. Richard Hertz, 189-92. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1993.
[209] Many media art institutions also have facilities tailored for media art, such as technical research laboratories (Eyebeam, NY, ZKM, Karlsruhe) or movie theaters (FACT, Liverpool) but galleries inhabit the central spaces in most facilities.

be a struggle to fit the right formats in and around it. One solution is to negate it, as it was with *CYSMN-O*. Barring the exhibition hall to the public in order for it to become the technology center for *CYSMN-O* essentially dissolved the white cube facing the institution's publics in favor of an art form meant for the streets but still dependent upon the host institution's infrastructure. Being accessible online at home or in the guesthouse lounge, *CYSMN-O* existed simultaneously inside and outside the institution—in art's sphere but also coming from the area of technological research, as indicated by the Blast Theory's equal billing with the Mixed Reality Lab from the University of Nottingham. Giving the gallery over to technicians accentuated the institution as a production space where art begins and from where it is outwardly distributed. Theoretically, an entirely separate and different exhibition could have been mounted in the galleries while *CYSMN-O* ran. The artists and technicians could have been squeezed into the guesthouse space as the technical center and the Internet could have been made the game's only accessible site—as it was for most players anyway. Yet it is highly likely that the press and the public would have given the production secondary status to whatever is playing in the galleries.

The bulk of the machinery that is the institution—the focus of its public relations as well as its financial and infrastructural resources—had to be behind the locative media artwork as the main attraction to identify locative technology as an artistic medium and the artwork as a central part of the narrative. For the duration of the *CYSMN-O* game, the space of interaction was situated between the institution, the artwork and the audience across the sites of the lounge, the grounds and the city streets outside the institution's walls as well as the sites of remote users. The location from which the Edith-Ruß-Haus' narrative unfolded was cited in the "voice" of the institution but distributed beyond the body of an exhibition. The institutional "utterance" did not just designate the game as artwork, thereby interiorizing the event. Its utterance was formed and articulated through the institution's extension into the streets and online.

Instead of casting the exhibition aside or demoting it to documentation of the main attraction (as is what essentially happened in the short exhibition after the *CYSMN-O* game), the exhibition can be re-formatted into different types of hybrid formats. An example of an exhibition-workshop format is *Trigger Project,*

addressed in chapter 3 as an integration of the media art institution into the cultural community's network (by cooperating with the university). However, hybrid formatting can also refer to the histories of where media art has been traditionally presented. An example of a hybrid exhibition-festival format is *Turbulent Screen: The Structural Movement in Film and Video* (2003) at the Edith-Ruß-Haus, a program not meant to replicate a festival but to combine elements from festival and museum displays, amplifying both the event character of the festival and the durational exhibition format of the museum.[210]

      Turbulent Screen made use of several program and presentation formats. It included two floors of installations featuring work from pioneers in video art, structural filmmakers and younger artists who have acquired techniques and questions for their own art. It projected art on the exterior of the building, in the gallery and even installed in the lecture hall for a night of expanded cinema. Off-site screenings were held as part of the program at the Casablanca Programmkino, an independent cinema in Oldenburg. Whereas festivals compress their programs into a few days and often include a conference, *Turbulent Screen* operated in the opposite direction, stretching the timeframe into the exhibition format.

      The curators' expertise in film and media art festivals fed this exhibition-festival model: The institution's artistic director, this author, co-directed the Videonale media art festival from 1994 to 2000. Ralf Sausmikat was also hired as Co-curator for his knowledge of experimental film from the 1960s and 70s and many years overseeing the transformation of a film and video art festival into the European Media Art Festival. Most media art festivals such as transmediale (Berlin), Ars Electronica (Linz) and VideoPositive (Liverpool) include an exhibition. The Videonale (Bonn) took an interesting route from a festival that took over the space of the Bonner Kunstverein for a few days to being a festival in the Kunstmuseum Bonn, not "occupying" its space as a guest, but acting essentially as one program among many others running simultaneously in a large museum. The Videonale festival includes a conference and screenings in the museum's theater. By contrast, *Turbulent Screen* used, partially, a hybrid

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[210] Rosanne Altstatt and Ralf Sausmikat, *Turbulent Screen: Die strukturelle Bewegung in Film und Video* (Frankfurt/Main: Revolver – Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, 2003).

display technique by melding a section of its exhibition with all of its screenings by uniting an installation by one artist with a series of screenings featuring work by other artists. The integration of a festival screening space and schedule into the space of the installation aimed to retain a festival character of presentation.

The concept of treating the installation as a cinema was derived from the installation *Deanimated – The Invisible Ghost* by Martin Arnold. The artist conceived the installation as a DVD screened in an old cinema space with a high-end video projector that is able to render video with the line clarity of film. He usually stipulates that the DVD be screened in a dilapidated movie theater, but instead of moving the work to an off-site and rundown cinema, Arnold agreed to let the Edith-Ruß-Haus simulate such a space for *Turbulent Screen*. A cinematic space was re-created out of shabby seats from a dismantled theater, a film screen and the requisite projector.

During regular exhibition hours the cinema was Arnold's video installation running on a loop. To be clear, the installation was not *in* the cinema; the installation used the cinema as a specific, artistic medium. For *Deanimated*, Arnold took the B-movie horror flick *The Invisible Ghost* with Bela Lugosi and "erased" some of the figures, removed dialogue and, one suspects, added little details to the scenes—like the flicker of a candle. The movie becomes a ghost of itself, progressing for almost an hour into increasing darkness until little more is left than shadow, scratches on celluloid and a few audible traces of a tinny soundtrack. The rundown cinema reflects the scratching out, running down, and disappearance of cinema as a theater experience. It can be taken as a sign of aiding the destruction, the preservation or of restructuring communal cinematic experience when the artist and curators "move" the theater into the exhibition space.

Arnold agreed that the space of the installation would serve a second function as the *Turbulent Screen* film and video screening room during extra-exhibition hours. Festival style, the works were grouped thematically, shown as blocks and on a schedule of screenings. The screenings presented many works in their original medium—bringing in a 16mm projector or an old U-Matic video player, for instance. Unlike festival screenings, this did not happen in a few

concurrent days but on weekend nights over the course of the two-month exhibition.

By day, that space was an installation and formally in sync with the rest of the exhibition. At night, it was a screening room for classic and recent work screened with a great projector but a shabby interior space—not unlike many a charming film or video festival. The display formats of art installation and screening room were collapsed. The temporary and dual-purpose installation/cinema simultaneously nodded toward a history of the presence of media art in museums, in festivals and off-venues such as movie theaters.

Turbulent Screen functioned as a hybrid museum-festival narrative style in that the exhibition had many events—not unlike a festival—where visitors gather for one-time screenings and presentations. The artwork was not entirely subsumed into the narrative of the white cube or black box that displays video or film on loop or at repeated times to fit the standard exhibition modus of having everything available to viewers at all times. Though this is convenient for the visitor, it limits how much time-based art or art that is difficult to display over long periods of time curators can put in an exhibition without bogging down the flow of the audience and the show. Embedding the screenings in the installation, formally melting them with the gallery black box, does, however, take into account the historical narrative of screenings that have also always taken place in gallery spaces. Individual works of media art—especially video—have historically moved back and forth between the sometimes intersecting art worlds of museum and festival circuits.

The examples of *CYSMN-O, Trigger Project* and *Turbulent Screen* show that there is a wrangling within the media art institution to come to terms with the gallery space as the site of the "speaking subjects." Formats other than the exhibition and in hybrids with the exhibition attempt to shape the narrative of the institution's story of art, but cross breeding the museum model with models from other spaces and formats for media art do not produce perfect hybrids and a full reflection of the multiple storylines and narratives in media art's histories. Instead the media art institution's multiple formats and integrative models of display nod to media art's historical narratives while developing its own narrative trajectory as a hybridizing space.

Bringing Media Art Narratives to Light

The media art institution brings to light narratives that are underrepresented in art history. In turn, elements from these narratives slowly make their way into more generalized museums and toward a larger audience. In order to illuminate this process, one can follow how the subject of surveillance was developed in two exhibitions: *CTRL [Space]. Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother*;[211] which was curated by Thomas Levin for the ZKM Center for Art and Media in 2001 and *Exposed: Voyeurism, Surveillance and the Camera since 1870*, a cooperative effort in 2010 by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) and Tate Modern, which also toured to Walker Art Center.[212]

CTRL [Space] was a historical analysis of artworks and architectural structures of surveillance as viewing apparatuses and systems that underpin a voyeuristic security culture of control. ZKM explains it to the public on its website: "In its exploration of the historicity of surveillant practices in their relationship to changing logics of representation, *CTRL [SPACE]* will offer both a state of the art survey of the full range of panopticism --in architecture, digital culture, video, painting, photography, conceptual art, cinema, installation work, television, robotics and satellite imaging-- and a largely unknown history of the various attempts to critically and creatively appropriate, refunction, expose and undermine these logics."[213] Most of the artworks involved imagery from various types of cameras—from those that make still film images to high-end video, surveillance cameras, webcams or cameras coupled with other military technologies such as night vision or satellite cameras. Alongside artworks rendered in the media of surveillance, diagrams like Jeremy Bentham's *The Penitentiary Panopticon or Inspection House* drawn by the architect Willey Reveley (1787/1791) or online maps such as the *NYC Surveillance Camera Project* (1998) were on display. The exhibition was steeped in theory on

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[211] Thomas Y. Levin, ed., *CTRL [SPACE]. Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press 2002).

[212] Tate Modern 28.5.–3.10.2010; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art 30.10.2010–17.10.2011, Walker Art Center 21.5.–18.9.2011. Sandra S. Phillips, *Exposed: Voyeurism, Surveillance and the Camera since 1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

[213] "CTRL [SPACE]," ZKM Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Online, accessed July 21, 2012 http://hosting.zkm.de/ctrlspace/e/intro.

developing media being employed to create structures of fear, security and control while tapping into the human inclination toward voyeurism.

Nine years later, the influence of this exhibition—especially in how new technologies merge with the desire to watch—could be seen in *Exposed*. The SFMOMA/Tate Modern exhibition was historically grounded in still image photography, and its theoretical framework was built on similar theory that viewing apparatuses and viewing desire co-develop, and have a significant impact upon society. The concept behind *Exposed* is formulated for the public on the SFMOMA website: "*Exposed* traces how voyeuristic observation with cameras in the 19th century influenced street photography in the 20th century. Moving beyond typical notions of voyeurism and surveillance as strictly erotic or predatory, the presentation will address these concepts in their broadest sense—in both historical and contemporary contexts—investigating how new technologies, urban planning, global intelligence, celebrity culture, and an evolving media environment have fueled a growing interest in the subject."[214] The exhibition included a great deal of historical work as well as contemporary examples that demonstrated how technological developments such as ever-smaller and better-hidden cameras lead to the capture of daring, intimate and sometimes shocking depictions of events. For instance, a photograph taken by Todd Howard using a hidden camera strapped to his ankle captured an image of Ruth Snyder being executed in 1928. The photographic apparatuses on display, such as a spy's shoe with a camera hidden in its sole, tells of the close ties between new technologies and new imagery in a very direct manner. Other works push *Exposed* into a deeper definition of the camera's expanded technology and usage: Harun Farocki's video *Eye/Machine II* (2002) uses footage from "intelligent cameras" and Jordan Crandall's video installation *Drive* (2000) combines tracking, identifying and targeting technologies with the visual language from traditional cinema, heightening the sense that military technologies shape civilian fantasies.

In her catalogue essay, the curator Sandra S. Phillips frames *Exposed* essentially as a photography exhibition:

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[214] "Press Release Exposed," San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, accessed July 21, 2012, http://www.sfmoma.org/about/press/press_exhibitions/releases/830#ixzz1bFQ1nP2q.

Exposed investigates photography's role in voyeuristic looking. Unlike other examinations of the medium that have isolated its formal strategies, this exhibition looks at photographs whose subject matter is a powerful co-expression of form. Indeed the content is the driving motivation for making these pictures. It is the premise of the exhibition that the technology of photography has had a considerable effect in aiding its users and observers in a distinctive kind of looking. As cameras became small and capable of recording events that were quick and unnoticed, or far away, or considered private, the resulting pictures encouraged viewers to tolerate or seek out or breech or at least question what we, as a culture, did not seek out before this invention—at least not without the threat of public approbation that eventually resulted in the elders' deaths.[215]

Phillips describes a circle of desiring to look, finding and developing a technology for looking, the act of watching and capturing the image with the result of pushing forward the desire to look more. Though its emphasis is on the object rather than the system, *Exposed* shares a similar premise to *CTRL [Space]*: the desire to view and to develop viewing devices that advance together.

This theory of the co-development of technology and society was not simply "in the air" during the first decade of the twenty-first century and taken up coincidentally by both institutions. It was present in a transfer of knowledge through the ZKM exhibition, its catalogue and the curator Rudolf Frieling who moved from the ZKM to SFMOMA. Frieling is acknowledged twice in the *Exposed* catalogue as selecting video and installation works for the exhibition.[216] He was the ZKM's *Mediathek* curator at the time *CTRL [Space]* was organized. In fact, *CTRL [Space]* and *Exposed* included a number of the same artworks and had many of the same artists in common: Vito Acconci, Merry Alpern, Denis Beaubois,

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[215] Sandra M. Phillips, "Looking Out, Looking In: Voyeurism and its Affinities from the Beginning of Photography," in *Exposed*, 11.
[216] Neal Benezra and Vincente Todolí, foreword, and Sandra M. Phillips, acknowledgements in Phillips, *Exposed*, 6; 8.

Guy Bourdin, Bureau of Inverse Technology, Sophie Calle, Jordan Crandall, Harun Farocki, Bruce Nauman, Yoko Ono, Thomas Ruff, Julia Scher and Andy Warhol.[217] This is an example of the media art institution feeding the mainstream museum on the levels of theory, artworks and even personnel.

Yet *Exposed* presented few artworks actually rendered with new technologies as their artistic medium (not just produced with the aid of these technologies) even though these technologies are an active part of today's evolving media environment.[218] The exceptions included in *Exposed* were Julia Scher's Web project "Predictive Engineering 2" (1998), which was accessible at SFMOMA but not on tour at Walker Art Center. The show also had a scattering of single-channel videos and multi-channel video installations.[219] Certainly, cultural phenomena such as "sexting" with cell phone pictures and their public, networked distribution "encourage[s] viewers to tolerate or seek out or breech or at least question what we, as a culture, did not seek out before this invention." The Motorola *Razr* cell phone, brought onto the market in 2005, was displayed in *Exposed* but not art grounded in the distribution of mobile phone images or networks. Though it put this item of technology on display, *Exposed* left the developing storylines of the camera as it is embedded in networked and participatory technologies for the masses "on the street" out of its narrative.

Each of the three institutions where *Exposed* was on view, either now or in the past, have built a reputation as venues with a history of supporting media art. Representative past initiatives in each institution include Tate Modern's vision of a virtual gallery filled with Internet art for its *Tate in Space* project of 2002; SFMOMA's groundbreaking *010101: Art in Technological Times* exhibition in 2001; and Walker Art Center's embrace of Internet art with *Gallery 9* in 1997 and then a plurality of media art until the abrupt end of that program. Despite this history, *Exposed* held mostly to the model of a classic photography exhibition without investigating the transformation of the photograph's status via what

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[217] See San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and Walker Art Center *Exposed* exhibition checklists.
[218] Christiane Paul addresses the dearth of digital art in museums in "New Media in the Mainstream," in Shanken, *Artnodes*: 102-06.
[219] See San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and Walker Art Center *Exposed* exhibition checklists.

could be called Internet street photography: the flood of sometimes surreptitious and often voyeuristic images artists (and non-artists) make as they are taken with small, personal devices and pass through social networks. It is a sin of omission. Still, the media art institution made its mark with *CTRL [Space]* and propelled *Exposed* in many ways. The ZKM not only told its own story of surveillance systems and images, it influenced the story told in "mainstream" institutions.

Written Word

In terms Ferguson would use, the "speech act" of an institution is made through the vehicle of the exhibition and the "rhetorics" of its presentation such as selection and the dramaturgy of how it is installed, but institutions do a great deal of narrating with the written word, too. Many people learn from the program through newspapers, trade journals, exhibition publications, online archives and the oral interpretation of those who have visited the institution. The written word is frequently the medium through which an artwork presented in one institution is "picked up" by curators for presentation in another. Cultural institutions would have little impact if the only way anyone knew of their programs were by visiting them, with dissemination of the institution's content ending when they left the space. When institutions think about their role in creating and preserving cultural memory, they are acutely aware that the boundaries of presentation do not end with the manifestation of the artwork at the institution's site. The words it produces to communicate its program beyond its "visualizing" presentation are part of the institution's structure.

The first line of Baxandall's *Patterns of Intention* underscores the importance of the verbal description of an artwork: "We do not explain pictures: we explain remarks about pictures – or rather, we explain pictures only in so far as we have considered them under some verbal description or specification."[220] Baxandall refers here to the way in which every explanation of a picture (or any other artwork, for that matter) is also a description of it, and what that description entails as well as the style in which it is written will frame the artwork's interpretation and explanation. With this in mind, the first line of

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[220] Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention*, 1.

written, public communication on an institution's presentation sets the stage for its reception. This is an early attempt to "write the picture," as Roland Barthes would formulate it, to connect the presentation (broadly, the picture) with language in order to read it.[221]

Before the institution's presentation is "made visible" a description of it begins with a press release and its impact cannot be underestimated.[222] Barthes proposes that "the picture, whoever writes it, exists only in the account given of it; or again: in the total and the organization of the various readings that can be made of it: a picture is never anything but its own plural description."[223] The institution begins its narration, its "writing" of the presentation and its literal writing before the curtain ever goes up. With the press release, it steers a first reading of the works involved in the presentation (if this is their premiere), adds more writing to the plural description of artwork previously made visible in presentations elsewhere and attempts to establish a first writing of the institution's overall presentation. The institution uses its infrastructure for publicity to narrate what it presents and ensure that the "utterances" it makes through its presentations are heard and may be received.

A press release and all ensuing types of media relations are not only an extension of the "speech acts" of the institution, they frame why the presentation is relevant at that particular time. For media art institutions, it is important that they articulate themselves well in a language understood by mainstream journalists, editors and others inside and outside the artworld who might otherwise run the other way when they hear the term "media art." This is significant in light of the increasingly closed network of contemporary art journalists, publications, museums and markets evidenced, for example, by the art journal *frieze* also starting its own art fairs. Any institution excluded from this discussion is denied opportunities to contribute to a broader discussion. Good

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[221] Roland Barthes, "Is Painting a Language?" in *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art and Representation*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 150.
[222] A press photo usually also accompanies a press release, which in another context might lead here to the first line of Barthes' "The Photographic Message," which states, "The press photograph is a message." But to follow Barthes' writing on the structural autonomy of photographs would lead this dissertation astray. See *Image – Music – Text*, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 15-31.
[223] Barthes, *Responsibility of Forms*, 150.

press relations establish trajectories important to media art and theory within current art discourse.

Unlike many temporary venues and intermittent presentation initiatives for media art, media art institutions have the means to publish in the tradition of museum catalogues and other publications that document and communicate. Part of the reason some stories of media art history go largely unsung is that festivals, art and technology conferences, public spaces and websites specializing in media art do publish in some form, but have distribution systems alternative to those in which art is recorded for longevity and for a general art audience, rather than a specific audience of experts in media art. Academic books on media theory and media studies abound, yet the existence of many events and artworks in media art history languish in brochures at the bottom of a storage box or end with a "File not Found" message on the Internet. An effort to counter this loss is being made with publications such as *MediaArtHistories*, which states: "Digital art has become the art of our times, yet it has not "arrived" in the cultural institutions of our societies. It is still rarely collected, it is not included or supported under the auspices of art history or other academic disciplines, and it is almost inaccessible for the non-north-Western public and their scholars. To change this is our goal! What is needed is a wider view encompassing media art in the context of the treasures left us by past experiences, possessions, and insights."[224] The media art institution has a unique position in that it can create these contexts of treasures by leveraging its narrating infrastructure in order to propel media art histories into the consciousness of specialized and unspecialized publics.

However, the preservation of media art's histories is made all the more difficult by the transitory nature of media art technologies. The variability of electronic media, as discussed in chapter 1, leads to preservation concerns. Yet process-based art, for instance, works against documentation in that it can never be complete. This is a concern in the wider context of contemporary art, but it reaches a critical state when it comes to media art, which is so often rendered and documented digitally. Even many media artworks that do appear in the

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[224] Oliver Grau, introduction to *MediaArtHistories*, ed. Oliver Grau (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 3.

institution may go undocumented in the long-term due to the difficulties of digital preservation and inability to document and publish a catalogue for every single presentation. For this dissertation, for instance, it was not possible to obtain an image of Oldenburg as it was rendered in the *CYSMN-O* game. Though the Oldenburg game was recorded and re-played later in Linz when it won the 2003 Golden Nike at the Ars Electronica festival in Linz, that documentation was never migrated to a new technologically. It exists as a shockwave file for a 2002 PowerPC, but not even the artists still have the technology to access it.[225]

The historical narrative is also shaped by the decisions an art institution makes on the documentation and distribution of its message. The type of publication an institution issues (if publication is in the budget) indicates which demographic(s) the institution is addressing and where the institution sets its priorities. A heavy, expensive picture book can seem destined for a tourist's coffee table or, depending upon the quality of the essays and images, an academic's bookshelf while a pocket-sized guide or pamphlet may be more of a companion to the presentation, perhaps read while viewing the art instead of unpacked at home. Is the institution cultivating relationships with fine arts presses, academic publishing houses or self-publishing? The Edith-Ruß-Haus initiated a series of readers based on its exhibitions with the fine arts press Revolver – Archiv für aktuelle Kunst in 2001. By partnering with this publisher, the Edith-Ruß-Haus positioned itself alongside other German contemporary art institutions producing books with Revolver.

Narration through Interviews

The artist talk, artist interview and conversations between artist and curator are important mediums to convey media art rooted in media theory, which can be highly conceptual, and join the artist's voice in the program beyond the visual language of the artwork. The Edith-Ruß-Haus series of readers focuses on the artist's word in the form of interviews, placing this mode of communication above a catalogue of images (though select images are included in each book). As

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[225] Email thread of exchange between Rosanne Altstatt and Matt Adams of Blast Theory, May 2012. After the artists were unable to open the *CYSMN-O* files, other technicians and I made several unsuccessful attempts to activate old computers and software or use simulation software.

institutional publications they are part of the "voice" of the institution through which artists speak.

Though the artist interview has a long precedence in art historical research,[226] books of interviews with artists, curators and theorists, of which Hans-Ulrich Obrist's have been highly visible, skyrocketed in the early 2000s.[227] The explosion of writing by curators on curating (sometimes referred to derogatorily as "curator lit") and symposia held on whether creating exhibitions is a form of art coincides with the rise of interviews and conversations that equally feature artists and curators.[228] Three factors can be identified as contributors to the phenomenon of the interview's popularity around this time: the rise of the curator as an important name en par with the artist (versus working under the name of a museum without credits in communications materials), a media landscape focused on a conversational style (versus a first-person narrative reporting style), and an ideological break with the hierarchies of the past, in which the author's voice was considered to be an objective authority and the interviewed "personality" the one with all the answers.

The first factor is the increased prominence of the star curator who is glamorously envisioned as jetting from biennial to biennial, taking turns at running an institution, publishing prolifically and befriending every artist in the stables of trendy galleries. Though precedence for this stereotype is found in the curator Harald Szeeman,[229] the role bloomed with Obrist, whose interviews and conversations with the creative minds of culture shore up his international reputation as a human "Rome" where all roads of contemporary art seem to lead. Interviews and published conversations have the appeal of putting all parties involved in presenting art to the public on equal footing.

The increased popularity of biennials in the 1990s and the visibility of curators who organize them normalized the visibility of the curator's hand in the

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[226] See Christoph Lichtin, *Das Künstlerinterview: Analyse eines Kunstprodukts* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004).

[227] As of this writing, Obrist's bibliography entails more than twenty books of interviews and "conversations." "Hans Ulrich Obrst – Professor of Philosophy – Bibliography." European Graduate School, accessed July 21, 2012, http://www.egs.edu/faculty/hans-ulrich-obrist/bibliography/.

[228] The flood of symposia on curating continues. See Randy Kennedy, 2012, "The Fine Art of Being a Curator," *New York Times*, C1, July 19.

[229] See Søren Grammel, *Ausstellungsautorenschaft: Die Konstruktion der auktorialen Position des Kurators bei Harald Szeemann; eine Mikroanalyse* (Köln: Verlag Walther König, 2005).

presentation, interpretation and even the production of art, with the curator's name featured as prominently as the artists. Obrist and a number of curators populating the biennial circuit live a profession similar to the transient international artist, pulling each other along from one exhibition or "project" to the next, and their careers are heavily dependent upon each other. Their roles sometimes merge and slip into each other as demonstrated by *Utopia Station*, an art project co-curated by the art historian and writer Molly Nesbit, the artist Rirkrit Tiravanija and Obrist.[230] Writing for the art journal *frieze*, Jacob Dahl Jürgensen describes it as "a functional neighbourhood open to social interaction, complete with a garden with funky communal showers designed by Tobias Rehberger, Padre de la Fontana (Father of the Fountain, 2003), ecological toilets designed by Atelier van Lieshout (Scatopia, 2002), its own web radio station (Zerynthia, in collaboration with Franz West), and a stilted hut where one might take a quick nap should it all become too exhausting (Billboardthailandhouse, 2000, by Alicia Framis)."[231] *Utopia Station* was designed as a flexible environment in which "speakers, writers, dancers, performers and musicians will be invited to give Utopia their ideas, radical actions and sounds."[232] The ideal rests upon a gathering of notables from various disciplines within the arts in a creative setting where each contributes to a cultural environment. It sounds like a perfect space for the creation of new ideas. It also has fabulous networking potential.

Judging by his contribution to the project, the artist Carsten Höller recognized and pilloried this with *No Names* (2003), a concept he proposed after it was too late to be realized, but was explained in a leaflet handed out at *Utopia Station*.[233] The idea was to keep the artist's and curator's names anonymous in order to "emphasize the notion of the common space."[234] Höller envisions a different kind of utopia in which the space of ideas reigns without celebrity.

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[230] Utopia Station, e-flux projects, accessed July 21, 2012, http://www.e-flux.com/projects/utopia/.
[231] Jacob Dahl Jürgensen, "50th Venice Biennial," *frieze*, 77 (September 2003), accessed February 14, 2012, http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/jacob_dahl_juergensen/.
[232] "Utopia Station," (press release) 50th Venice Biennial, May 2003, accessed November 30, 2011, http://www.universes-in-universe.de/car/venezia/bien50/utopia/e-press.htm.
[233] Scott Rothkopf, Linda Nochlin and Tim Griffin "Pictures of an Exhibition: The 50th Venice Biennial," *Artforum International*, XLII, no. 1 (September 2003): 261.
[234] Ibid.

(Celebrity is a relative term here, since who would recognize a contemporary artist or curator?) Yet it should be kept in mind that ideas and celebrity or just notability are not mutually exclusive. The interview or conversation is rarely anonymous, but it has the capacity to convey ideas in the personal tone of named parties.

A second dynamic contributing to the rise of the interview is the mass media landscape of talk shows, the "confessionals" of reality TV, personality profiles in newspapers and magazines, and the "man on the street" interview of radio. The mass media has made the interview format ubiquitous in all communication platforms. Michael Diers notes in his introduction to one of the many volumes of interviews conducted by Hans-Ulrich Obrist how "the interview has become very common in art criticism, maybe because the conversational form is such a trend in the general news media."[235] One oversight in Diers' remark is that the artist interview is not "criticism" as it rarely takes a critical approach. Instead, it is an amalgamation of a critic's observations, a scholar providing background and context, perhaps a curator's/institution's desire to promote a story of art and (not least) the artist's issuance of intent and self-contextualization of the work. The conversational form is taken up in artworld publications because it attaches people and personalities to the artworks upon which they reflect in the everyday form of mass media. When interviews appear in an art institution's publications, they reduce the distance between institutions and their audiences in a format that has become familiar and easy-to-read through the news media, as Diers indicates.

A third factor relates to technology and its influence as models of power systems. Geert Lovink addresses this in "The Art of Electronic Dialogue: A Self-Interview as Introduction." True to form, the author conducts this interview-introduction with himself to open his collection of interviews:

> [Lovink:] Where does your fascination with this "secondary" text
> genre of the interview originate? Wouldn't time be better spent

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[235] Michael Diers, "Infinite Conversation" or "The Interview as an Art Form," in *Hans-Ulrich Obrist: Interviews Vol. 1*, ed. Thomas Boutooux (Milan: Edizioni Charta, 2003), 13.

writing original pieces? You are not a journalist. Shouldn't a media theorist stick to theory?

[Lovink:] We don't live in the early Twentieth Century anymore, even though that is my favorite period. Aristocratic elitism from that age has caused enough damage – and so has identification with totalitarian ideologies. It is certainly easier and more rewarding for today's intellectual to withdraw into his or her own work than it is to engage. Interviews are all about creating contexts, together with chats and debates, reviews, links, and other reference systems. The genre fits very well into the general tendency to break down the text and create a social-technological knowledge environment. Interviews are one of many sorts of imaginative text one can use in creating common, networked discourses.[236]

Lovink sees the interview format as an ideological break from the hierarchies of the past, in which he claims an author could "withdraw into his or her own work," in favor of the interview as one node in a larger web of discourse. His reason for favoring the interview format is relevant to the way the media art institution seeks to analyze art in a technologically-mediated society. Publishing short books of interviews or conversations in lieu of catalogues featuring secondary literature points back to the art institution as a place from which art and artists "speak" in many forms. The interview books are another type of "speech act" that contributes to the story of art in a "social-technological knowledge environment."

The curator Iwona Blazwick has observed that artist interviews interject in hierarchies by clearing the fog of an "objective" writing style: "The creator and the critic are revealed as subjects, with all the subtle complexities of gender,

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[236] Geert Lovink, "The Art of Electronic Dialogue: A Self-Interview as introduction," in *Geert Lovink, Uncanny Networks. Dialogues with the Virtual Intelligentsia* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), 5.

generation and social interaction that that implies."[237] When this is put on the table with the artist interview, speaking subjects open themselves to critique—not just critique of artworks, but the motivations behind making them. Hierarchal structures have not been undone completely: the speaking subjects are chosen as worthy of publication, placing them above those who remain voicelessly unpublished. Nevertheless the conversationalists taking part in the interviews register as embodied voices with educated opinions. The interviewer and interviewee are both contextualized as part of a fluctuating artistic and theoretical development. When the conversationalists are "revealed as subjects," the artwork is implied to be from a subjective viewpoint.

Writing of the relationship an interview establishes with the "object of art," Blazwick continues: "Descriptions of method and technique ground the work in process. Formal strategies may be situated within an ideological framework, or understood within the context of a zeitgeist that expands from the subjective, lived experience of the artist within a cultural and sociopolitical context. We establish, perhaps unconsciously, an empathetic relation with the object of art as its autonomy is inflected with a psychology, a voice."[238] Note that Blazwick does not write of the "art object" but of the "object of art," tying the artwork back to its creator through a subject-object relationship. The object is shaped by subjectivity: she holds that we enter into a relation to the work of art when its conceptual independence (or "autonomy") is given a tone or texture ("inflected") by the subject's voice. Establishing the "empathetic relationship" she writes of can be especially relevant for media art when it is difficult for some to see beyond the technology and into the ideas. Breaking this stereotype of the gadget as the crux of the artwork is part of the work of a media art institution. (Of course, this work begins with the pursuit of art that is not blinded by the beauty of its weapons.) Publishing the words of media artists and their thoughts circulating around the work they create helps the reader connect to the human implications of technology-driven art.

That empathetic relationship with the object of art extends to the institution hosting the conversation/interview. Through its interview

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[237] Iwona Blazwick, "An Anatomy of the Interview," in *Talking Art: Interviews with artists since 1976*, Art Monthly, eds. Patricia Bickers and Andrew Wilson (London: Ridinghouse, 2007), 26.
[238] Ibid., 27.

publications, the institution narrates a story in a conversational format, which is created by people informed through their lived experiences and not authoritatively asserting facts from an impenetrable ivory tower. Favoring the artist interview within publications is another strategy to promote the concept that the institution has the attribute of a good host who initiates thoughtful conversation.

Interview as Documentation of a Moment and Intention

Each of the Edith-Ruß-Haus readers published with Revolver contains interviews with every artist in the exhibition, with those for solo exhibitions including other types of material produced by the artists.[239] Artists wrote their own essays, contributed drawings, or, in the case of Mark Bain, printed another writer's material as "found words" akin to the "found object" or "found footage." Conscious of its role in generating future histories, these publications prioritize the artist's voice in order to document the moment of original intent in the institution, setting a historical narrative in motion. The interview format as the propeller of these publications presents the exhibition as well as the book as part of a process, an ongoing conversation that preceded the documented moment and stretches beyond it. The Edith-Ruß-Haus readers are a joint artist-institution speaking voice as a discussant, a recorder and an agent of developments in media art. They convey that it is not only a matter of the artist being given a venue to speak but of the artist's and institution's work together.

In *Das Künstlerinterview: Analyse eines Kunstprodukts* the art historian Christoph Lichtin finds a motivation for the interview in providing an "explanation to an unknowing public."[240] The interview published in an institution's publication is a vehicle that anticipates the questions an "unknowing public" might ask and steers the direction of the conversation. In the Edith-Ruß-Haus readers, interviews are often labeled "a conversation." This creates a less formal tone and implies that the reader is invited to listen in. Literal inclusions of audience members in conversations take place when artists are present in the institution. The interview form is a representation of this atmosphere. Like an interview, the conversation is based on the question and answer format, but "a conversation" implies give-and-take between equal partners—less journalism in which one side appears to be the objective questioner than an exchange between two subjective contributors. Rarely does an institution's artist interview put anyone on the hot seat. The conversational form in an art institution's publication appears light, usually has little or no artworld jargon and often

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[239] Exhibitions with Revolver readers: *Avatars and Others: The Extension of the Self into Virtual Space*, 2001; *Jordan Crandall: Trigger Project*, 2002; *ArchiSound Mark Bain: Sonusphere*, 2003; *Avi Mograbi (fictional documentary)*, 2003; *Monika Oechsler: At the far and farthest point*, 2004.
[240] Lichtin, *Künstlerinterview*, 33.

begins with questions of why and how the presentation of an artwork comes together before delving into deeper subjects. Though the conversation seems effortless, it is highly constructed. Whether it takes place via email, fax or during face-to-face meetings, countless revisions are made to increase clarity, include more pertinent content and give the piece increasingly complex information while smoothing style.

An everyday conversation takes place during a specific moment in time. The phrase "remember when we were talking about . . ." picks up a conversation where it had been left off or adds something more to an idea that had been kicked around earlier. The interview publication captures some of this feeling. The Edith-Ruß-Haus readers were usually released a few weeks after an opening reception in order to include photographs from the presentation and promote the idea of art and artist as being in production. Their interviews were conducted while the show was being prepared and essentially document the discussion between the artist and curator during this period. They included references to the artist's intention, but also the curator's intention in including it in that exhibition or why it is considered relevant for the viewers at that time.

Honing in on an artist's intention is a prominent interview characteristic. Lichtin's thesis argues that the increasingly verbal artists of the 1960's challenged the role of art historians as first interpreters; subsequently, Lichtin observes, historians would have to countenance the reluctance of artists to comment on their own work.[241] At first glance it seems that an artist's own writing or statements in an interview furnish information from the source and encapsulate an ultimate truth by citing original intent. Once the artist has verbalized intention, further commentary almost seems superfluous. Who can argue about interpretation when the source interprets itself—either as an oracle whose words are an enigma or as a technician whose explanations are too cut and dried?

Lichtin argues that an interview is really a beginning and not an end: "In einem Interview gemachte Äusserungen werden damit vorerst zu einem möglichen Ausgangspunkt der Beschäftigung mit der Intention des Künstlers. Der Kommentar des Künstlers ist nicht der Abschluss der Interpretation und

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[241] Ibid., 94.

nicht das Ende des Argumentationsprozesses. Die Äusserungen des Künstlers lassen ohne weitere Interpretation ungeklärt, wie weit seine Intention überhaupt in das Kunstwerk reicht."[242] Discussion remains open when it is recognized that an artist's intention can be realized to a varying degree in the artwork. If an artwork does not fulfill what an artist states as its intention, is it then an unsuccessful artwork? Inversely: if an artwork fulfils an artist's intention is that what makes it successful? Even if the artist's original intention is fulfilled, that does not mean the artwork cannot take on new value and insights in the future. How it resonates with viewers and their own subjectively lived experience over a long period of time remains in the understanding and relevance of an artwork.

This relates to the question of an artworks' autonomy beyond its creator. Once the artist has released it into the public realm, an artwork takes on a life of its own. The artist has intent, but as the work and the discussion around it persevere through the cultural shifts that come with time, new readings evolve. New viewers and future generations undoubtedly find new perspectives because the collective consciousness evolves as well. Therefore, the interviewer and interviewed speaking about any particular artworks, exhibitions or subjects surrounding and contextualizing the work are always *Zeitzeugen* (historical witnesses), providing source material and witnessing a moment in the life of the work discussed.

In the Edith-Ruß-Haus readers that moment is framed by the institution, which also acts as witness. All of the problems with *Zeitzeugen* testimonials apply to the artist interview and its germination in the framework of the institution—failing memory, colored viewpoints, a sometimes-subconscious desire to reinforce or undermine existing narratives. The word of the *Zeitzeuge* is a powerful statement, yet it cannot avoid a degree of subjectivity. Unlike the catalogue of essays written in the third person, the interview format reveals the persons involved in the interview as subjects, as Blazwick observes, and it also reveals the subjectivity of the institution as it documents a moment, leaving a conceptual space in which thought and intent may evolve.

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[242] The statements made in an interview become first a possible starting point for engaging with the artist's intention. The artists's commentary is not the end of interpretation and not the end of the argumentation process. Without further interpretation the artist's statements leave open how far his intention reaches into the artwork at all. (my translation) Ibid., 64.

Artist, Theorist, Communicator

Many media artists are theorists whose work intertwines artistic practice and research. The artist-theorist is not an exclusive development in media art and those working in that mode today do so with a historical precedence. The writing of conceptual artists such as Sol Lewitt in the 1960s and 70s established the dual role of artist-theorist, and video artists such Frank Gillette would create video art while publishing media theory.[243] Like those creating conceptual art, video artists of the time were often their own ambassadors for their work and the medium.[244]

An artist-theorist whose writing is textbook material for media art programs is Lev Manovich, whose *The Language of New Media* is written as "a record and a theory of the present" with the "aim to describe and understand the logic driving the development of the language of new media."[245] Another example of the artist-theorist is Sean Cubitt, whose practice includes working as an essayist and publishing the blog "the history and philosophy of media."[246] The artwork of cyberfeminist Cornelia Sollfrank has analyzed and actively steered "net culture." She also co-founded the "Old Boys Network," which developed into symposia and publications on women in cyberculture.[247] The writing, editing, symposium-organizing, and teaching activities of these artist-theorists do not simply contextualize and inform their artwork. It furthers the field of media theory.

In 2008 the transmediale Festival in Berlin formally recognized the special situation of the media artist-theorist by establishing the Vilém Flusser Theory Award "for outstanding theory and research-based digital arts practice" in collaboration with the Vilém Flusser Archive of the University of Arts, Berlin. In 2011 the award was given to Jordan Crandall, whose cinematic artworks must

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[243] See Frank Gilette, *Between Paradigms: The Mood and Its Purpose, An Interface Book* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1973).
[244] See Linda Cathcart, ed., *Steina: Machine Visions, Woody Vasulka: Descriptions* (Buffalo: Albright Knox Gallery, 1978).
[245] Lev Manovich, introduction to *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 7.
[246] *Sean Cubitt's Blog: Aphorisms and scribbled notes on the history and philosophy of media*, accessed November 19, 2011, http://seancubitt.blogspot.com/.
[247] See Cornelia Sollfrank, ed., *First Cyberfeminist International Reader* (Hamburg: OBN, 1998).

be regarded in the same light of his writing as a study of the vectors of power, desire, visual and data tracking, intimacy and militarized culture. Crandall is also the founding editor of the journal VERSION.[248] One of Crandall's larger projects, which unified his work as theorist and practitioner, is *Under Fire* (2004). Crandall developed *Under Fire* at the contemporary art institution Witte de Witte and in collaboration with V2_ Institute for the Unstable Media. Over the course of a year, *Under Fire* conducted a series of discussions online and in Rotterdam, and published two books in conjunction with these activities. The project's participants did not strictly come from an art background but from "politics, theory, criticism, the arts, and journalism from both the West and the Middle East."[249] They came to discuss "the forms of militarized agencies that are emerging today, including Western defense industries and decentralized terrorist organizations," and "the ways that armed violence materializes as act and image, searching for new insight into its mechanisms and effects . . ."[250] *Under Fire* took place in the midst of a global "War on Terror," ignited after Al Qaida's September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States. By 2004 this had bled into reprisals in Afghanistan and Iraq, and enabled the installation of an invasive culture of control in the name of security: increased audio-visual surveillance of civil society, decreased civil liberties during a drumbeat of warnings and terror scenarios. Crandall's project took a visual studies approach to these developments:

> The project emphasizes the role that representations play as registers of symbolic meaning and as agents of affective change. It engages images from commercial and independent news media, as well as representations from artistic, literary, and popular entertainment sources, both in the West and the Middle East. These images are regarded in terms of attention strategy and perception management, but they are also regarded in terms of

[248] "Jordan Crandall: Writings," Jordan Crandall, accessed July 21, 2012, http://jordancrandall.com/main/index.html.
[249] "Jordan Crandall, Under Fire," Witte de Witte Center for Contemporary Art, accessed July 21, 2012, http://www.wdw.nl/event/jordan-crandall-under-fire/.
[250] Ibid.

cultural imaginaries of conflict, where they can operate as
"fictionalized components of reality." They are studied in terms of
the deeper truths they may offer about collective identifications
and aggressions, and their roles in the formation of a new body
politic.[251]

Rather than explicitly concentrating on artworks, this description of the Witte de
Witte project presents itself as a study of images generated from different
sources ("commercial and independent news media . . . artistic, literary, and
popular entertainment") and as having a collective impact.

Under Fire is also the title of Crandall's photographic work made in the
sphere of the Witte de Witte project (2006, fig. 4.1). The figures in the
photographs are not clearly in focus and it is unknown to the viewer whether the
male bodies have their shirts off or have been "disrobed" through the technology
recording them; were shot with night vision or heat sensitive cameras; are
staged or real. One figure is viewed through crosshairs of a camera, a weapon or
an apparatus that has been engineered to integrate the camera into the weapon.
The images' blurred dynamism of aggression show human acts of combat—one
may be tossing a Molotov cocktail; the other depicts two men firing upon each
other at close range with blasts seen between them as bright white rings of fire
in the darkness. All of this takes place in front of the eye of the one behind the
camera, but it is impossible to know whether this is an ally who will support and
protect or an enemy who will injure. Perhaps it is simply a disembodied monitor,
recording but taking no action. That role could theoretically echo with a state
power, a journalist's recording or someone standing in an exhibition space and
viewing the photograph.

Crandall initiates discussion as a communicator on two fronts with the
separate project and artworks named Under Fire. His work as writer and
discussion leader is more than a contextualization of his artwork. As a theorist he
develops overarching theories on society while as an artist gets down to the
body and psyche of individuals with visuals that "ask" as many questions as they
answer. As a media theorist and artist, Crandall simultaneously analyzes images

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[251] Ibid.

from these sources and creates his own images that beget critical analysis. This creation does not illustrate but rather theorizes image-making while it is itself something to be theorized.

This begs the question of whether the Witte de Witte project is an artwork in itself, separate but related to the photographs made two years later. Lichtin makes an argument for the artist interview as an art form and, in this line of thought, *Under Fire* is then the symposium as art form. Lichtin begins by charting the artist as communicator in his or her own voice back to Abstract Expressionism when representation fell out of favor and an acute need to explain new imagery to the public arose: "In diesem Zeitraum wird die kommunikative Tätigkeit nicht nur rein Nebenher der künstlerischen Tätigkeit, sondern es gibt Momente der Verschmelzung. Das Interview, das Gespräch, der Vortrag, also eine Fülle verschiedenster verbaler Kommunikationsformen, wurden zu einem wichtigen Gegenstand der Kunst selbst. Das Interview wird einer Kunstform."[252] Lichtin argues that artists who present a discussion of their work and the context in which it is developed rather than objects per se make all types of "kommunikative Tätigkeit" (communicative activity) an art form. In this context, the symposium/project generated by Crandall can be categorized as an art form.

Lichtin goes on to state that the interview became an art form as new territories in art were developed: "Dies kann im Zusammenhang mit der Entmaterialisierung des künstlerischen Objekts gesehen werden, der Erweiterung des Kunstbegriffs jenseits der Gattungsgrenzen und mit der Ausdehnung hin zur Konzeptkunst. Mit dem Einsatz von Sprache, Aktion und neuen Medien war ein traditioneller Künstlerbegriff zur Diskussion gestellt. Die Diskussion über die Rolle des künstlerischen Objekts, insbesondere die Problematik seiner Ausstellbarkeit, war von der Reflexion über die Funktion des Künstlers nicht mehr zu trennen."[253] "New media" is cited here as one of the

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[252] In this time period the communicative activity becomes not just an aside to artistic activity but there are moments of mergence. The interview, the conversation, the lecture—an abundance of the most varied verbal forms of communication become themselves an important object of art. The interview becomes an art form. (my translation) Lichtin, *Künstlerinterview*, 73.

[253] This can be seen as related to the dematerialization of the art object, the expansion of the definition of art beyond the borders of genre and with the stretching into concept art. With the adoption of language, action and new media a traditional definition of the artist was put up for discussion. The discussion on the role of the art object, especially the problematics of its ability to be exhibited, could no longer be separated from the function of the artist. (my translation) Ibid.

factors that put the traditional definition of the artist and his (or her) function up for discussion. In the 1960s and 70s it not only needed explaining as an art form that re-purposes mass media technology for art; the role of the one who creates it as being an artist versus a television producer or technician (or simultaneously all of these things) needed to be newly defined. The role of the object and the role of the artist, Lichtin states, can no longer be separated. As art using new technologies as artistic media has grown into an unquestioned form of art, artists have also become more established as theorists, taking their roles as artist-theorist into deeper territory.

Filled with interviews, original artist texts and other materials such as artist's work sketches, diagrams, drawings or "found text." the Edith-Ruß-Haus readers are not complete works of art but contain a continuation of the artwork being visualized by the institution. They are a reflection of the artist-theorist as a communicator, narrating his or her own story of art through and joined with the voice of the institution.

Cultural Questioner

Focusing on interviews as its mode of narrating with publications, the institution puts itself and the artist in the role of cultural questioner, one who assumes the task of scrutinizing and analyzing the behaviors, beliefs and characteristics of society. This has a doubling effect for Avi Mograbi's reader at the Edith-Ruß-Haus because the interview is a series of questions put to the artist while the content of the conversation revolves around Mograbi's activity as a questioner of boundaries: between the genres of fictional and documentary film as well as between Jews and Arabs in Israel. The exhibition also highlights the artist as a cultural questioner who uses that role for his own sociopolitical ends.

Lichtin notes a new role for the artist as the one who questions the nature of art from the perspective of one responsible for the production of culture: "Der Beitrag des Künstlers für die Gesellschaft wurde neu definiert. Joseph Kosuth formulierte diesen folgendermassen: 'I think to be an artist now means to question the nature of art – that's what being "creative" means to me because that includes the whole responsibility of the artist as a person: the social and

political as well as the cultural implications of his or her activity.'"[254] The idea of artists having a special sensibility for contemporary society and, aware of the social, political and cultural impact of their work, taking the role of cultural leaders is a prominent characteristic of many twentieth century art movements. The Futurists' embrace of destruction, the Surrealists dreams of transformation and feminist artists demand for action are notable moments. Heading directly into politics, Joseph Beuys assumed the artist-as-shaman role in his practice and later fused it with the image of political (oppositional) leader in the political organizations he founded.

The artist as questioner, critic and ultimately a socio-political, cultural agent is brought out in the question and answer format of the interview. A demonstration of this is contained in the Avi Mograbi reader for the Edith-Ruß-Haus. Mograbi is an Israeli filmmaker and oppositional activist working extensively inside and outside of his country. His mid-career retrospective exhibition at the Edith-Ruß-Haus showcased how he crosses genre lines between fiction and documentary film to create a separate art form. His art is political, but unlike the inclusion of Kein Mensch ist Illegal in *Totally Covered*, Mograbi's work does not occupy the art institution solely as a vehicle for his political message but as a filmmaker and visual artist. His exhibition questioned political and filmic truths. It posited that "fiction" might tell a clearer truth and that some "truths" are eventually revealed as fictions. The artist's underlying political message about Arab-Jewish relations never supersedes his art as a filmmaker. He is a dual communicator on the subjects of politics and film.

Mograbi protested in the 1980s as an active member of the refusists movement "Yesh Gevul," lobbied for his son Shaul Mograbi-Berger (who was jailed in 2005 as a conscientious objector refusing to serve in the Israeli army), and in 2002 became a member of the Ta'ayush Arab and Jewish organization. Mograbi described his political stance upon being questioned for the Edith-Ruß-Haus interview: "[Ta'ayush is] dedicated to creating a dialogue and joint, non-violent actions by Israelis and Palestinians, and to humanitarian support in the occupied territories, confronting the police and the military who usually declare

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[254] The contribution of the artist to society would be re-defined. Jospeh Kosuth formulated this as follows: . . ." (my translation) Ibid.
[254] Ibid.

the area a 'closed military zone'"[255] This creation of a dialogue in the political groups with which he aligns himself extends to his artwork. It is difficult to separate personal subjectivity, the interpretation of current and historical events, and political commitment. Mograbi establishes a lateral movement, rather than a hierarchy, between these sources and forces. It is not possible to pinpoint Mograbi's work as singly art or singly politics because they coalesce.

The texts of the reader reflect this fusion: the curator's introduction contextualizes Mograbi as a political artist, an essay by the artist attempts to sort out the fictional from the documentary, and a conversational interview is held between curator and artist in which Mograbi discusses the political and artistic motivations behind each work screened in the exhibition. The artwork is his cultural commentary in filmic form, and the reader becomes commentary in written form. Mograbi's essay and interview give him the opportunity to narrate his artwork, which features him on screen as a narrator of the social and political state of relations between Arabs and Jews in relation to Israel.

Mograbi works in many variations of the documentary that range from recording an action to "fictional documentary" that mixes real and staged scenes. The artist aims to formulate a "greater truth" through a genre, one typified by the confrontational and personal style of the filmmaker Michael Moore (who never admits to the fictionality of what he does) or Errol Morris, whose truths can best be attained through fiction. The exhibition was installed as "black boxes" with closed doors and seating reminiscent of the multiplex cinema or a documentary film festival. Mograbi's most traditional documentary film records him in a phone conversation with a Palestinian friend whose home is being entered by Israeli soldiers in *Wait, It's the Soldiers, I have to Hang Up Now* (2002). *Relief* (1999) is best described as video art made by the visual abstraction of documentary footage of a front-line clash between a Palestinian crowd and a line of Israeli police. Short film was represented by *Deportation* (1989). Mograbi's most well-known work falls within the genre of "fictional documentary": *How I Learned to Overcome My Fear and Love Arik Sharon* (1997) and *Happy Birthday Mr. Mograbi* (1999). Lastly, the exhibition screened a work difficult to categorize,

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[255] Rosanne Altstatt and Avi Mograbi, "True Documentary: A conversation with Avi Mograbi" *Avi Mograbi (fictional documentary)*, ed. Rosanne Altstatt (Frankfurt/Main: Revolver-Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, 2003), 19.

The Reconstruction (The Danny Katz Murder Case) (1999). Mograbi's interview attempts to label it with documentary but none materializes:

> [Rosanne Altstatt:] Quite a few artists make documentaries that are very much in the journalistic tradition, and present them in an art context. Many of these works are on current topics such as genetic engineering or globalization, for example. What's interesting is how the practice of art and activism from the 1960s and 1970s is being applied today – with mixed results. A lack of a journalistic background and knowledge of the history of documentary film makes artists' documentary works questionable. Was this a problem with your journalistic video *The Reconstruction* (1999), in which you reconstruct the murder of a young Jewish-Israeli boy and the possible coercion of confessions from five convicted Palestinians? Has your work in 'fictional documentary' caused a loss of credibility in your journalistic work?
>
> [Avi Mograbi:] When I made *The Reconstruction* I did not see myself as an artist taking a journalistic task. Actually, I was not sure at the time that I was an artist at all. I was not a journalist either, *The Reconstruction* is my only journalistic effort if this is indeed what it is. I read an article written by an old friend of mine, Avigdor Feldman, who was the attorney of the five that were convicted of the murder of Danny Katz and was taken by it immediately. I called him up and asked to see the reconstruction tapes of the murder that were discussed in depth in the article. Watching the six hour tapes that were mostly in Arabic and using a Hebrew transcript took me a long time as it was hard to follow in detail without subtitles. I then started borrowing portfolios from my friend's office containing the testimonies and interrogations that made the police's case. A few months later I was an expert in the case and had learned everything that could be learned about it.

When I decided to make the film I was not thinking of it as a journalist nor an artist, I was a truth seeker. …

Since it was a case of life and death – on one hand there was a dead youth and on the other five convicts that may have been in jail for a crime they did not commit – I had to take extreme precautions in depicting the story as to not make any mistakes that might harm the possibility of exposing the truth. I chose to tell the story in a dry research oriented manner hoping to create a strong feeling of credibility with the audience. I wanted the audience to have doubts concerning the truth value that lies in the case and not as to the credibility of the one presenting it. But wasn't this just another way to fool the audience to believe that what they see is a depiction of the truth? Wouldn't it have been more truthful to tell the story in a less dry manner and allow the audience to draw the ambiguity of the case from the way it was told? Was I making an artistic decision when I decided what style of storytelling to use in depicting the case? Was it a journalistic decision? I am not sure it was any of those. I felt I had to tell the truth and at that certain moment this was the way I thought it should be done. Today I would probably have done it differently, not that I have reservations as to what I have done, but I am a different person now and I know more about the evasive nature of truth. But it was truth that I was looking for and it is truth that is so hard to capture.[256]

As Mograbi explains, *The Reconstruction* is an animal of a different stripe: not quite art, not quite journalism, not quite film, not quite evidence, not quite truth. It fits into the genre of television reportage "reconstruction," in which scenes of a crime are played by actors, but Mograbi's film uses "the original videotaped reconstructions of the murder performed by the defendants in which they admit

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[256] Ibid., 29-30.

their guilt."[257] The filmmaker ends up describing it as a vehicle for "the truth" while freely admitting that it is the truth as he sees it—an educated truth, but that truth can never be fully separated from subjectivity. His film and video work demonstrates this in all of its complexity while his voice in written form tries to peel apart the complexity. The failure to do so resultantly buttresses the complexity of the screened work.

The question and answer modus is not limited to the interview between Mograbi and the curator of his exhibition. His essay lays out his thoughts on fictional documentary through musing questions he puts to himself. Readers benefit by being privy to his thought process and coming to understand that they are not alone in having questions about his work. The artist questions it himself. In his essay, Mograbi manages to "undefine" the categories of fiction and documentary in which he works by questioning definitions. A blur between genres is created: "What makes a film a documentary on the one hand, and what makes it a fiction on the other hand? What about all those films that are situated in between? Why and for whom should one make a distinction between the various genres?"[258] He answers with a statement on his own position: "I am inclined to think that documentaries should basically be defined as films whose aim is to present a truth or rather a reality. But unlike journalistic truth or reality, which is mainly factual, I believe that documentary films seek to present a truth or a reality on a different level. In this respect, that reality may indeed be factual but also more complex and to a certain degree more abstract."[259] His questions suggest that documentaries are made not only for constituent parties in their subject matter but constituent parties of filmmakers. The inclination toward subjectivity is turned toward value judgments in the next line: "But the main question is whether the distinction between documentary and fiction films is a mere technicality or whether it is based on a value judgment."[260] What Mograbi calls "value judgments" come to mean relevance:

[257] "The Reconstruction: synopsis," MUBI, accessed November 19, 2011, http://mubi.com/films/the-reconstruction.

[258] Mograbi, "Untitled," in Altstatt, *Avi Mograbi*, 13.

[259] Ibid.

[260] Ibid.

Is the documentary film being examined not on its technical merits as a presenter of truth (did the event actually take place or didn't it), but rather on the value-based merits of that truth (worthy or not worthy of discussion)? Is the distinction between fiction and documentary only a classifying one or is it meant to evaluate the film in terms of its worthiness? Often one feels that many documentarists advocate the 'purity of genre' because they believe that documentary films are morally superior to those of the other kind, since the things they are dealing with are more important to man and mankind than those dealt with by 'just a fiction movie'.[261]

Mograbi unmasks aesthetics as a factor in categorization: "Must it look like a documentary in order to be worthy of the title? Is there a kind of bon ton of authentic appearance, a kind of stylistic indulgence in the casual, the incidental, the unplanned, the documentary?"[262] Finally, in a the-hell-with-it-all gesture, the filmmaker brings fiction into the fold of documentary: "And what about those unmistakably and self-proclaimed fiction films which, although there is no need to investigate the facts they display, present us with a refined, illuminating, intellectually challenging, 'worthy of discussing' picture of reality? Who the hell cares to which genre does *Apocalypse Now* belong?"[263] Mograbi's writing style is one of posited questions, which is what he does in his film and video as well. He questions the authority of biblical verse to dictate political policy, the ability of a "regular guy" to resist majority opinion, "remixes" filmic documents prepared for court, and poses rhetorical questions on whether what has become the norm in how Arabs and Jews treat each other is ultimately beneficial for the good of everyone involved. His questioning of the status quo is not limited to cultural commentary on Israeli-Palestinian relations. They also apply to the narrative film-documentary film split. Mograbi's Edith-Ruß-Haus reader carried forth his role as a questioner by giving him a format designed around questioning while reinforcing the institution by proxy as a cultural and societal questioner.

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[261] Ibid., 15-16.
[262] Ibid., 15.
[263] Ibid., 13-16.

Evolution of the Artist's Voice through Different Forms of Interview

The ways in which artists perceive and use the interview has changed over the past half-century are illuminated in a comparison of two artworks, each considered a self-interview by the artist. The first work is a Robert Rauschenberg "combine," a term he invented to describe painting combined with objects, entitled *Interview* (1955, fig. 4.2). The second is *IY-IY-IY-IY-IY! (Interview Yourself!)*, an Internet art project of artists' self-interviews on the website plagiarist.org, which was "live" from 2001 until 2002 (fig. 4.3).[264]

One of Rauschenberg's early combines, *Interview* is a rectangular wall piece that houses a brick, a fork, a softball, a nail, a found painting, a found drawing, string, lace, an envelope, a found letter, fabric, photographs, printed reproductions, toweling, and newspaper. Every surface has been painted and transformed by the artist. A wooden door on hinges is hung down the length of the piece, left of center, and stands open. The open door implies that the interview referred to in the title is a glimpse into the artist's studio and its treasures.[265] The artist implies that everything one could learn about him and his art should be gleaned from the objects in this cabinet. The voice of the artist is metaphoric, heard "speaking" through imagery; this interview remains on the cusp of language and is not to exceed a work titled to reflect its function, *Interview*. Rauschenberg reveals himself through the visualization of the artwork and suggests that the studio interview—a favorite site for curators and journalists who create a portrait of the artist in his environment—is unnecessary.

Rauschenberg suggests that the mediator could be eliminated by offering his artwork as an interview directly with the viewer while plagiarist.org's *IY-IY-IY-IY-IY* cuts out the middleman in favor of written self-interpretation. The "IY" in the title stands for "Interview Yourself," a play on the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) movement. Plagiarist was originally an anonymous website for "ripping off other people's works without being detected."[266] It soon hosted Internet art and

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[264] "IY-IY-IY-IY-IY," plagiarist.org, accessed July 21, 2012, http://plagiarist.org/iy/.

[265] For a comprehensive description and interpretation of *Interview*, see Roni Feinstein, *Robert Rauschenberg: The Silkscreen Paintings 1962-64* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1990), 23.

[266] "plagiarist.org," Amy Alexander, accessed May 23, 2012, http://amy-alexander.com/projects/internet-art/plagiarist-org.html.

served as artist Amy Alexander's Web page.[267] *IY-IY-IY-IY-IY* is a website and an art project that is open for artists to publish self-interviews. Its tagline, "Interview Yourself - Celebrity Interviews the way Warhol used to do 'em - only cheaper," makes the connection to Warhol, his magazine *Interview*, and the futility of celebrity in the Internet age.[268] The names of participating artists are listed and linked to their interviews (fig. 4.4). It is a "combine" of a different sort: aggregate action, interviews, editorial work, curatorial initiative, artwork and journalism. Working largely outside the art market/gallery system, media art has historically been largely in the hands of the artist to distribute the work and disseminate the concepts involved. Merging the roles of art creator, exhibitor/presenter, promoter and theorist makes the artist into a one-man-band or DIY enterprise. Artists working in this mode carry a heavy burden since one person fills many jobs, but it can create a very direct connection between artist and audience. Technology and a definition of art that includes verbal communication have made it possible. This merging of roles is usually offset by a new network of artists working in similar situations. As a block, they have a larger presence than any single artist and, theoretically, can more easily gain the attention of an artworld outside the Internet, thus working in several circles at once.

The self-published, self-conducted interview circumvents the question of whether the interviewer is asking tough or critical questions or passing judgments by giving both roles in the interviewer/interviewed dialogue to the subject. In Lovink's case, his self-interview is a witty introduction to his role as editor and an explanation of what went into choosing who else is featured in the book. With *IY-IY-IY-IY-IY*, the idea of access, exclusivity, and interviewed subjects as having a chosen status is undermined completely. The "About" section of *IY-IY-IY-IY-IY* explains that this project was conceived as an antidote to "Net art critics . . . [having] created a new Art Star System – a whole new Art World accidentally spawned as we were fleeing the old one!"[269] It proposes that this project "subverts the Net Art World Institution, and makes everyone a star.... or,

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[267] Ibid.

[268] "About IY-IY-IY-IY-IY… ," plagiarist.org, accessed May 23, 2012, http://plagiarist.org/iy/about.html.

[269] Ibid.

uh, makes nobody a star, depending on how you want to look at it... it finally gives the interviewees a chance to answer the kinds of questions they *wish* they'd be asked about their work" and pushes artists to narrate their own history in the making with the call "History awaits!"[270] While claiming to subvert an art star system, however, it does seem to be making a play for the re-installation of the artist at the top of the hierarchy of interpretive voices. Yet *IY-IY-IY-IY-IY* reminds the reader that it "doesn't preclude critics from doing interviews just sort of er, open sources the interview process."[271]

Interview and *IY-IY-IY-IY-IY* illustrate the evolving perception of the artist's role and character. The former takes place in the space of the "combine," which is publicly displayed but remains private behind the veils of imagery. It is revelation both in the doubled sense of having a "revelation" through experiencing an artwork and the artist "revealing" himself through the interview as well as the art. By displaying things one might find in his studio and the painterly messiness contained in the painting that one associates with the work of an artist, Rauschenberg is in essence granting the viewer access in the form of a studio visit and let in on the exclusivity of the interview situation.

A peek into that studio was granted in 1958 with a photograph of Rauschenberg in his cleaned-up environ, looking serious in a dark turtleneck sweater and standing at the center of several finished and unfinished works, with *Interview* at the far left (fig. 4.5). This photograph functions as an artist profile and supports the stereotype of the brooding artist-genius alone with his mysterious creation, his mind holding the answers to the universe of art he has created.

IY-IY-IY-IY-IY speaks from a post-studio perspective, one that does not necessitate the home studio and creates through the website an "open source" environment in which users—in this case artists—can conceivably contribute from anywhere inside or outside of a studio. Everyone with Internet access has access to the publication process (as artists) and to the publication (as readers). *IY-IY-IY-IY-IY* is genre-blurring because it is journalistic work and artwork at

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[270] Ibid.
[271] Ibid.

once, even inviting critics to join in the self-interviews.[272] It further levels the two categories by using the same medium and format for each. After reading an interview, entering an artist's name into a search engine will immediately call up her works, side-by-side in another window. These artists bring their voices as artists as well as purveyors of information about their own work—and access to it —so very near to each other on the Internet that the differences between these roles are barely discernible.

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[272] Ibid.

Chapter 5

SOUNDING AN ATMOSPHERE

The media art institution is situated in an artworld that is conscious of artists who partially bypass the art establishment of criticism and institutions with their own writing and presentation outside of museums. As seen in the above example, the artists engaged in plagiarist.org pull the role of theorist to themselves. However, none of this happens in a sphere separate from the institution but in one information-filled atmosphere. The media art institution is a permeable body in this information-filled atmosphere that contributes to the production of art and meaning within the current technocultural environment. It is a narrating voice that sounds out this atmosphere as it sounds out into it, joining with the voices of the artists it presents. During an age of post-studio production, the institution is sometimes not just presentation site but production site, doubling as the artist's studio for in situ artworks. This united process and presentation fuses the artist's and the institution's voices in public perception. That institutional voice has a "body" in the sense of the institution's buildings, but it is acousmatic in that it is simultaneously disembodied as its narrative reaches beyond its walls and it does not appear as a human counterpart. It holds an authoritative power, which both intimidates and invites visitors to the physical and mental spaces it creates to reflect upon, participate in and affirm their own experiences as they are played out in art. When they choose to enter they become part of a collective (even if their experience is private) in a social space defined by the institution through its program, by the artworks presented and by the visitors themselves. Each contributes and "inter-reacts" to an information-filled atmosphere that produces a space of awareness, which envelops and permeates those who enter the arena of the media art institution.

Post-Studio Production and Collaborative Voice

The shift toward post-studio production involves decentralized, process-based artwork that draws its energy from contexts other than studio environments.[273] The studio-artist-museum/institution relationship from the perspective of the collaborative voices of artist and institution is of particular relevance to the media art institution. The creative tension produced between physical and virtual presentation and production spaces is exactly where the institution emerges as a significant agent for the discussion of technoculture.

A similar shift is found in the use of the Internet as a medium of production and presentation site in one. Until recently the artist's voice, as illustrated above in the discussion of Robert Rauschenberg's *Interview*, was perceived as speaking from the studio and through the artwork. *IY-IY-IY-IY-IY* of plagiarist.org demonstrates a removal of that voice from the studio of the "creative genius" and spreads it across many artists, the only identifiable site of production for each being a website. This dislocates the voice from physical space, implying a degree of disembodiment, and associates the site of presentation with a communal site of production. Each artist taking part in *IY-IY-IY-IY-IY* contributes individually from a studio, an office, perhaps an Internet café, but they produce collectively to the interview site, making themselves part of *plagiarist.org*.

When the institution serves as a production site for new work, the artist's voice speaks through the artwork presented on site and from the institution, which influences its rendering and sometimes its content. If the exhibition (or presentation) is an institution's utterance and this is the first discernible place

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[273] For recent statements by a multitude of artists, curators and critics on their differing relationships to the artist's studio—from secluded private workspace to nonexistent and everything in between, see Mary Jane Jacob and Michelle Grabner, eds., *The Studio Reader: On the Space of Artists* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). For its affects on art school, see Juli Carson, "Curriculum and Practice in the Age of Post-Studio Art Production," in *Re-thinking the Contemporary Art School,* ed. Brad Buckley (Nova Scotia: NSCAD University Press, 2009), 90-100. Among the exhibitions reacting to the changing artist-studio-institution relationship is *Production Site: The Artist's Studio Inside-Out* at Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago (February-May 2010). Its curator, Dominic Molon, blogged on the recent spate of books and exhibitions on the subject: "Perhaps the traditional idea of the studio is being given one last hurrah of examination and attention, before more spatially-ambivalent or presentation-site-specific approaches to process become the norm." "Producing Production Site: Revisiting and Revisualizing the Artist's Studio," *Studio Chicago*, January 24, 2010, accessed February 2, 2102, http://studiochicago.blogspot.com/2010/01/producing-production-site-revisiting.html.

from where the artist speaks as well, the artist and institution speak with unified voices in a shared production and presentation site. To formulate it as a musical metaphor, each sings its own choral part, sounding against and with the other, their voices coming together as the song emanates from them as one body, reverberating in one sound arena and in the ears of the audience.

Monika Oechsler's "voice installation" *At the Far and Farthest Point,* which was produced at the Edith-Ruß-Haus, can be applied as a metaphor for the co-mingling voices of the artist and the institution in joint production.[274] This artwork is quite literally a chorus of voices. The viewer/listener enters the installation and hears voices from speakers embedded in the walls. With works such as *Farthest Point*, the institution has a part in the collaborative model of production that is not exclusive to media art but is one of its commonly cited characteristics and behaviors.[275] *Farthest Point* reflects the collaborative model in which artists, programmers, designers and other professionals contribute to produce a single artwork, and the institution, in this case, has its own specialized role in this process.

The production began in 2003 with a site visit and Oechsler's subsequent decision to "challenge the space as much as possible."[276] She drew up plans in London to displace the lofty, white, cubic space of the exhibition hall's upper gallery with an asymmetrical, variedly painted space on a false, sloping floor and topped by a low ceiling of gauze. In Oldenburg, she and the Edith-Russ-Haus put out a casting call for local, professional actors from the theater to fill the parts of the installation's voices. The respondents read the artwork's dialogue, replacing the original actors' voices with their own and inflecting their speech as the artist, back in Oldenburg, directed. The dialogue for the artwork had been lifted and re-mixed from television and film by Oechsler. The digital recordings were made and remixed by the Edith-Ruß-Haus' technician, Frank Möcklinghoff. The walls

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[274] Oechsler first coined the term *voice installation* to describe her artwork *Solar Plexus* (2003). Hannelore Paflik-Huber, "Our Minds Never Stop Working: Hannelore Paflik-Huber in conversation with Monika Oechsler," in *Monika Oechsler: At the far and farthest point*, eds. Rosanne Altstatt and Revolver (Frankfurt/Main: Revolver – Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, 2004), 8.

[275] "New Media art is often characterized as process-oriented, time-base dynamic, and real-time; participatory, collaborative, and performative; modular, variable, generative, and customizable. These features need not all surface in a particular artwork but can appear in varying combinations." Paul, introduction to *New Media Art in the White Cube and Beyond*, 4.

[276] Paflik-Huber, "Our Minds Never Stop Working," 11.

and floor of the installation were built by workers from a municipal social program. Speakers and the digital system that steers the recordings were mounted behind the walls of the installation. This was a crooked room nested inside the "white cube" of the exhibition hall and visitors must enter the installation's space through a smaller door in order to experience the artwork (fig. 5.1).

The aura attached to the architecture of the Edith-Ruß-Haus as a classical art temple was literally walled-off, yet not sealed off. With a suspension of disbelief *Farthest Point* would be thought of as contained and separated from the institution—far away. Yet, on another level, the installation remained part of the institution: visitors approached and entered the building, walked across the first third of the upper gallery to reach *Farthest Point* and then passed into it. This is a progression inward (and back out when they leave), not a progression beyond. Once inside, the installation was detectable as a physical construct that is another section of the institution since flashing theater lights, one of the installation's effects, and the building's scaffolding to which they were attached were visible through the gauze ceiling.

By opening night, the artist and the institution had formulated a joint "speech act." Visitors crossed the thresholds of the Edith-Ruß-Haus and then the installation into a melee of voices: The voices of the installation compete to be heard by the visitor; they are literal utterances in broken dialogues. Using Ferguson's critical idiom, visitors also "hear" an utterance of the institution narrating another chapter in its story of art. "What are they trying to tell us?" would be a question thought by an avid listener and it is one that can be applied in two instances: when deciphering the installation's dialogue and deciphering the meaning of the artwork. A third possible instance is the question of what the institution is trying to tell in its story of art.

Producing a Voice: Acousmêtre

The walls speak in *Farthest Point.* This gives the installation a sense of being alive and the power of an unseen being. Its power lies in the combination of voice and no visible human body, more of a supernatural authority. A comparison of this to the institution's "voice" and its power to tell a story of art reveals how this authority is acousmatic. Monika Oechsler's voice installation shows the power of the *acousmêtre,* a term coined by film theorist Michel Chion in his study of sound in film, as an unseen character in physical and mental space. This relates to the art institution as a "speaking/uttering" character, an institutional acousmêtre.

Chion develops a theory of the acousmêtre for cinema, which he has drawn from Pierre Schaffer's resurrection of the word *acousmatic* as "a sound that is heard without its cause or source being seen."[277] He explains it as a being with a vocal presence: "When the acousmatic presence is a voice, and especially when this voice has not yet been visualized—that is, when we cannot yet connect it to a face—we get a special being, a kind of talking and acting shadow to which we attach the name *acousmêtre*."[278] Chion's focus is on films featuring voices without distinct visual embodiment on screen: the voice of the concealed evil genius in *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*, the mother's chastisements in the mind of Norman Bates during the film *Psycho*, the imperatives issued by an unseen director in *The Magnificent Ambersons,* and the voice of Hal in *2001: A Space Odyssey* who resides throughout the space station's computer in a state of omniscient everywhere and nowhere.[279] These voices are filmic characters that execute power—authorities that drive the narrative.

Oechsler transports the filmic acousmêtre as conceived by Chion into her voice installation. Whereas Chion uses examples of singular acousmêtres in the abovementioned films, *Farthest Point* inserts several bodiless voices into one physical and mental space, not amplifying any one acousmêtric character but intensifying the effect of the many external acousmêtres in the media landscape in order to induce a simulated media neurosis. Oeschler's use of script fragments from television and film dissociates memory of the exact original voice while

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[277] Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema,* ed. and trans. Claudia Grobman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 18; 20.
[278] Ibid., 20.
[279] Ibid., 20; 44.

retaining the familiar of the dialogue. The lines sound vaguely recognizable but the new voices and context make them harder to assign to a previously seen image. In the unstable environment of *Farthest Point*, they tend to slip into the mind as one's own thoughts.

In the area closest to the installation's entrance, a disembodied voice says, "Open the door," which seems to be answered with "I'm sorry, I can't do that."[280] These are familiar lines spoken by Hal in *2001* that were re-recorded by an Oldenburg voice actor in the German language translation. Though Oechsler has made no direct reference to Chion, she uses this exemplary filmic acousmêtre in the installation, referencing the power (and the threat) of this presence. This initial two-line dialogue is where the narrative ends and the overall impression of a melee of disjointed conversations begins.

Voices distinguish themselves once the listener becomes acclimated to the sound environment. Much like the visual experience of entering a cinema where the eyes must to adjust to the light, the ears go through the same experience here. Yet Oechsler avoids allowing the listener to focus. Voices may come forth from the walls or fall into the background, but they are always present, biding for one's attention.

The installation was designed to keep visitors physically off-balance with the sloping floor, light occasionally blitzing through the ceiling to interrupt their thought patterns, and narrow, colored niches with sharp corners (figs. 5.2 - 5.4). By moving about the space from one color zone to the next, the viewer/listener locates areas where the voices seem to relate to each other. In a black area, a voice (originally a character from the film *Gattaca*, 1997, but this will only be recognized by the most devoted film enthusiasts) suggests the benevolent dictator, "I have taken the liberty of eradicating any potentially prejudicial conditions."[281] In a blue area participants being interviewed in the "confessional" of a reality show are heard.[282] In the red zone, a CEO shouts questions to motivate his staff, which answers in a drill-team like chorus:

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[280] "Scripts," in Altstatt and Revolver, *Monika Oechsler*, English 22.
[281] Ibid., 26.
[282] Ibid., 18.

What are we going to do?

Rock them!

When are we going to do it?

Every day!

How are we going to do it?

Every way! [283]

Anger, motivation, pressure, doubt, but also ambition, sympathy and seduction can all be found in the voices of *At the Far and Farthest Point*. [284] The installation's voices emanate from the single artwork as a multiplicitous acousmêtre. This is also true of the institution as it narrates its story of art. The artworks it presents reflect a range of thoughts and experiences, narrated by the institution. It is not a tight narration but one filled with holes and jumps of thought as it skips from one facet of media art to the next. Yet unlike *Farthest Point*, the institution does not voice everything all at once. It orders its elements into understandable units as it serially presents them to its audiences. Though it documents, the institution's narrative has similar characteristics to an oral history that weaves from one tale to the next and associatively trails off on tangents.

   The visitor who enters the institution's arena is surrounded by a piece of the narrative, "listening" to it from her own perspective, which is being guided by the presentation. There are several layers of "listening" for the attentive visitor and Oechsler's thoughts on the near and the far in *Farthest Point* bring to mind a schema for the workings of the institution: "The space and sound are designed so that visitors can immerse themselves in an intense atmosphere. Visitors are surrounded by disembodied voices that seem to appear out of nowhere. The architecture of the space helps to keep all external elements at a distance so that visitors can completely concentrate on what they're hearing in their heads. If one concentrates hard enough, one can experience the near and the far at the same time. It's possible to hear one voice clearly while others only murmur in the

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[283] Ibid., 26.

[284] Altstatt, "At the Far and Farthest Point" and "Scripts," in Altstatt and Revolver, *Monika Oechsler*, 4-7; 17-24.

background."[285] The institution is itself a space where "visitors can immerse themselves in an intense atmosphere." As an architectural construction as well as a constructed space of interaction, it does not exactly "keep all external elements at a distance"; rather it creates a permeable enclosure where visitors can concentrate on what the artwork is "saying" while joined with the "voice" of the institution's narrative. These voices act together as "the near and the far," oscillating back-and-forth in the mind of the aware visitor as she "listens" to the narrative of the story of art being told. The multiple acousmêtres of *Farthest Point* lure visitors further into the installation's space, making them into psychological participants as they become physically and mentally immersed in the installation. The visitor's inner voice—the silent narrative in the mind—is also at play in the movement of the near and the far, intermingling with the others. The mind of the visitor pushes or pulls the voices of the artworks and institution nearer or further from her own thoughts while formulating more thoughts and producing another experience in the institution.

The institution is what can be called here a *silent acousmêtre*, an oxymoron that best describes the art institution's voice, which is silent to the ears but resonates in the consciousness of the attentive visitor as the institution's utterance. The concept of acousmêtre can be applied to the voice of the art institution as Ferguson frames it in rhetorics. It is not ascribed to a human body but rather to a speech act: be it in gallery space, in cyberspace, in publications or in a geographic region's public space.

The art institution's silent acousmêtre differs in its spatial relationships from Chion's "radio-acousmêtre," a studio speaker who can never be seen by the listener at home, or the "theater-acousmêtre" heard "at a remove from the stage."[286] Its acousmêtre is related to the filmic acousmêtre in that it is simultaneously inside and outside the presentation as it is being experienced: "'offscreen,' outside the image, and at the same time *in* the image: the loudspeaker that's actually its source is located behind the image in the movie theater."[287] The art institution's silent-acousmêtre is present as a voice outside the "frame" of the presentation as the organizing authority that chooses what to

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[285] Paflik-Huber, "Our Minds Never Stop Working," 9.
[286] Chion, *Voice in Cinema*, 21-22.
[287] Ibid., 23.

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present and the voice that "speaks" through publications, press materials and other explanatory writing. The silent-acousmêtre is also inside the presentation as it narrates its story of art through the speech acts of its presentations. Unlike the voiceover narrator in a film, this institutional acousmêtre does not speak at a complete remove nor are visitors always entirely at a distance. They are participants to varying degrees, dependent upon the artwork presented and the inclusiveness of the program's format. The institution's silent acousmêtre narrates while emphatically occupying the premises.

This partial remove is the hallmark of the art institution's power as silent acousmêtre. It works similarly to what Chion described in film: "Being in the screen and not, wandering the surface of the screen without entering it, the acousmêtre brings disequlibrium and tension."[288] The tension created by the filmic acousmêtre is comparative to the art institution's silent acousmêtre in that many visitors are wary of entering the space of the institution because they are afraid of being silently judged, worried they will not understand what is being presented and may not belong there as a participant in the realm of this art world. This is one reason for threshold fear; a reason why people flock to the art institution during citywide "museum night" events so that they may overcome it and perform the ritual of following the route of the institution's programmed narrative.[289] Apart from enjoying the hubbub, the crowd provides them with anonymity—a chance to hide from the acousmêtre's perceived authority of judgment.

Chion points out that the acousmêtre is not simply a vaguely threatening presence but also has a positive function: "[The acousmêtre] invites the spectator to go see, and he can be an invitation to the loss of the self, to desire and fascination."[290] Chion's characterization of the filmic acousmêtre again applies to the art institution. As it "wanders the surface" of its presentations, the art institution-acousmêtre invites the visitor to become a participant in the desire

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[288] Ibid., 24.

[289] In the museum context, "threshold fear" refers to "the constraints people feel that prevent them from participating in activities meant for them." *Civilizing the Museum: The Collected Writings of Elaine Heumann Gurian* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 15. On exhibition viewing as the performance of a ritual, see Duncan, "Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship," 88-101.

[290] Chion, *Voice in Cinema*, 24.

and fascination that art can awaken. It can be an invitation to the loss of self as well as to the affirmation of self and—as reviewed above—a confirmation of experiences that are perceived by the self to be singular but are in fact communal.

Oechsler states that her artworks "address group identity; they don't rely on individual experiences. I would like viewers to be able to see themselves theoretically as part of a group, but they remain external observers at the same time. My aim is not that viewers identify with particular protagonists, but that there is a balance in the area in between. As a subjective being, a viewer should experience the works as someone affected by them, but still be strong enough to maintain a critical self-confidence."[291] This last sentence can just as easily be said of two levels of engagement the art institution may desire for the visitor: one in which the presentation "speaks" to the visitor and a second in which "a critical self-confidence" enables reflection on the work as well as on personal experience as it relates to the artwork or takes part in it.

Producing Physical and Mental Spaces

Farthest Point is a representation of mental space, rendered as physical and in the art institution's gallery. This work of producing art in order to reproduce reality has the power to affirm human experiences such as the penetrating effects of the media landscape on the human psyche. Anything that reproduces a version of reality is actually producing an unrealized reality. The art institution does just that: it uses its narrative machinery to create mental spaces that reflect reality through art while also creating spaces of reflection. It does so by producing physical spaces such as Oechsler's voice installation as well as by producing the space of each presentation, whether exhibition or event. A section from the original description of *Farthest Point* from the exhibition's reader ties together constructed physical space with the simulation of a mental space that the artwork was built to reflect: "What the brain looks like is common knowledge. It has been scientifically dissected and diagrammed. Defining the shape of mental space is where art steps in. Within the real, tangible space of the physical installation Monika Oechsler opens the gate to the abstract space of

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[291] Paflik-Huber, "Our Minds Never Stop Working," 10.

where thoughts are shaped."[292] *Farthest Point* does not negate the space of the exhibition hall or willfully close it to the public. Instead, it reconstitutes the space and opens an additional plane of the art institution as a place where one is able to enter and access another mental state.

The distorted mental space Oechsler devised for *Farthest Point* twists the behavior of quiet reflection in a gallery into one filled by myriad voices directed toward the subject, creating a low-grade but constant anxiety. The artist explains the relationship between the experience of art to that of reality in term of producing both: "The background to my works is the question of what reality is in contrast to representation and what that means. Since we don't have direct access to reality other than through descriptions and visualizations made in hindsight we first have to construct reality in order to be able to reflect on it."[293] Each ensuing presentation in the institution's program has the capacity to open and create different types of mental spaces. It reflects the realities of technoculture as viewed through the representations of its presentations while constructing both.

Farthest Point is designed to turn the viewer's attention to the psyche, but there can be no doubt that the visitor is aware of the installation as a physical object. A visitor's footsteps echo in the hollow beneath the particleboard floor where it reaches the height of its tilt. Shadows of the lights and rigging are intentionally left visible through the gauze ceiling. In many ways, walking into the installation is like entering a stage set. On one level, the visitor is made aware of the space as a construct. On another, the artwork asks for the suspension of disbelief in order to enter the mental space it creates. The art institution offers itself to its publics as a possible space for nonduality, where a subject (the visitor) becomes aware of an inner and outer state as a single experience.

Farthest Point is immersive but quite different from virtual reality, where the body seems to dissolve into the environment's digital code when the visitor puts on helmet and gloves to be "transported" into digital space. Certainly, a CAVE—a four to six wall virtual reality system—can be installed in an art institution to present that type of immersive artwork and, depending upon the

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292 Altstatt, "At the Far and Farthest Point," 4.
293 Paflik-Huber, "Our Minds Never Stop Working," 13.

artwork itself, it can be a fantastic example of what is prototyped for the future. The type of immersive experience the *Farthest Point* production offers reflects the state of the current atmosphere people experience today. It is an intermingling of the real and the virtual, less "augmented" in the sense of another layer of digital information on top of physical reality than comingled on all levels of experience.

For *Farthest Point*, digital technology is used to reproduce and synchronize its sound, enabling an experience that is difficult to achieve with purely analog means. The body moves in a tangible space built in an art institution, where audiences are conditioned to reflect, while the mind is influenced by aural, digital means. The installation is effective precisely because it is not futuristic but created as an exaggeration of current mediated experience.

Producing a Collective Experience, Aural Architecture

The institution produces presentations of artworks for its many publics and it produces opportunities for collective experience. Mark Bain's *Sonusphere* (2003), an in situ, sculptural, and aural artwork, was just such a production. It is employed here to describe the media art institution as a site for the production of collective experience—not directly as an acousmatic experience but as a metaphor of the encompassing effects of sound. The aural qualities of *Sonusphere* are essential to its power to penetrate the body and its visual components alter the perception of the institution's space by playing with scale. With *Farthest Point* the desire to hear the installation's voices draws visitors inside its nooks and crannies, those voices then seeping into the visitor's mind. With *Sonusphere*, low, pulsating sound and its reverberation in the bodies of the visitors and the building unite in an aural arena to which everything in the space contributes, everything is connected. Whereas Oechsler's work involves the influence of mass media and the group identity of individuals, Bain's *Sonusphere* actively produced collective experience with sound, drawing from the site's aural architecture.

The system Bain created amplifies the Edith-Ruß-Haus's *aural architecture*, a term that has been elaborated in Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter's *Space's Speak, Are You Listening? Experiencing Aural Architecture* to describe a scenario of composite sounds producing one architectural

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"personality," in the sense that "[t]he composite of numerous surfaces, objects, and geometries in a complicated environment creates an aural architecture. As we hear how sounds from multiple sources interact with the various spatial elements, we assign an identifiable personality to the aural architecture, in much the same way we interpret an echo as the aural personality of a wall."[294] At the Edith-Ruß-Haus the aural architecture has the authority associated with the echoes and reverberations that accompany the tall ceilings and open space of a civic building combined with the noisy clatter of a small industrial hall in the lower gallery.

On the outside, the Edith-Ruß-Haus has a brick façade and is no taller than the houses and other buildings in its neighborhood. Inside, it has more of the visual and aural attributes of a modern museum space. Visitors enter an open gallery, glass doors whoosh closed, and they walk into a single gallery with white walls, a square "footprint" and a ceiling approximately equal in height to the length of each wall. The sound of hard shoe soles will reverberate off the floor and multiple windows and there is a distinct metallic sound to footsteps on the staircase, which also acts as a conduit between the upper and lower galleries for any and all noise—from private (now made public) conversations to sound from the artworks. Should personnel enter from the office building, a heavy fire door slams closed with a hydraulic pull. The elevator can be heard no matter where one stands. For a curator, it is positively maddening because the sound conditions can never be controlled.

By conventional standards, the Edith-Ruß-Haus' architecture has an extremely long reverberation time and qualifies by most standards as having "bad acoustics." However, whether acoustics are good or bad is a matter of taste, depending upon what the one producing sound and the one listening desire. A nineteenth century violinist, for instance, may have appreciated reverberation in a concert hall to seamlessly carry one note into another, although modern taste and corresponding architectural designs have minimized reverberation, and audiences have come to expect this crispness.[295] Similarly, curators at any type of art institution go to great lengths to accommodate artworks with sound in

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[294] Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter, *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening? Experiencing Aural Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 2.
[295] Ibid., 108.

order to ensure that they are heard correctly, do not disturb the space of silent artworks or invade the sound arenas of other works that have their own soundtracks.

For a media art institution, which constantly presents artworks with sound and has a special mandate to do this in the best manner possible, the aural architecture of its facilities are of the utmost importance. Nevertheless, it is difficult to find a media art institution with an architecture that is not in the modern museum's tradition: long, white walls; hard floors; large open spaces, many divided into smaller galleries; and high ceilings. Yet curators and preparators must often retrofit their gallery spaces with carpets and soundproofing or sound–reducing walls in order to accommodate the delicate balance between artworks' sound arenas and visual arenas. For instance, a video installation's sensitive soundtrack may be best suited for a gallery of its own, but this also visually isolates it from other works in an exhibition. If the gallery spaces of an institution have a high level of reverberation, more video niches or subdivided rooms will have to be built or an exhibition will require more monitors with headphones, which is a common but not always a desired visual aesthetic for video exhibitions.

The impetus behind commissioning Mark Bain to produce a sound installation involving the building was a desire to accommodate and amplify the aural personality of the Edith-Ruß-Haus instead of fight it. The site's aural architecture was to be the presentation's source material.[296] A description of *Sonusphere* clarifies how this operated (fig. 5.5): Bain buried seismographic measuring instruments (seismometers) into the grounds outside the Edith-Ruß-Haus and inside the building. The vibrations these extremely sensitive devices pick up were fed into a small sphere suspended between the columns of the lower gallery. It "is a kind of sonic charger made of aluminum and steel with two low frequency transducers that are driven by the amplified signals of the seismometers."[297] Here, the vibrations were mixed and wired to the upper

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[296] The original idea was to commission a number of artists to work with the building's architecture and sound for a multi-part presentation series, but the concept evolved into Bain's solo exhibition.
[297] Mark Bain, quoted in "Sounding out the Terrain: Interview with Mark Bain," in *ArchiSound*, ed. Rosanne Altstatt and Revolver (Frankfurt/Main: Revolver, 2003), unnumbered English.

gallery from where they were broadcast. The broadcasting device is sculptural, a vinyl inflatable functioning as a "pressure envelope that both contains the sound and radiates it through an active pulsation of the air inside a 6-meter inflatable sphere."[298] This light-gray ball in the neutral color scheme of the floor and walls fit just inside the main exhibition hall and was the installation's most striking visual element (fig. 5.6-5.7). Loudspeakers hang inside it, but they are not visible through the opaque vinyl of the sphere. The deep sounds emanating from the loudspeakers slid along the outer skin of the sphere and emanated throughout the hall. They bounced off the walls, collected in the corners, reverberated off the entryway's glass windows and the frieze of windows below the ceiling ten meters above. Vibrations traveled down the metal staircase, causing the steps to shiver. Downstairs, the sound wandered through the gallery space, inevitably brushing back up against the metal sphere that charged and amplified the vibrations being picked up by the seismometers (fig. 5.8).

Anyone entering this sound arena felt it resonate throughout his or her body. When only a few visitors were in the exhibition hall, they were able to detect an abstraction of their footsteps echoing through the space. People standing in the corners were inundated with sound and perhaps slightly uneasy when they walked downstairs with a quivering railing beneath their hands. When the space was crowded, the collective sound made individual movement indistinguishable. A rainstorm was deafening. Little movement was required to be a source of sound. Foot traffic outside on the sidewalk or a lawnmower on the grass in front of the building fed the *Sonusphere*. Their pitch and tone were lost as they were filtered through the seismographic sensors, but the constancy of their rhythms was recognizable. The vibrations were so strong that the artwork—consisting not only of Bain's apparatus but the resonant body of the exhibition hall and everything or everyone contributing vibrations to it—would cause cracks in the walls and eventually bring the building to ruins if the volume of the installation were a little higher or if it were installed for too long.[299]

In his Edith-Ruß-Haus reader, Bain lays out the design of his system as a composition consisting of two levels: a basic ground rhythm and then outside

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[298] Ibid.
[299] Observations of the artworks effects are based on my experience in the exhibition.

sound being improvised by outside sources atop it. First, a base layer of sound was created with a feedback-loop circling within the two-sphere system:

> In the process of making this work I discovered that the idea of resonance could be taken a step further by running the system so that the sphere generates its own signal without any input from the ground sensors. By feeding the output of the smaller sphere into itself there is a potential for the most intense feedback. Using this self-amplifying signal as a base material, I run a simple discerning algorithm that tracks and controls the changing frequencies as they slide around. The sound is perceived as a kind of sonic tug-of-war, a system that fights to stay both in control and out of control at the same time. The objects become a pure sonic formation unto itself. It develops its own self-induced composition and is a reflection of this struggle of amplitude and frequency."[300]

Bain explains that the first layer of sound is created by the *Sonusphere* system itself, with no outside input from the seismometers. It is the core of the artwork, a technological system built as "a pure sonic formation," which Bain describes as a "self-induced composition."

The second layer of sound was devised by adapting and linking the seismometers in order to make seemingly silent materials audible. This is the technology that picks up sounds in the grounds and the building:

> I started to research specialized sensors that are used in seismographic studies and data collection. I found that instead of data collection, I could convert these small devices for audio collection. After building a simple two-channel set up, I found if I magnified the numbers of sensors to strings or arrays, I could greatly increase the sensitivity. . . . I could tap into the strange sounds resident within the materials of structures and land sites. Acting like hypersensitive contact mics, I found this secret world of

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[300] Mark Bain, quoted in "Sounding out the Terrain," unnumbered English.

microsound standing right beneath our feet and containing a quality of sublime heaviness. Using the basic premise that sound travels more efficiently through materials with greater density than air, the sound I captured inside materials had a unique richness containing a mix of all action impacting a site at a specific location. I found that differing materials influenced this mix, acting like filters of translation.[301]

The sounds that the artist searches for are embedded in dense materials, exactly those that would seem static. He uncovers the "unique richness' of sound created by "all action impacting a site at a specific location." These sounds from the earth and the edifice are not at all in a closed system but injected with the improvised movement of man, machine or nature. In summary, the dual layers of sound, one closed and one open, consist of three elements: the technical apparatus joining both spheres, the material environment, and movement—no matter how minute. All of these together produce a collective, reactive system.

A building's aural architecture has a social meaning. For instance, footsteps resounding on bare marble floors reinforce entering the office lobby, government building or cathedral as a public event. Blesser and Salter observe how "[i]n certain religious spaces, [aural attributes] can produce a reverberation that conveys a sense of awe and reverence."[302] A museum building can also be reinforced as a secularized society's sacred space when the sound of visitors reverberates off its stark surfaces and vaulted ceilings. This is the case of the Edith-Ruß-Haus with its high ceilinged gallery space projecting the "awe and reverence" attributed to religious spaces or public buildings with grand halls. Yet the clanging staircase and banging doors add a work-a-day dimension to its aural architecture. It is a gathering space and a working space. This mixed social meaning is also reflected in its visual architecture, its brick buildings (with one attached to a converted house, which is now a government building for culture) and front lawn unassumingly blend in with the residential aspects of the neighborhood, though as a whole the complex takes on an expansive character.

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[301] Mark Bain, "Sonic Architecture," in Altstatt and Revolver, *ArchiSound*, unnumbered English.
[302] Blesser and Salter, *Spaces Speak*, 3.

Mark Bain comes to the media art institution not only as an artist but as an aural architect, someone who "stud[ies], design[s], or manipulate[s] spatial attributes for the purpose of creating aural experiences for others."[303] As an aural architect, Bain literally shakes up its acoustic inheritance as a sacred space for art. As a visual artist, he realigns the gallery spaces' air of monumentality, inserting the large and small spheres to shift spatial perspectives. Blesser and Salter point out how "[v]isual and aural meanings often align and reinforce each other. For example, the visual vastness of a cathedral communicates through the eyes, while its enveloping reverberation communicates through the ears. . . . the visual elegance of a grand opera hall contributes to the artistry of the performance, and the aura of power in a governmental chamber contributes to the importance of speeches presented there."[304] All of this is put to work in most art institutions: the visual vastness and reverberations in its halls, the clean lines of white-walled galleries contributing to the "artistry" of the exhibitions or presentations, and the aura of power imbued on a monumental building—whether it is built of stone or glass.

As an aural architect Bain amplifies the architecture's visual sterility as well as its aural texture by minimizing visual multiplicity and maximizing aural collection. The visual impression is simple: almost colorless shapes, an enormous sphere inside a cube, a small sphere between four cuboidal columns. This is counterbalanced by an aural impression that is complex: the force of the sound runs through those in its aural arena while they become aware of their ability to contribute to the soundscape as a consequence of their movements. By conducting action-reaction experiments such as pounding their feet, aware participants may discern another rhythm in the atmosphere and add another layer of sound. Though it is physically disruptive to the participant as it vibrates through the body, *Sonusphere* causes no disruption between the Edith-Ruß-Haus' aural and visual meanings: it heightens them. Hallowed or awe-inspiring visual and acoustic attributes are pushed together over the top, engulfing visitors in the shared experience of the site's vibrations.

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[303] Ibid., 8.
[304] Ibid., 3.

Bain provided a sonic interface to show how the building and the visitor "inter-react" to each other as dual contributors to something larger than discreet units.[305] Of *Sonusphere* he says, "I suppose this small sphere is a model of the large, you can potentially enter one while the other you can't. It all mimics each other, playing with the scale in relation to the building, the spectator and the ground outside. With this magnification of the site an attempt is made to create a stage of destabilization, a reactive zone or interface between the spectator and the architecture." Who Bain calls the "spectator" should more rightly be called the visitor or contributor if not the participant, for all who enter the *Sonusphere*'s aural arena contribute to it. Of the three characterizations of the site Bain proffers, "a reactive zone" may be the best descriptor—one in which all parties act and react as contributors to and producers of one "atmosphere" in the social space of the art institution.

The architecture of inter-reaction is not only the institution as a physical manifestation, it represents the institution in its entirety as a system. *Sonusphere* is a system that reveals how everything and everyone in the institution's arena contribute to its social space—not only as individuals but cumulatively as a group acting and reacting together to produce sound. As an aural architect, Bain produces a collective experience that demonstrates an ideal of how the art institution can function: as a shared social space to which everyone who enters it participates even if they do so only with their presence. This sharing is a kind of acoustic meshing that lies between the shared experience of listening to a symphonic concert and the active "give-and-take" sharing of concerted exchange.

Producing in an Information-Filled Atmosphere

Sonusphere produces and contributes to an atmosphere while making it audible. It is the name of the installation and of the aural arena—like an aural sphere of influence. It is live sound, not recorded; the simultaneous events of nature and

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[305] Speaking of his concern for "pure experience" and the physicality of *Sonusphere*, Bain cites a desire to reach people directly by provoking their senses, "I wouldn't call it interactive art though, more like inter-reactive. . . . This is where so much interactive art fails, where the brain has to take over and somehow figure out an interface to control what the artist has intended. You lose so much of the experience this way. . . . I think it is ultimately important to hijack the senses, to escape from the purely screenal and deliver something that provokes on other levels." "Sounding out the Terrain," unnumbered English.

culture, which transform the sound of rain into the mechanic rumble of a humidifier and collects the buzz of an electric lawnmower into that same soundpool. The *Sonusphere* incorportes the building as a resonating body that surrounds and inter-reacts with those who enter it. It is a metainstrument playing all the sounds in its arena—and all the sounds in its arena playing *it*—producing an atmosphere of perceptual awareness and active exchange.

This usage of the word *atmosphere* is borrowed from the media theorist Frances Dyson, who describes it as a space of information where interaction—or "inter-reaction" (to use Bain's lexicon)—takes place. She does this as a step forward and away from the body as a boundary:

> The concept of embodiment, as either a site of resistance to technological incorporation, or a site of excess toward which technology will always aim but never arrive, is no longer adequate to represent the realities of technoculture. For the body has given way to the atmosphere—the resonant, information-filled atmosphere as the site for technological deployment. Like the aural, the atmospheric suggests a relationship not only with the body in its immediate space but with a permeable body integrated within, and subject to, a global system: one that combines the air we breathe, the weather we feel, the pulses and waves of the electromagnetic spectrum that subtends and enables technologies, old and new, and circulate, as [the artist Catherine] Richards would say, in the excitable tissues of the heart.[306]

Sonusphere produces the representation of just such an atmosphere. It is a "resonant, information-filled atmosphere" that surrounds and permeates bodies located within the system of its arena. The artwork is a model of the global system Dyson describes as interrelated and always affecting the body. Doubtlessly, the body (or the persons represented by "the body") affects this atmosphere as well.

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[306] Frances Dyson, *Sounding New Media: Immersion and Embodiment in the Arts and Culture* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2009), 16-17.

In the spirit of the supposition that an artwork gains multiple meanings once it has been released into the world, one way to interpret *Sonusphere* in this context is as an aural metaphor for the atmosphere produced at the media art institution. Those who enter its arena become involved in and aware of a media environment that affects them. Visitors/contributors/participants/reflecting spectators or however one chooses to label those who enter the media art institution's arena search to explore this atmosphere through art. With each new presentation, the media art institution produces and contributes to this atmosphere from the social situation of the public institution. Dyson's further description of atmosphere is effective as a model for the media art institution's unification of what is typified as human (mood, emotion) and technological (digital, computational):

> An aural metaphor, 'atmosphere' is evocative of affective states within social situations. The atmosphere in a board meeting, the 'sentiment' of the consumer, the exuberance of Wall Street—all indicate the importance of mood, affect, emotion, and feeling in the outcomes of sociality. Yet the social is the realm of noise and rumor, of pulsing and multiple waves rather than discrete signals, and it moves against technologies and systems (e.g., affective computing) that are oriented toward the individual body. Thinking of atmospheres also return us to the breath, to the continuous and necessary exchange between subject and environment, a movement that forms a multiplicity existing within the space necessary for sound to sound, and for Being, in whatever form, to resonate.[307]

The tension Dyson describes between the social "realm of noise and rumor" and "technologies and systems . . . oriented toward the individual body" exists within Dyson's global, information-filled atmosphere and is played out in the program of the media art institution, in an exchange between "subject and environment."

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[307] Ibid., 17.

It is here, at the site of the media art institution, where Being as it progresses in today's technocultural environment resonates and is heard.

The resonance of the silent acousmêtre of the institution is made audible with *Sonusphere*. By pulling back the proverbial curtain to show the circle of inter-reaction inside and outside the institution's permeable arena, *Sonusphere* reveals that, as a demonstrating force that "speaks" through its presentations, the institution's silent acousmêtre is only part of its power as an agent in the exploration of art in a technocultural environment. A potent part of its power is derived from its environment and those who contribute to it; from the quietest participation of presence to the highest level of action, each has its value.

The system of the institution provides a rumbling baseline of activity, but the activity of those people and objects in its environment contribute to and produce a cultural atmosphere of interrelations. This means that, after all, the action of inter-reaction does not involve a finite or self-contained amount of energy, but that it is productive. The institution and those in its arena not only seek to understand media art and culture, but they produce meaning in the process of searching for it. The meaning generated at the media art institution reverberates beyond its walls, carrying its string of speech acts, its utterances, as a story to a larger cultural map and the negotiations over (media) art. These negotiations are not only about a definition of art, they are ultimately negotiations over an individual's place, actions and role—a person's sense of Being—in a technocultural environment.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures

On the top left the chatterbot »Robbie« is shown in conversation with an unknown stagnant macrovirus. Attention! There is a Trojan horse going around on the left side called the »B.I.R.G.I.T. Virus«. It is on the way to »BRIAN«. »BRIAN« is a chatterbot that thinks it is an 18 year old college student from Australia. Feel free to chat with »BRIAN« and just try to have a natural conversation. The IP address »156.134.245.231« is chatting with an unrecognizable macrovirus on the bottom right. The slow moving pale spot on the top right is an indefinable worm.

1.1

Markus Huemer
.arcadia 02, 2002
acrylic on canvas (above), wall text (below)
Image in: *Avatars and Others*, Altstatt and Revolver, 2001, unnumbered.
© Markus Huemer

1.2

Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.org
Biennale.py, 2001
Computer drawing with source code for virus
© Eva and Franco Mattes

1.3

Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.org
Biennale.py, 2001
T-shirts with Biennale.py code printed on front
© Eva and Franco Mattes

1.4

Eva and Franco Mattes aka 0100101110101101.org
Perpetual Self Dis/Infecting Machine, 2001-2004
Custom made computer infected with Biennale.py virus
© Eva and Franco Mattes

1.5   Steina
Summer Salt, 1982
Single-channel video, still
Steina & Woody Vasulka Video Works, eds. Minoru Hatanaka and Keiko
Koizumi, ICC Collection (Tokyo: NTT Publishing Co. Ltd, 1998), 6.
© Steina

1.6

Total Überzogen
29.11.2002-09.02.2003
Installation view
West facade, left to right: Urs Breitenstein's *Hauszeichen* (1995/2002);
Jenny Holzer *IF YOU CAN'T LEAVE YOUR MARK GIVE UP*, (1979-
1983/2002); Swetlana Heger, *Playtime* (2002); Partial view of City of
Oldenburg marketing logo introduced in 2002 (above right); list of *Total
Überzogen* events on red background (below right). Blank area below
window frieze above banners for Dagmar Keller and Martin Wittwer, *Do
You Like My Ideas?*
South facade, clockwise from upper left: Candice Breitz, *FREE KUNST*
(2002); Niedersächsisches Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Kultur
(2002); Johann Grimonprez, *Pear* (2002); Florian Zeyfang, *Complaintes: Le
Lion* (2002); French doors with Urs Breitenstein *Hauszeichen*
(1995/2002); Lise Harlev, *I Sometimes Feel Ashamed* (2002)
(pictured below) exhibition hall between guest house and office building
with Julian Opie, *Escaped Animals* (2002) on lawn
Altstatt, *total überzogen,* 2002, 13. Photographer Sven Adelaide

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1.7

Total Überzogen
29.11.2002-09.02.2003
Installation view
East facade, clockwise from upper left: Die Beauftragte der
Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien logo; Johannes Wohnseifer, *The
Place Only Four People Know About* (2002); Michael Mandiberg, *Critical
Discourse* (detail, banner outside, Internet artwork inside, 2002); Kein
Mensch ist Illegal / Deportation Class (2002)
North facade, from left: Inventory, *Comply* (2002); Stiftung Niedersachsen,
Urs Breitenstein *Hauszeichen* (1995/2002)
Edith-Ruß-Haus Archive, photographer Sven Adelaide.

1.8

Edith-Ruß-Haus Advertisement on Evangelisch-Lutheranishe
Christuskirche Harpstedt (2002) with Pastor Gunnar Schulz-Achilles
(left), red Edith-Ruß-Haus banner for Total Überzogen on far left
scaffolding
Altstatt, *total überzogen,* 2002, 13, photographer unknown.

1.9

Candice Breitz
Group Portraits series, 2001
Installation view, clockwise from top left: *Group Portrait #3* (j-crew),
Group Portrait #2 (tommy Hilfiger), *Group Portrait* (Clinique), *Group
Portrait #5* (Mercedes Benz).
Edith-Ruß-Haus Archive, photographer unknown.

1.10

Kein Mensch ist Illegal
Deportation Class advertising image
© Kein Mensch ist Illegal

3.1

Trigger Project workshop, 2002. Crandall behind built wall stage set.
Work table in foreground, partial view of storyboard on right.
Image provided by Jordan Crandall, photographer unknown.

3.2

Students during *Trigger Project* workshop, 2002
Image provided by Jordan Crandall.

3.3

Electro-Edu-Collab-Proj, 2003
Top: Performance and modular installation space
Bottom: Three images from Dave Allen performing with collaborators
Tobias and Michael
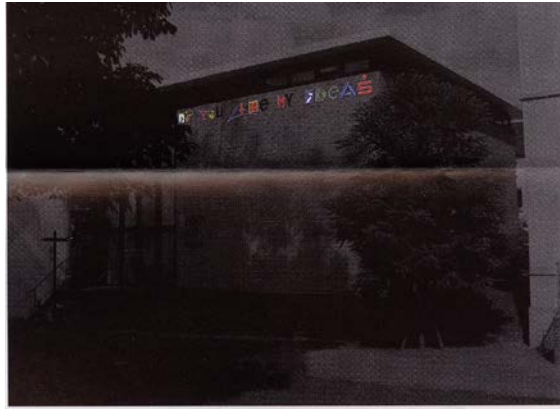Himmelsbach, Produced@, 105. © Dave Allen.

3.4

Naomi Ben-Shahar
Oldenburg Candles (Oldenburg), 2003
Single-channel video, stills
Himmelsbach, Produced@, 105. Edith-Ruß-Haus Archive.

3.5

Dagmar Keller/Martin Wittwer
Do You Like My Ideas? 2002
Design sketch, scanned with fold from the newspaper *total überzogen,* 2002, 10. © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

3.6

Rirkrit Tiravanija
untitled (*tomorrow is another day*), 1996
Kölnischer Kunstverein exterior installation view, mixed media
Kölnischer Kunstverein Archive. © Rirkrit Tiravanija

3.7

Victoria Vesna
Cellular Trans_Actions, 2001
Cell phone performance; Cell phones, people
Edith-Ruß-Haus Archive, photographer unknown

3.8

Victoria Vesna
Cellular Trans_Actions, 2001
Cell phone performance, detail
Computer projector and screen, cell phones, people
Edith-Ruß-Haus Archive, photographer unknown

3.9

Victoria Vesna
Cellular Trans_Actions, 2001
Cell phone performance, detail
Computer projector and screen, cell phones, people
Edith-Ruß-Haus Archive, photographer unknown

3.10

Victoria Vesna
Cellular Trans_Actions: 091101, 2001
Installation view; Projection screens, projector, live telephone line,
voicemail system
Edith-Ruß-Haus Archive, photographer Sven Adelaide
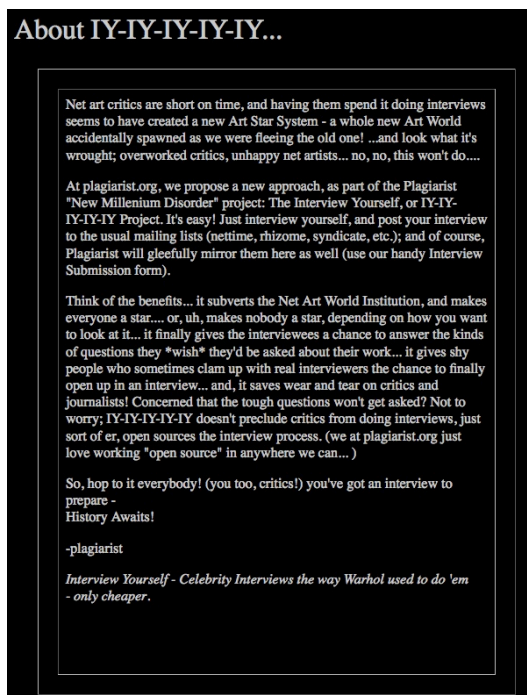
4.1

Jordan Crandall
Under Fire, 2006
C-Print photograph
© Jordan Crandall

4.2

Robert Rauschenberg
Interview, 1955
Mixed media
© Robert Rauschenberg / Adagp, Paris, 2006

About IY-IY-IY-IY-IY...

Net art critics are short on time, and having them spend it doing interviews seems to have created a new Art Star System - a whole new Art World accidentally spawned as we were fleeing the old one! ...and look what it's wrought; overworked critics, unhappy net artists... no, no, this won't do....

At plagiarist.org, we propose a new approach, as part of the Plagiarist "New Millenium Disorder" project: The Interview Yourself, or IY-IY-IY-IY-IY Project. It's easy! Just interview yourself, and post your interview to the usual mailing lists (nettime, rhizome, syndicate, etc.); and of course, Plagiarist will gleefully mirror them here as well (use our handy Interview Submission form).

Think of the benefits... it subverts the Net Art World Institution, and makes everyone a star.... or, uh, makes nobody a star, depending on how you want to look at it... it finally gives the interviewees a chance to answer the kinds of questions they *wish* they'd be asked about their work... it gives shy people who sometimes clam up with real interviewers the chance to finally open up in an interview... and, it saves wear and tear on critics and journalists! Concerned that the tough questions won't get asked? Not to worry; IY-IY-IY-IY-IY doesn't preclude critics from doing interviews, just sort of er, open sources the interview process. (we at plagiarist.org just love working "open source" in anywhere we can...)

So, hop to it everybody! (you too, critics!) you've got an interview to prepare -
History Awaits!

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Interview Yourself - Celebrity Interviews the way Warhol used to do 'em - only cheaper.

4.3

IY-IY-IY-IY-IY! (Interview Yourself!)
plagairist.org, 2001-2002
Internet, "About." Accessed May 24, 2012
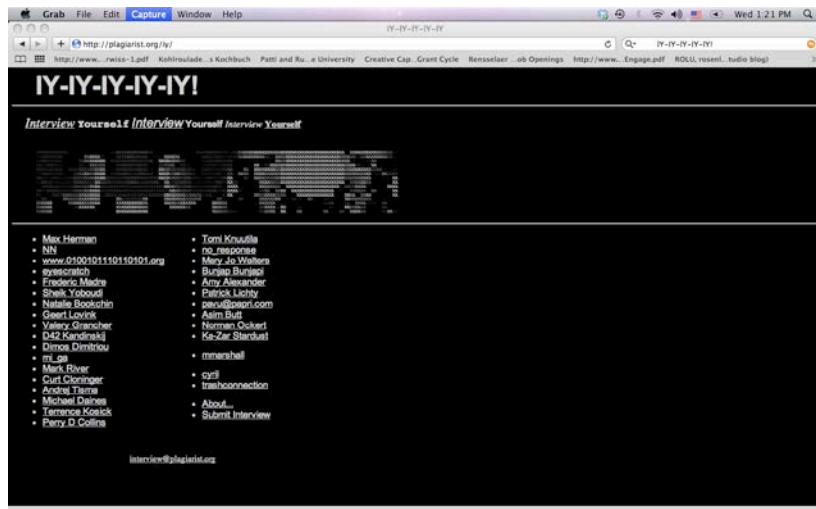
4.4

IY-IY-IY-IY-IY! (Interview Yourself!)
plagairist.org, 2001-2002
Internet, List of interviews, Web page screenshot October 2, 2012

4.5

Robert Rauschenberg in Front Street studio. New York, 1958. Left to right:
Interview, 1955; *Untitled* (combine), 1955 (final state); *Bed*, 1955;
Odalisque, 1955-58 (early state); foreground: *Monogram* (second state),
circa 1956.
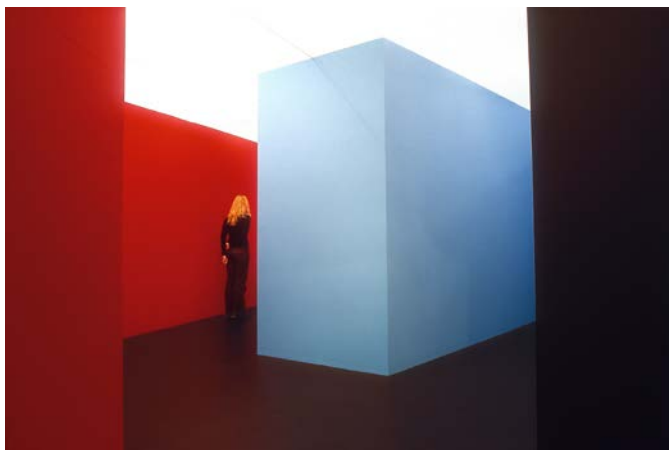Smithsonian Institution, *Robert Rauschenberg* (Washington: Smithsonian
Institution, 1977), 37. © Statens Konstmuseen, Stockholm

5.1

Monika Oechsler
At the Far and Farthest Point, 2004
Installation view, wall with door leading inside installation.
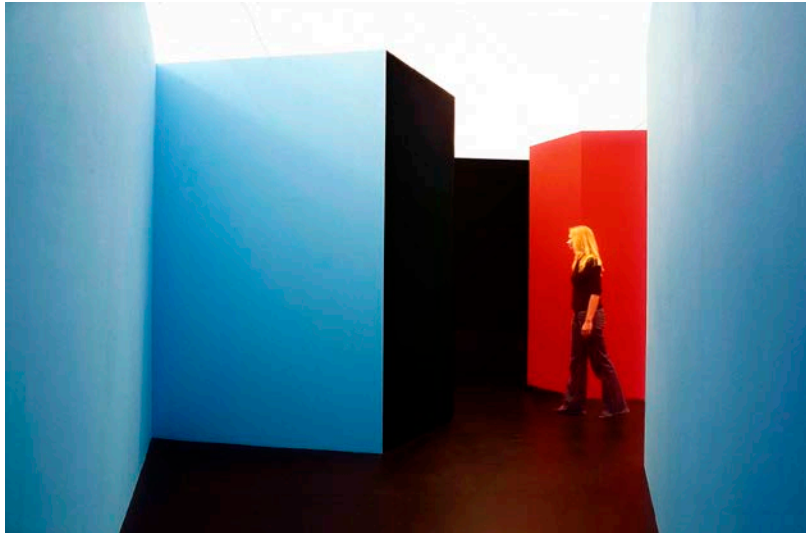Edith-Ruß-Haus Archive, Photographer Sven Adelaide.

5.2

Monika Oechsler
At the Far and Farthest Point, 2004
Installation view (This photograph was lit to highlight the walls,
unfortunately blending out the light fixtures and scaffolding visible
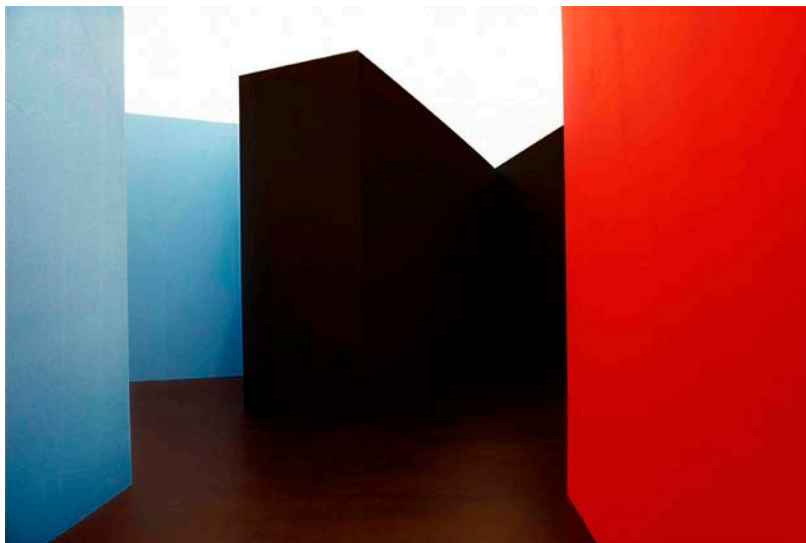through the gauze scrim ceiling.)
Photographer Sven Adelaide.

5.3

Monika Oechsler
At the Far and Farthest Point, 2004
Installation view; painted walls, gauze ceiling, wood floor, theater lights,
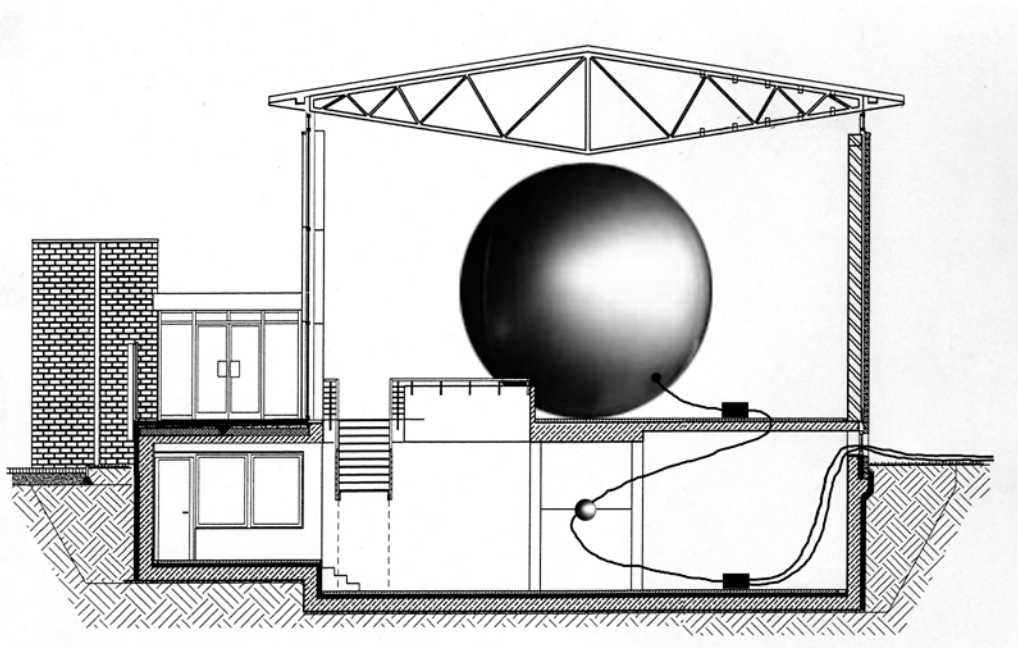computer, speakers
Photographer Sven Adelaide.

5.4

Monika Oechsler
At the Far and Farthest Point, 2004
Installation view; painted walls, gauze ceiling, wood floor, theater lights,
computer, speakers
Photographer Sven Adelaide.

Mark Bain
Sonusphere, 2003
Schematic design; PVC, seismic sensors, loudspeakers, amplification system
Edith-Ruß-Haus Archive, © Mark Bain.

Mark Bain
Sonusphere, 2003
Installation view, upper gallery
PVC, seismic sensors, loudspeakers, amplification system
Edith-Ruß-Haus Archive, photographer Sven Adelaide.

5.7

Mark Bain
Sonusphere, 2003
Installation view with metal stairs
PVC, seismic sensors, loudspeakers, amplification system
Edith-Ruß-Haus Archive, photographer Sven Adelaide.

5.8

Mark Bain
Sonusphere, 2003
Installation view; lower gallery with doors to adjoining building
PVC, seismic sensors, loudspeakers, amplification system
Edith-Ruß-Haus Archive, photographer Sven Adelaide.