FUSE
MAGAZINE

Rewiring bodies, art and technology
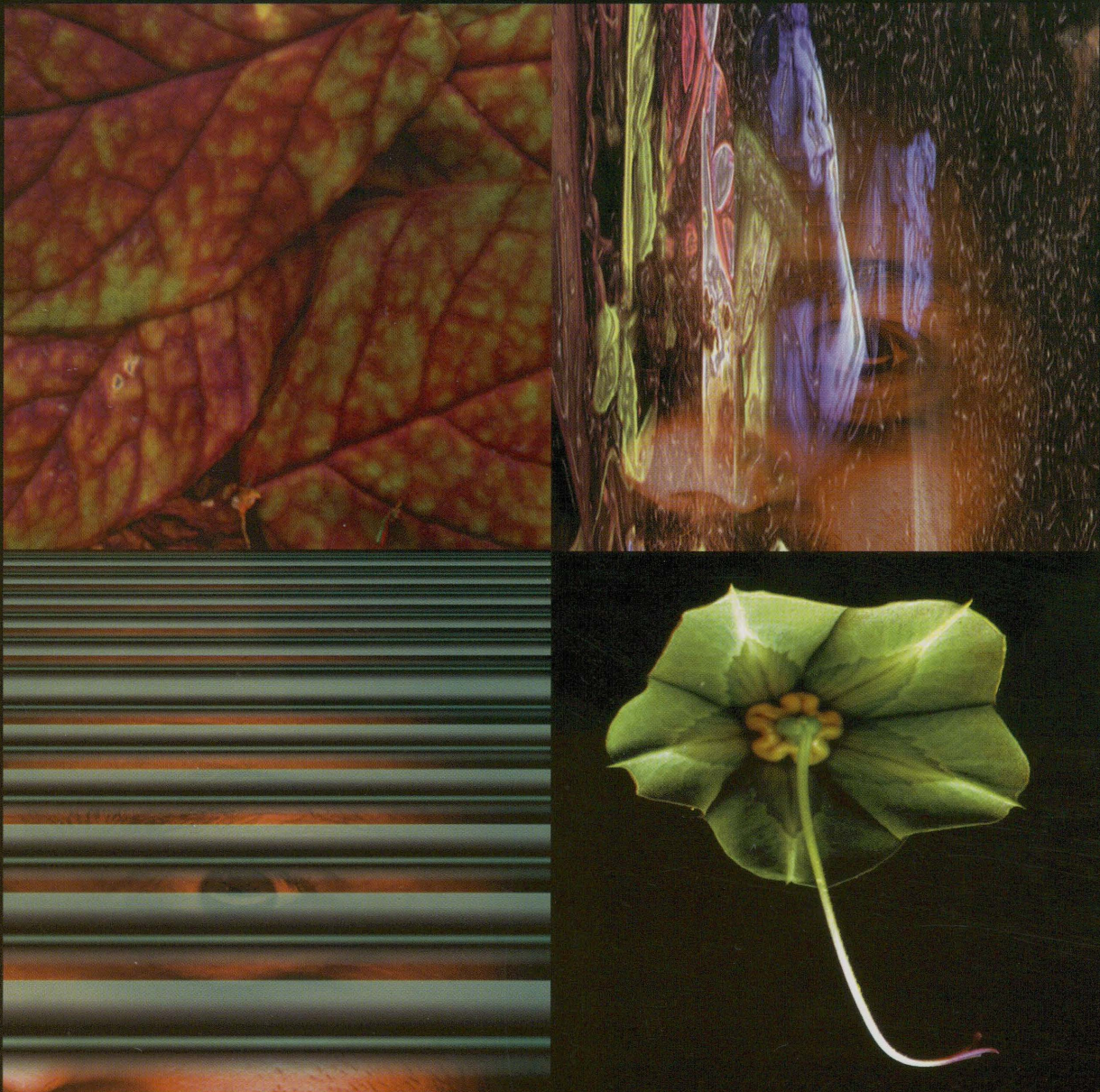
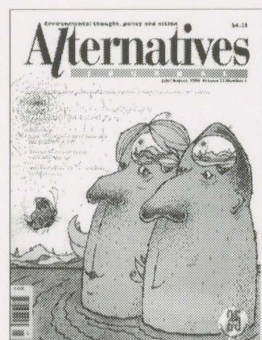art, virtual reality & the media   women and new technologies

the technology of AIDS   artists, encoding & translation

the Net, interactivity & pseudo-science   the Human Genome Project

ALTERNATIVES is Canada's foremost environmental journal since 1971. Thought-provoking articles go beyond band-aid solutions to consider concrete alternatives for a wide range of environmental issues. Look to *Alternatives* for reports of environmental happenings, provocative opinion pieces, and reviews of the latest eco-books.
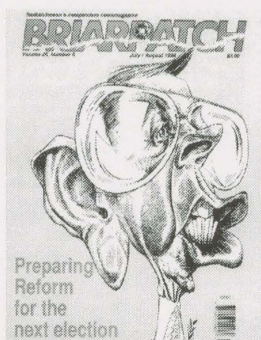
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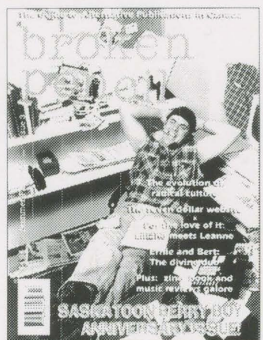
From political zines to hilarious comics, from small press books to indie music, **BROKEN PENCIL** maps the ephemeral world of independently produced Canadian culture. Featuring hundreds of reviews, interviews with creators, and excerpts from everywhere, *Broken Pencil* puts the reader in touch with the creators and their work.
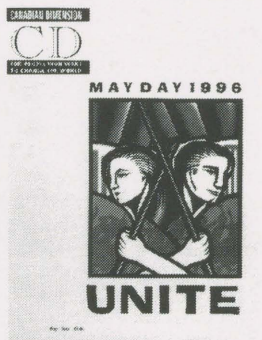
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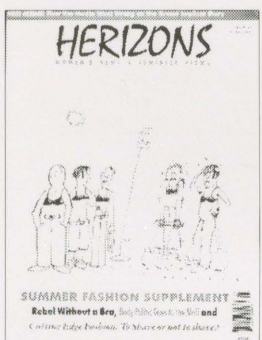
As Canada's largest national feminist magazine, **HERIZONS** explores women's health issues, the law, work and culture, and entices readers with provocative reviews and columnists. Unabashedly feminist, *Herizons* is written in a way that is relevant to the daily lives of women. Canada's much-needed answer to *Ms.*
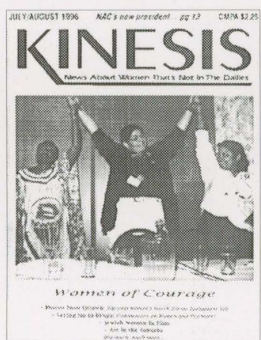
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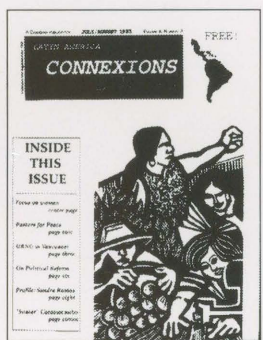
LATIN AMERICA CONNEXIONS/ CONEXION LATINA provides commentary on the struggle for peace and justice in Latin America, and promotes a continent-wide, internationalist vision. This bilingual publication includes current accurate analysis of Latin American events, and information about resources, campaigns and organizations.
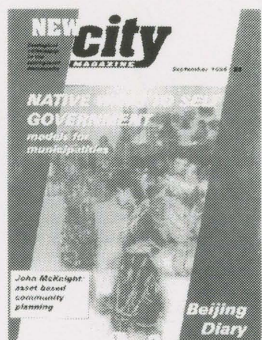
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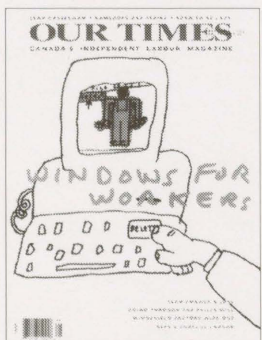
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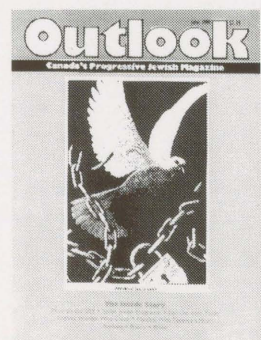
OUTLOOK provides a Jewish secular-humanist perspective on political and cultural issues. It features original articles, stories, and reviews by writers from Canada, the USA, Israel, France, Germany and Eastern Europe. Promoting peace in the Middle East and the world, *Outlook* supports multiculturalism and promotes self-determination of all peoples.

PEACE MAGAZINE is a multi-partisan voice for peace, conflict resolution and non-violence in our homes, in playgrounds and between nations. For over a decade, our magazine has been a forum on how to create a more peaceful and just world. "Your solace in conflicting times." – *Broken Pencil*
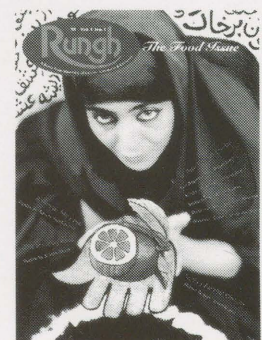
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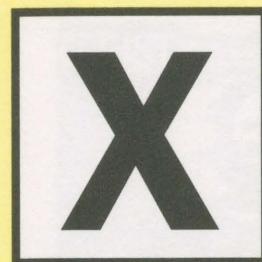
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FUSE

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BOAP
BEST OF THE ALTERNATIVE PRESS

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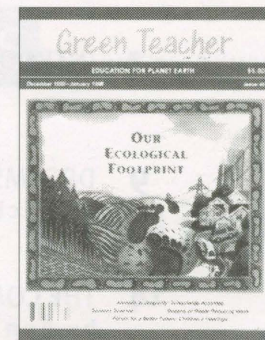
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NEW INTERNATIONALIST magazine turns the issues inside out and explains what's really going on. It's the best guide to the major issues from the arms trade to AIDS, from human rights to hunger. Each month, *NI* tackles one subject, and gives you the facts and the arguments. To influence what's happening to you, you need to know what's going on.
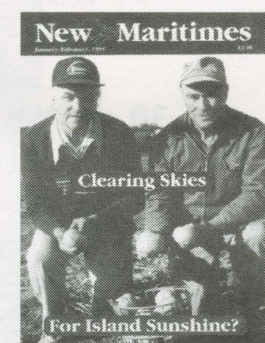
NEW MARITIMES is regional politics, environment, labour, culture and history, all from a refreshing perspective. Regular columns on Maritime books, political economy and Third World issues. This bimonthly is a unique adventure in radical regionalism that, into its second decade, still refuses to bow to the powers that be.

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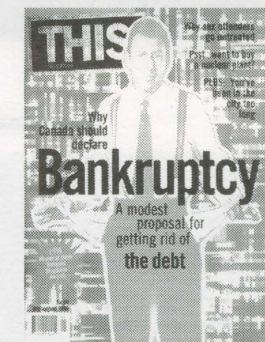
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FUSE
MAGAZINE

Cover images: Michael Balser

errata

Apologies for the misprint of Camilla Griggers and
Nell Tenhaaf's review of *Studiolo* in the last issue
(vol. 20, no. 4). The text was written in two separate
voices which were to be represented by two different
typefaces. The two voices alternate from one
paragraph to the next.

In the review of "(Be)longing" by Alice Ming Wai Jim
(p. 39), the title of the piece by Laiwan should have
read: *she who had scanned the flower of the world*. In the
same review, an image of work by Ellen Pau titled
I can only talk to strangers about this should have been
rotated 90° to the right.

contents VOLUME 20 NUMBER 5

Rewiring Bodies, Art and Technology

From the VR project *Placeholder* by Brenda Laurel
and Rachel Strickland. See page 43.
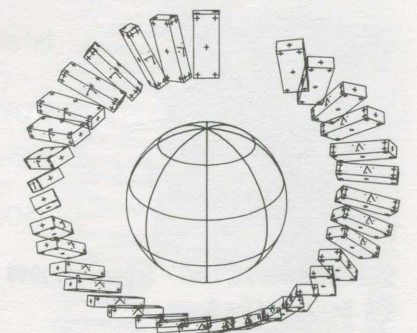
Picture of a satellite in orbit – as drawn by a computer

From the CD-ROM *Mauve Desert* by Adriene Jenik. See page 34.

This issue of FUSE presents a range of cyber-sceptical takes on recent art discourse about the body and technology. Academicized, professionalized, romanticized, infantilized, popularized and then rendered conceptually impenetrable, the art of the techno-body is in need of some serious reaming out. We offer this collection of visuals and text by artists with an attitude as a refreshing sip of tonic for the parched and beleaguered.

Artist Michael Balser composed his "crypto-pharma-tech-talk" travel notes while recovering from surgery after an AIDS-related disease that attacked several vertebrae in his spine. "Dreams of Bones and Wires" is a personal and provocative mix of communiqués, conversations, medical records and altered images of weird science, a potent blend in which he discovers a soon-to-be ubiquitous medico-media induced neurosis called MPIRS (pronounced "empires"), Miraculous Protease Induced Recovery Syndrome.

Dot Tuer brings an extended reading of works by video/installation artists Dara Birnbaum and Stan Douglas, whose images offer cautionary tales for our current infatuation with cyberspace. Tuer examines "what issues emerge when an image map of simulation meets a territory of bodies and histories." Dot Tuer brings an extended reading of works by video/installation artists Dara Birnbaum and Stan Douglas, whose images offer cautionary tales for our current infatuation with cyberspace. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and end of the Cold War, there is an arena of representation in which the ghosts of history repressed by ideology emerge. In a global nervous system of "fusion and mutation, confusion and contamination" Tuer asserts that issues of access and resources, of historical legacies and cultural differences, are integral to an image map of simulation.

In an earlier form, Jeannette Armstrong's text on biocolonization was presented in conjunction with an exhibit of Ron Benner's images that also appear in this issue. Together these works address commodification of life by examining the rise of lifeform patenting by pharmaceutical and bio-engineering companies. Armstrong shows that the Human Genome Project, ostensibly set up to "preserve the DNA of 'endangered' aboriginal peoples," should be regarded in the context of a long history of colonization and plundering.

Taking as her starting point Metro Toronto's vote to become the first government in Canada to fingerprint welfare recipients, Deborah Waddington went to Parkdale with a mail-order fingerprinting kit, giving voice to the imprinted in witty cartoon text bubbles. Noting that "the overriding paradigm of the information age is DNA and the code," she, like Jeannette Armstrong, reveals class differences between the subjects and the objects of encoding.

David McIntosh traces the process of translation of *Mauve Desert*, the novel by Nicole Brossard that is profoundly concerned with the art and sensuality of translation, into a CD-ROM adaptation by artist Adriene Jenick. Contrasting Jenick's accountable and interactive technological practice with the questionable borrowing of meaning and metaphor from physics and genetics by hypertext theorists, "Driving Mauve Desert" outlines new forms of creative resistance in a digital era.
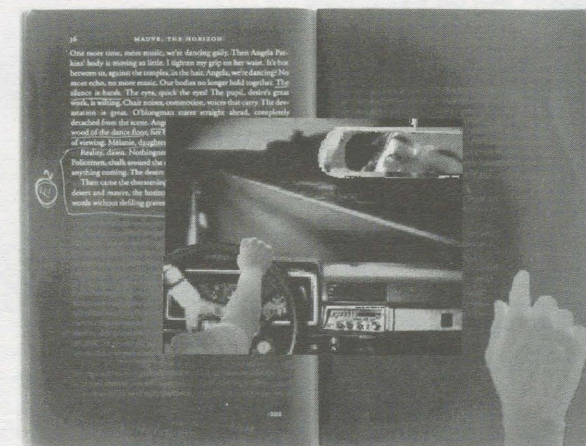
Reggie Woolery and Cylena Simonds collaborate to wrap description, website URLs, quotes and images around a webwork-in-progress by Shu Lea Cheang on Brandon Teena, a Humboldt, Nebraska, man who was raped then murdered by two men who discovered that he was anatomically female. The website sparks debate tied to Brandon's real-life murder trial, reminding us of "online stalking, rape and homophobia as cultural sites deserving of investigation" on the web.

In her discussion of VR works by Brenda Laurel and Char Davies, two of the very few women inscribing female bodies in that medium, Nancy Paterson suggests that "discussions around the disappearance of the body" should be reframed to consider "the disappearance or non-existence of critical and aesthetic discourse in the field of new media art." Identifying military paradigms underlying new media artmaking systems and software, Paterson points to a central controversy—if we forego involvement in the design of these systems, what responsibility are we able to take for the types of experiences they trigger?

Anne Golden examines Shari Hatt's "Breast Wishes," a photographic journal about a body part, discovering that "in an age of relentless encroachment of technology on both bodies and artistic practices, 'Breast Wishes' asserts that simple personal acts of recording, showing and telling can reveal a powerful central story that influences the perception and interpretation of many otherwise hidden body stories."

This issue of FUSE, edited by Judith Doyle and David McIntosh, suspends the traditional divisions between features, commentaries, reviews and artists' projects, to allow for breathing room and experiment in form. The resulting projects thrive in the interstices, easily falling into two or more categories. There is also a focus on multi-vocal projects—collaborations and cross-pollinations within texts, between texts and between texts and images. These critical, personal and multi-vocal interventions by artists thwart the piracy and plundering, stalking and cannibalism that are all-too everyday realities of digital life.

Dreams of Bones and Wires

by Michael Balser

From November 1995 to November 1996, I was recovering from surgery after an AIDS-related disease that had attacked several vertebrae in my spine. The recovery period was marked by several distinct phases, both medical and social. One's success at "living with AIDS" can be gauged by various immune "markers" as well as the impact one's condition has on others. Psychological and neurological changes can be tracked in the patient during the first few months, as biological termination retreats from the impending fright zone to the safety zone of denial. During this experience I had to first replace myself in my own shoes (literally), then begin the process of reconstructing social territory that would accommodate my new needs and the needs of others, some of whom were at a loss to deal with yet another crisis. This project is a document of my experience composed of a selection of communiqués, conversations, observations and medical records, some fictional, some not, which I've accumulated and juxtaposed with altered images of vintage weird science.

NO ALTERNATIVE

I recently had the chance to review the videotape *AIDS, Anxiety & Art* (1991) by Michael Balser. Rogers Cable 10 presented the piece as part of their "It's After Midnight and Nobody's Watching" series. The voice-over begins "like everybody else, I wanted to do a tape about AIDS" and the tape goes on to be deliciously ironic and carefully distanced from many of the issues surrounding AIDS at that time: the lack of effective anti-retroviral treatments, of social assistance and of funds for research. While watching this artist's tape on television in 1997, I remember my reaction on first viewing it in 1991; how cynical, clever and dismissive, I thought. However, the video makes you work to find your own place in the mess of "responses to the AIDS epidemic" that were tolerated in alternative media between 1988 and 1994. Alternative tapes were bracketed by movies of the week (*Making Love*, and that one with Carol Burnett as an alcoholic AIDS mother) and feature films (*Longtime Companion*, *Philadelphia*). There are now more frequent TV documentaries and news profiles dealing with AIDS — treating it/living with it/surviving it/singing about it — which have been absorbed, accepted or tolerated by the mainstream, creating the appearance of extensive reportage and eliminating the need for an "alternative cultural response."

THIS IS THE SPACE AGE

In July 1996, Rogers Cable provided several hours of daily access to the 1996 International AIDS Conference in Vancouver during the program slot known as "It's the Middle of the Afternoon on a Beautiful Summer Day and Nobody's Watching." Scientists attending the conference began announcing breakthroughs in treatment, referring to the future of AIDS as a "chronic manageable illness" and creating a positive media buzz. The scientific abstracts presented at the conference were, of

course, beyond the comprehension of the few cable viewers who tuned in each afternoon to watch funny graphics and hear interplanetary voice-over. The scientists at the 1996 AIDS Conference may well have been speaking Klingon. For example:

> **Tumor necrosis factor-a (TNF-a), in fact, exists as both a soluble cytokine and a membrane-bound protein. Patterns of cytokine secretion by CD4+ T cells distinguish cell-mediated immune responses from humoral responses. T-helper-1 (TH1) cells secrete interleukin 2 (IL-2) and interferon-g (IFN-g), which are associated with cell mediated responses, and TH2 cells secrete IL-4, IL-5, and IL-10, favoring antibody responses. Some investigators have reported a shift from TH1 to T1l2 patterns with progression of HIV infection to AIDS.**

This crypto-pharma-tech-talk, a requirement when presenting abstracts at AIDS conferences, discourages the general public from paying attention at all, confounds the viewer to whom this information could be a saviour and sometimes awakens TV reporters from a sound sleep long enough to further misrepresent the facts and figures. The scientists entertain by debating the incomprehensible and illustrating the subatomic. We do, however, come away from the week of media blitz with a sense that there are some possibly adequately, clinically tested new pharmaceutical options and combinations for the treatment of HIV. The first generation of drugs that will lower HIV to undetectable levels in the body have been announced. PROTEASE INHIBITORS. Good name! A breakthrough. More media blitz. Scientists and community leaders continually intone "these new drugs are NOT A CURE. NOT A CURE. NOT A CURE." Nonetheless, several Prozac-dazed reporters smell a career-boosting headline and in a flash the exciting news of a CURE and the end of the AIDS epidemic is proclaimed on the cover of Newsweek.
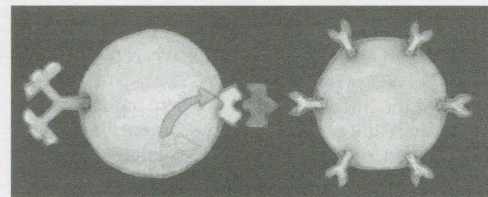
(ONE OF THE) SEVEN ARGUMENTS FOR THE ELIMINATION OF AIDS

Much of the real content of reporting on AIDS in the media, mostly television, has been altered by the facts of visual presentation. In certain reports, there is a disorienting disparity between the written or spoken account and the visual record. Much can be altered by selection and editing, but in most cases, graphics resembling geometric abstraction in modern painting are used to illustrate biochemical processes that even the researchers are hard pressed to trust as science. A "funny diagram" is always visible, and it can be more misleading in situations in which awareness of an information conflict is inevitable. Such awareness, however, is commonly absorbed by habituation and routine since much information-driven television programming is constructed to be viewed in a trance-like ritual rather than as an information-gathering activity. The "funny diagram" provides enough visual clues to keep alive the illusion that one program is actually different from the next; this becomes a problem when a viewer is attempting to determine if the abstract diagrams might be living inside his body. There are many events that come through the television with less processing or filtration than in any other medium but AIDS is not one of them since it cannot be transmitted electronically, as far as we know at this time.
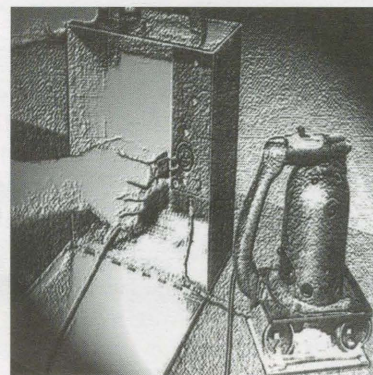
SHOCK & BARK

I WAS SHOCKED TO HEAR THAT BECAUSE OF CUTBACKS IN ONTARIO HEALTH CARE YOU ARE HAVING A PORTION OF YOUR SPINE REPLACED WITH PVC PLUMBING! I KNOW THINGS ARE TOUGH IN ONTARIO NOW BUT I THINK THIS IS A BAD IDEA. I URGE YOU TO HOLD OFF ON THE OPERATION UNTIL YOU HAVE EXPLORED ALL THE OPTIONS. (IS IT TRUE THAT YOUR BRAIN WOULD BE KEPT IN SUSPENDED ANIMATION AT A SEPARATE FACILITY DURING THE PROCEDURE?) I UNDERSTAND THAT IN THE STATES THEY USE PROHIBITIVELY EXPENSIVE TITANIUM ALLOYS BUT IN NORWAY AND DENMARK THEY ARE MAKING GREAT STRIDES WITH WOOD. APPARENTLY THEY'VE DISCOVERED THAT THE VIKINGS ROUTINELY
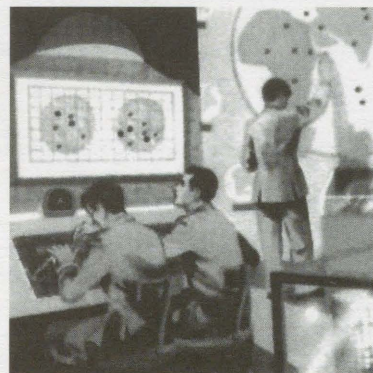
CONDUCTED MAJOR NEURAL SURGERY USING RUDIMENTARY INSTRUMENTS AND BIRCH PROSTHETICS. A GIANT DAY CLINIC HAS BEEN FOUND PERFECTLY PRESERVED IN MUD IN JUTLAND. I'LL MAKE SOME INQUIRIES. DO NOT GO AHEAD WITH THIS OPERATION UNTIL I GET BACK TO YOU.

THE OPERATION CHANNEL

SCENE 1: 2 AM. *A semi-private hospital room. A wall-mounted jointed metal arm presents a 5-inch television, with limited cable access, to a sleepless patient. A remote channel changer and ear-plug connect the patient to the media. He feels like his body is walking in space as he surfs. The identical voices of various narrators cut in and out as the channel selection bleeds one horrifying image of viscera into the next. Sci-fi atmosphere provided by (insert name of any pharmaceutical company here). Multiple narrators with singular intonation challenge the viewer to hang on or...*

[click....click....click]

This body has a short memory. Motion is lost to memory. Tenuous connections wither. Nervous fibres like ratty thread. Reinventing the machine awakens the memory.

[click... double click]

Ze experiment vas vell undavay ven ze doktor..... sorry, I'll begin again. The experiment was well underway when Dr. Desmodiuys entered wearing a deep sea diving suit circa Jules Verne. Nurse Nan had been fastidious in her preparation of the laboratory. She had proudly displayed her designer surgical tools on rotating museum plinths for the audience of ten hand-picked students who rotated mysteriously above the surgical arena without apparent mechanical support.

[click... click]

Change channels, compare, contrast, recontextualize, discard. Is there anything left to say about the Body?

[click]

Diagnosis: Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma to Thoracic Spine. Anterior Spinal Core Compression. Procedure: Anterior Decompression and Instrumentation with Kirschner Wires. Following the induction of general anesthesia with an endotracheal tube in place and a foley catheter draining the bladder, the patient was turned into the right lateral decubitus position. Cutvilinear lateral flank incision was made coming around the interior pole of the scapula with the arm abducted over the head.

[click]

Dr. Desmodiuys removes his antique brass (replete with faux-patina) diving helmet. He presents his famous, skilled hands to the audience. Applause. Nurse Nan assists in the mounting of the patient's limbs into black leather restraints. An industrial strength hot glue gun, the type often used in microsurgery, is employed to adorn the restraints with decorative platinum studs. The patient is rotated for full audience viewing. More applause.

[click]

This incision was deepened by sharp dissection through to the subcutaneous and with homeostasis obtained by cautery. Incision was then deepened down to muscle using cutting current and the latissimus dorsi and trapezius were divided in line with the skin incision.

[click]

The way you're looking at this program right now is different from the way you may have, say, two years ago. You no longer feel an obligation to read the words in the order in which they are presented. Your eyes scan the subheads and go back and forth between the text. You are constantly testing what is said against your own sense of the world around you.
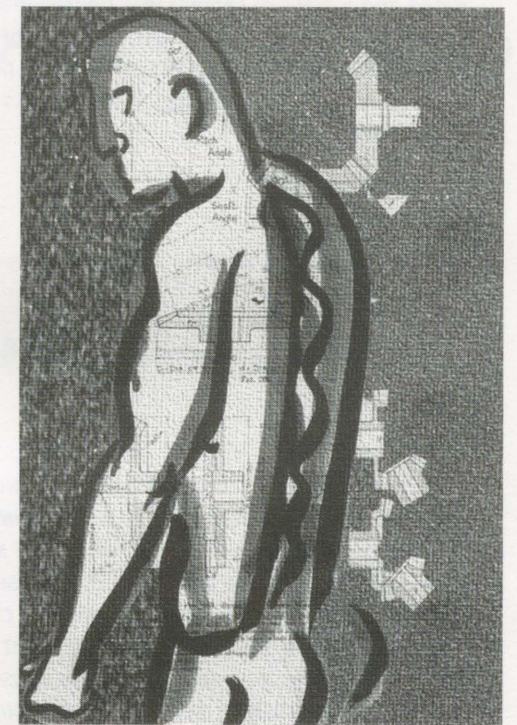
From an extremely high vantage point the operating theatre is revealed—part mausoleum, part discotheque. Serratus anterior was released from its scapular origin and the scapula was retracted superiorly exposing the fourth rib. Accompanied by an annoying techno-trance beat, Nurse Nam and Dr. Desmodiuys float above the operating table chanting:

Boom Shacka Laka, Boom Shacka Laka, Boom Shacka Laka.
Boom! Boom! BOOM!

A rib spreader was inserted and opened. Good exposure was obtained. The lung was retracted toward the midline and there was obvious tumor mass near the head of the fourth rib. The tumour of L4 was initially readily removed with a curette. The decompression bed was then thoroughly irrigated and a mass of cement was poured into it filling it completely. The patient was returned to intensive care unit for monitoring. Sensory evoked potentials were monitored throughout this procedure. The surgical team has become a blue blur of digital video effects as they whirl and ascend out of the domed theatre.

[BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!]

2:15 AM. *An extraordinarily beautiful male nurse appears nude at the foot of the hospital bed.*

Mr. Balser wake up, please. It's time for your morphine.

Cash Clone

WHAT THE FUCK IS GOING ON? I'M E-MAILING YOU SINCE YOU SEEM TO NEVER ANSWER THE PHONE. IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE WE LAST SPOKE AND NOW I HEAR YOU'RE IN THE HOSPITAL WITH SOME KIND OF CLONED INFECTION? IS THIS TRUE? DID YOU REALLY HAVE SO LITTLE CASH THAT YOU HAD SELL YOUR BODY TO SOME EXPERIMENT LABORATORY? HOW CAN THAT BE? I THOUGHT YOU WERE A DARLING OF THE CANADA COUNCIL? WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU? WHAT DID THEY DO TO YOU? MY GOD, I JUST SAW A DOCUMENTARY ON THE DISCOVERY CHANNEL LAST NIGHT ABOUT EXPERIMENTS IN CLONING THE FLU VIRUS IN AN EFFORT TO FIND A CURE!

Prose Inhibitors

In 1993 many of my friends were being prescribed Prozac for what ailed them. Now, several people I know are being prescribed protease inhibitors for different but related illnesses. One gay man with longterm HIV and a history of serious depression is now taking Prozac and protease inhibitors. The drugs are working; he is healthy and socially functional. It is remarkable how these new drug therapies for mind and body have emerged so fully, so effectively, so recently. Is it the natural conclusion to decades of modern pharmaceutical research finally catching up to postmodern anxiety? The decision to begin either of these therapies (mental or physical) involves similar abandonment of denial and the acceptance that one is chronically ill. I have been sceptical for a long time about medical science, the health care system and the efficacy of miracle drugs; but the pharmaceutical conspiracy theories fall away when you cross the bridge to recovery. Triggering the therapeutic value of chemical treatments begins with a compromised belief system (scared to death) assisted by doctors, surgeons, nurses, health care advisors, supportive friends/family (and support groups, if absolutely necessary). Add a measured amount of clockwork chemical cocktail and voila!
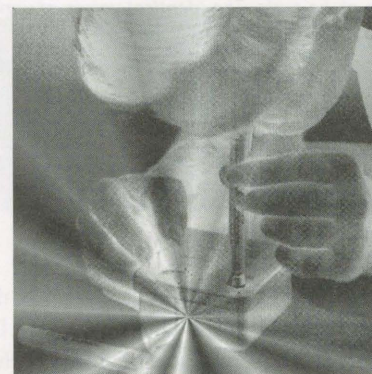
Excessive analysis, patient diaries or personal testimonial regarding the current wave of treatments for HIV may risk sounding paranoid, conspiratorial and ungrateful. The dark spectre of living is the latest dilemma among those who have experienced the "miraculous protease-induced recovery syndrome" (I believe this is the first time this syndrome has been named in print). Apparently, everybody has spent their longterm disability, cashed-in insurance policies, refinanced mortgages and sold all the silverware while popping designer drugs and raving their twilight years away. Since the fateful moment when I decided to enter the word "artist" in the space that required me to define an occupation, I do not have the luxury of a benefits package or longterm disability. I didn't sell the house (I don't own one) and fly to Chile to seek high-altitude cocaine leaf purification and chanting cures. No alternative medicine for me, it's new technology and new media all the way. In the absence of insurance policies and frequent flyer points my only recourse was to reconvene my scattered body through art.
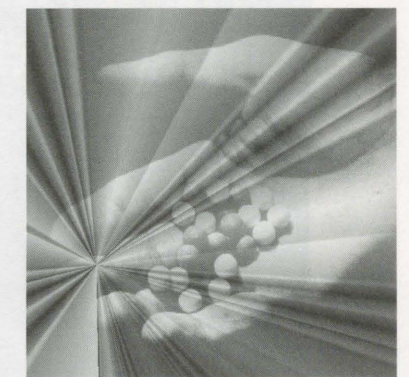
Miraculous Protease-Induced Recovery Syndrome (MPIRS)

MPIRS (pronounced "empires") is a relatively new and frightening disorder that involves combination mental/physical pharmacological strategies. "Do you mind if I ask you what's the matter with your mind over matter" might well be the burning, musical question on the lips of HIV physicians this year. Since a healthy belief in just about any medical practice known to science or magick is necessary to survive HIV, it is not surprising that we embraced the somewhat abstract concept of the "protease inhibitor" within days after the initial clinical trial results.

Body Transmission

NEWS TRAVELS FAST ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB, ESPECIALLY SINCE YOU ARE NOW CYBERNETICALLY LINKED. I READ THAT DURING YOUR RECENT HIGH-TECH SURGERY YOU SOLD THE ENSUING AIR SPACE IN YOUR SPINAL CORD TO NEWSWORLD AS A SATELLITE RETRANSMISSION SITE? WAS THIS WISE? PLEASE RECONSIDER. WHAT IF YOU ONLY GET ONE CHANNEL?

Bones & Dreams

I heard you before I saw you. The metallic clattering that filled the glossy hospital hallways was caused by your quaking body atop a rickety chrome gurney. Someone had left you out in the hall for pick-up, a parcel of goods to be delivered to the MRI lab, preferably intact. You shook and shook in raw terror—ever able to sum up the correct response to your circumstances. Surgery was scheduled for the next day. After we snatched you back from paraplegia and the threat of an early death, you showed me a picture of your body, an interior shot. The MRI, or maybe it was a CAT scan, showed your skeleton in dreamy repose, embedded in a soft cloud-like outline of flesh. It was a beautiful picture, marred only by one dark patch on the spine. That, you told me, is where all the hardware is now. And you have the scars to prove it. You told me of a nightmare: that you were made of twigs and wicker. And in the dream you had sprung a leak. Branches poked through your skin. Like stuffing spilling out, crushed and brittle. There there, I said clumsily, blame the morphine.
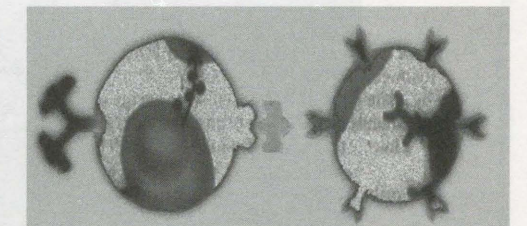
CALGENE   DAVID MICHAEL & CO.
DNA PLANT TECH DUPONT INGENE

U.S. PATENT NO. 2,864,353

II

PHYTOGEN PLANT SCIENCES LTD.
PIONEER HI-BRED   PFIZER CORP.

U.S. PATENT NO. 3,843,625

IV

Biocolonization and Biopiracy

THE FINAL FRONTIER

by Jeannette Armstrong

*Edited from a talk in conjunction with Ron Benner's exhibition
"All That Has Value," Presentation House Gallery, North Vancouver, 1996.*

I have been working in the indigenous community, trying to find ways to protect people and their rights in relation to a healthy environment. After a research trip to Siberia and some other areas in the former Soviet Union, our indigenous research group was invited to a meeting in California about the commodification of life. RAFI[1] and other organizations had just uncovered the Human Genome Diversity Project. The meeting changed my life activities from that point on.

The Human Genome Project is already underway, undertaken by people from the science community and various governments, the United States primarily, and Canada, Italy and other European countries. It is being promoted as a way to map the whole human genome. An offshoot of that—the Human Genome Diversity Project—is set up to look at where diversity occurs from the norm or standard—how genes diverge, how they're different, and ways they could be developed into applications. The general mandate is to look at over 700 endangered indigenous groups worldwide. The project classifies the reasons they are endangered and therefore targeted for collection. Actually, they created a project to go and collect samples from a minimum of twenty-five people from each community, and to put the samples on repository. The rationale of this project is to look for and discover possible divergent genes of indigenous people who are endangered before they become extinct and disappear, to preserve this data for science.

This mandate doesn't seem like something to be alarmed about until we start looking at the issues behind it. Clearly, putting the collection on repository has a purpose. Why immortalize these cells in Maryland? To whom will it be made available? For what uses? Worldwide, the highest disease rates are in indigenous communities, as are the poorest medical services and the pressures of poverty that are fundamental to disease. Even simple diseases that could be dealt with by feeding people are a recurrent, everyday reality of indigenous people's lives. Whether in countries with more blatantly oppressive governments or the subtly oppressive one in Canada, whether people are rounded up and put some place to starve or put on a reservation, the deaths are the same. Increasingly in the United States and Canada under the Free Trade Agreement, we're feeling the effects of the commodification of health services. You can be sitting right outside the hospital; if you don't have Blue Cross, you're gone. Underlying this is the profit motive, not the motive of community health. The beneficiaries of this kind of research and science are corporations, not you or me.

It's really difficult to get information about the Human Genome Diversity Project out to targeted communities here in Canada, let alone in Central or South

IPRI LOTTE LUBRIZOL MONSANTO
MOLECULAR GENETICS PRUTECH

U.S. PATENT NO. 3,234,658
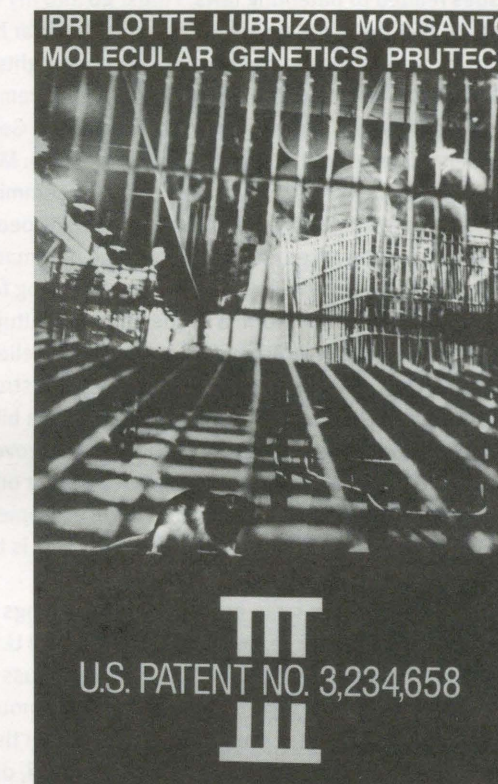
All Images from *The Commodification of Life*,
Ron Benner, 1996. Photos by John Tamblin.

In 1930, the U.S. Congress inaugurated plant patenting of specific breeds of flowers.... Hitler followed with plant patenting in Germany in 1933; following Nazi occupation, patent regimes were imposed over plant rights across Europe.

America. Developing educational tools leads to a triple jeopardy situation. I can't just take a leaflet and pass it around. The literacy level in the indigenous communities in Canada, supposedly one of the top ten countries, is at grade three or four. I have to go and deliver information orally. I have to talk about a science that is totally foreign to my way of thinking, as it is to most people who aren't scientists. The priest's language of science is relegated to a very few who spend years studying compartmentalized sections of it, in terms of what DNA is, the things they're creating with it and issues related to patenting laws. I must go into my communities, explain that these things are done and make clear how this jeopardizes their principles, their human rights, civil rights and rights as indigenous peoples. What about countries where there's no literacy at all, remote communities in the jungles or mountains? Yet the proponents of the Human Genome Diversity Project such as Dr. Henry Greely from Stanford University and Dr. Mary Claire King from Berkeley, have the audacity to say to us that an ethics committee is designing a process to give and get informed consent from indigenous peoples, that this will happen before collection takes place, before some pharmaceutical company comes and offers a contract. We're asking, how are you going to do that? How are you going to develop a process to inform a whole different culture of people who don't subscribe to your Western ideals of science or believe in the commodification of land, rights or anything else, let alone the basic structure of life? Already, a pharmaceutical that stands to make more than a billion dollars has been deemed to have more of a right to do so than the entire government of the Solomon Islands. The United States decision that a patent on the Solomon Island people would not be repatriated because of trade agreements reveals the U.S. position that it has the right to patent these people. This is the kind of outcome that I'm really concerned about.

There have been large organizational meetings with the National Congress of American Indians. We've called on Canadian and U.S. groups, indigenous leaders from the Western hemisphere, to meet and discuss the Vampire Project. In Phoenix last year, we brought together over thirty indigenous organizations from Central, South and North America and did a workshop on these issues, asking, what is your take? What do you want to do about it? A central, difficult aspect is that we are not just speaking about intellectual property rights, or the patenting of human life forms, genes, and other species on the land, but about the whole issue of ownership of land, of water and of a people. To own a people is not very far from ownership of an individual gene. Colonialism—the ownership of something that you have no right to own and control, for the profit motive—is what allows for this new bio-colonialism.

Colonization is a piracy system that has been legalized in the western hemisphere for over 500 years, and a lot longer on other continents in the world. It is a system that says you can own a people; you can go in and reap the benefits after thousands of years of their caretakership of the land, by sheer weight of technology and coercive force (the mean mind, as elder Lavina White calls it). It is colonization to deprive people of the right to say no, you can't kill these rivers, you can't make another species extinct on this land. You don't have the right to make us extinct. I ask the indigenous people that we meet with, is there any hope that the United Nations will protect our rights and our genes from the trading, bartering and pirating, the mine-staking, that's going on in the world? They don't have any hope, for a simple reason: not one indigenous nation from North or South America sits at that table as a nation. It's not because of population. There are twenty million Mayans spread out in seven nation-states in Central and South America. They share a land base, culture and language, they have political systems,

Every country in the world that's signed the GATT has to agree to the patenting of micro-organisms, and by extension, of human DNA.

PLANT GENETICS SUNGENE SOHIO
U.S.D.A. U.S. DEPT. OF COMMERCE

U.S. PATENT NO. 4,326,358

As of 1996, about 20% of the DNA in the human brain is under patent.

sciences—but they do not have one seat or voice in the United Nations. Of the seven million people of Bolivia, five and a half million are indigenous people—poverty-stricken landless slaves to the colonizing government that sits on the UN.

I work in international forums on wording for the protection of indigenous peoples that will go to the UN because it's a stopgap, but it's like fixing a symptom of the problem. The problem is the idea that things can be commodified that should never be. We all know it's not right to do these things to the water, air, land, to the flesh of all living things around us. We can all feel it, inside the interior of us, where we are alive. Yet we get caught up in apparatuses that have been framed and shaped over hundreds of years to control assets for a small number of people—their leisure and profit—to the detriment of whole segments of our populations. Some of these fundamental questions around commodification just aren't being asked.

Looking at the bio-safety risks that are being permitted in the name of science, we are putting ourselves at great risk because of the profit motive. This science will not relieve the world of its basic problems because oppressed people are needed, people who have to buy food, medicine and the right to survive. If there is vaster and vaster self-sufficiency, the system will not run. It requires the pressures of poverty to make us all into consumers, and it requires commodification of resources that are unavailable because native peoples present an obstacle to their access.

It's been difficult for indigenous people to get across that we're not of the same mindset, that part of our law includes sharing with others living on the land. Sharing doesn't mean ownership, it means responsibility to look after, transgenerationally, in a healthy state, the life forms that sustained your ancestors and sustain you, your children, grandchildren and so on. In my community, selling medicine is either totally unheard of, or it's against the law. If a person were to charge people to help them get well, that person would be thrown out, because everyone has the right to health, food and medicine. Nobody here can brag that we have human rights, regardless of the UN conventions, when all of our lives are threatened by things in our water and air, things being done with food. Everyone knows somebody with cancer or a disease related to toxicities invading our bodies through all sources. Isn't healthy living a human right? These are fundamental issues that indigenous groups must look at when drafting changes to conventions that need to be made. I don't think the Canadian government will, because it is an apparatus that serves other economic apparatuses intent on protecting transnational trade.

The Human Genome Diversity Project is the tip of the iceberg. There are companies out there in biotechnology practicing drift net patenting; they're simply patenting everything under the sun. They don't have to prove utility—they're just mine-staking. What we call the "Vampire Project" could make indigenous peoples' genes available for scientists to research and profit from—genes from the most oppressed, uninformed and poverty-stricken peoples in the world. The indigenous community in Canada lives in privilege in comparison to some of the communities in Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Mexico. I hate it when I go to these countries and see tourists bartering with people who can't even feed their children from one day to the next. I'm enraged to think of companies coming in to take their genes, then making billions of dollars without any concern for these people who may not know their rights or understand the profit mindset. It's difficult to maintain feelings about my fellow human beings that are positive. I haven't been as active creatively because there's a lot of grief, anger and rage around it. So for the last three years, I have spent most of my time travelling, lobbying and talking, trying to get information to the indigenous communities that are being targeted in North America and elsewhere in the world. And it's been hard going.

In Canada and the United States, about one in four perscription drugs under patent is based on indigenous knowledge.

Note

1. RAFI, the Rural Advancement Foundation International, based in Ottawa, has an information-packed website on these issues: http://www.rafi.ca/.

Ron Benner's The Commodification of Life *was installed at the Devonshire Mall in Windsor, Ontario, July 25–October 12, 1997, in "Southwest Triennial: Public Order" curated by Robin Metcalfe for the Art Gallery of Windsor.*

Jeannette Armstrong wrote the novel Slash, *and* Breath Tracks, *an anthology of poetry. With architect Douglas Cardinal, she edited the book* Native Creative Process, *and she recently edited* Looking at the Words of our People: First Nations Analysis of Literature. *Her music/poetry collaboration "Indian Woman" on Cargo Record's* Till the Bars Break *was nominated for a Juno award.*

Pull quotes edited from "Civil and Uncivil Societies," a talk by Pat Roy Mooney in conjunction with Ron Benner's exhibit, "All That Has Value."

Related texts include :

1. "Keepers of the Earth," Jeannette Armstrong, *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind*; ed. Theodore Roszak, Mary E. Gomes & Allen D. Kanner (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1995).

2. "Jeannette Armstrong: Interview," *Listening to the Land: Conversations about Nature, Culture and Eros*; ed. Derrick Jensen (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1995).

3. "The Spirit of the People," *People of the Seventh Fire: Returning Life Ways of Native America*, ed. Dagmar Thorpe (Ithica, N.Y.: Akwe:Kon Press, 1996).

4. "The Case Against the Global Economy and The Case For Local Community," essays, ed. Gerry Mander, San Francisco, 1997.

Mining the Media Archive

WHEN HISTORY MEETS SIMULATION IN THE RECENT WORK OF DARA BIRNBAUM AND STAN DOUGLAS

by Dot Tuer

As the millennium draws to a close, we are confronted with an entanglement of lived and simulated experience that daily grows more complex. Seeking to comprehend this relationship between the everyday world we embody and the manufactured realm of images that envelop us, we stumble upon both familiar territories and unfamiliar terrain. In the contemporary enthusiasm to refashion the self through technology, echoes of an early modernist embrace of machine over humanity can be heard. The ubiquitousness of a contemporary field of vision, described by Paul Virilio as "the handling of simultaneous data in a global but unstable environment where the image is the most concentrated but also the most unstable form of information,"[1] finds a resonance in the Futurist's celebration of "simultaneous states of mind."[2] From the dematerialization of identity taking place in the chat rooms of the Internet to the destabilization of experience occurring through the headgear sets of virtual reality, Charles Baudelaire's poetic vision of modernity as "the transient, the fleeting, the contingent,"[3] seems as apt a description for the impending fragmentation of the senses taking place in 1997 as it did in 1863.

At the same time, it is also possible that an utopian desire to harness consciousness to the luminous emissions of image machines renders these modernist echoes obsolete. During the emergence of modernity, railroads, telegraphs and standard time cut a swath of grids across a heterogeneous landscape to reconfigure spatial and temporal boundaries. Now the feverish construction of information highways and the global swirl of data threaten to dissolve these boundaries altogether. With the invention of X-rays, photography and cinema, an image of the body was frozen in time and cast into motion. With the advent of nanotechnology and virtual reality, both body and image are caught within a cybernetic feedback loop. At the beginning of the twentieth century, an exponential expansion of knowledge in fields such as biology and physics mapped a comprehension of the self within a scientific sphere and cast it adrift in relativity. At its end, we meet with a conception of the self that is subject to DNA code manipulations, artificial intelligence and image phantasms.

Given the changes that new technologies have wrought, perhaps Baudelaire's poetic vision of modernity is not so appropriate after all. Perhaps instead of a world in flux we have been plunged into a world of fusion and mutation, confusion and contamination. Marshall McLuhan, a media guru writing a hundred years after Baudelaire, envisions this brave new world as the "extension of our central nervous system itself into a global embrace."[4] Jean Baudrillard, a postmodernist theorist who expands upon McLuhan's prophesy of a global nervous system, proposes that we have left behind a world in flux to enter the realm of the simulacrum. According to Baudrillard's opaque description of the simulacrum we now inhabit, "simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of the real without origin or reality: a hyperreal."[5] The image now precedes reality; henceforth, argues Baudrillard, "it is the map that engenders the territory."[6]

Baudrillard's encapsulation of the simulacrum as a hyperreal offers a seductive, albeit slightly incomprehensible, theorization for the increasing convergence of lived and simulated experience. Yet paradoxically, his vision of a technologically engineered reality is also uncannily familiar. In his passive acquiescence to a technological omnipotence, a dystopic echo of an early modern embrace of machine over humanity can be heard. From his postmodern pronouncement of a symbolic economy of images completely severed from lived reality, there emerges a modernist lament for a representational purity of originals over copies.

In contrast to the modernist undertones and technological overdetermination that saturate Baudrillard's theorization of the hyperreal, Gilles Deleuze's philosophical reading of the simulacrum offers a way out of an apparent impasse in which both familiar territories and unfamiliar terrain lead back to the same mastery of machines over consciousness. Tracing the idea of the simulacrum back to its philosophical origins in Plato's hostility to the imitation or mimesis of

appearances, Deleuze identifies an ancient site of contestation between copies and originals. What is at stake in the simulacrum, argues Deleuze, is an archaic struggle between representational purity and promiscuity that challenges a Platonic order of representation in Western culture privileging sameness over difference.[7]

In Deleuze's reading of Plato's hostility to mimesis, he notes that Plato distinguishes between good copies (geometry) and bad copies (images). Good copies are based upon the degree to which the representation of appearances resemble ideal forms or Ideas. Bad copies, on the other hand, are imitations of appearances that seem to perfectly mimic reality. Upon close inspection, however, they do not even remotely resemble the originals they profess to represent. For Plato, it is these bad copies that are the simulacra. They give rise to a false representation that challenges the primacy of sameness linking appearances to good copies to ideal forms. Accordingly, it is the simulacra that Plato represses in the search for knowledge that enlightens rather than deceives, purifies rather than contaminates.

In turn, argues Deleuze, Plato's decision to exorcise the simulacra from the order of representation constructs a legacy in Western culture of repressing difference in favour of sameness. Banished from the Platonic tradition of thought is the power of mimesis to conjure indeterminacy and the power of the copy to affect the original. What is lost in the process, writes Deleuze, "is the state of free, oceanic differences, of nomadic distributions, and crowned anarchy."[8] Thus to assert the primacy of the simulacrum is not to give into a reality lost in a shuffle of degraded copies, but in Deleuze's words to "render the order of participation, the fixidity of distribution, the determination of hierarchy impossible."[9]

In recent multimedia works by Dara Birnbaum and Stan Douglas, it is this ordered hierarchy of representation that is called into question. Instead of surrendering to a spectre of a seamless hyperreal in which the map precedes the territory, these artists examine what issues emerge when an image map of simulation meets a territory of bodies and histories. Mining the media archives to isolate historical moments in which ideological confrontation is played out through a proliferation of images, they excavate a site of contestation between good copies and bad copies. In the use of multiple video projections, their installations mimic the ubiquitousness of a contemporary field of vision to reflect upon the ways in which a global nervous system conjures and represses the ghosts of difference. Recontextualizing a flow of information through visual strategies of juxtaposition and montage, they position the viewer as an active participant in deciphering the entanglement of simulated and lived experience. In the process, they locate in the simulacrum the potential to pry loose the fixed categories of gender and race from their representational moorings.

In Dara Birnbaum's *Hostage*, a six-channel video installation with an interactive laser beam, an interrogation of a
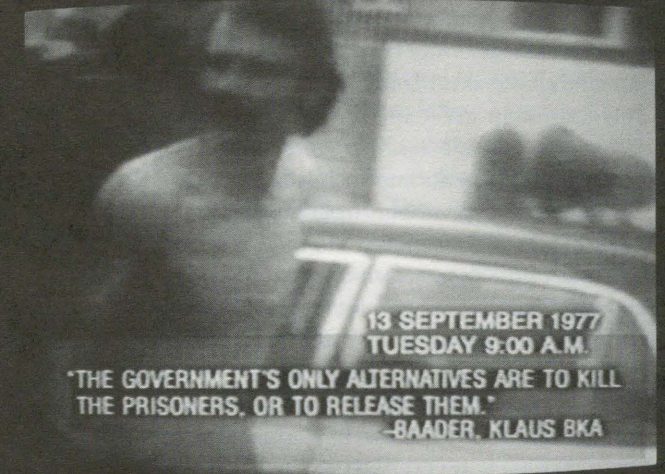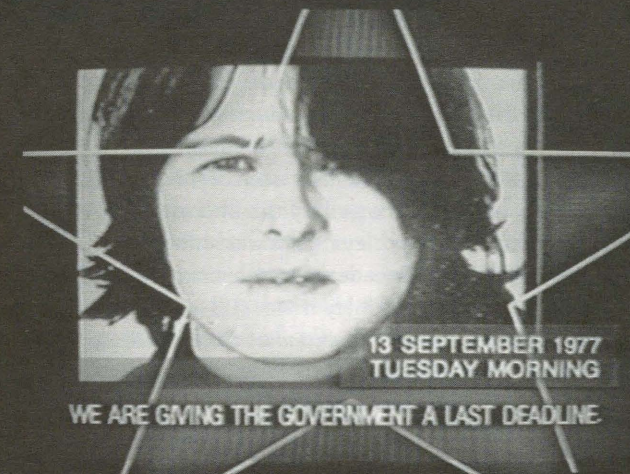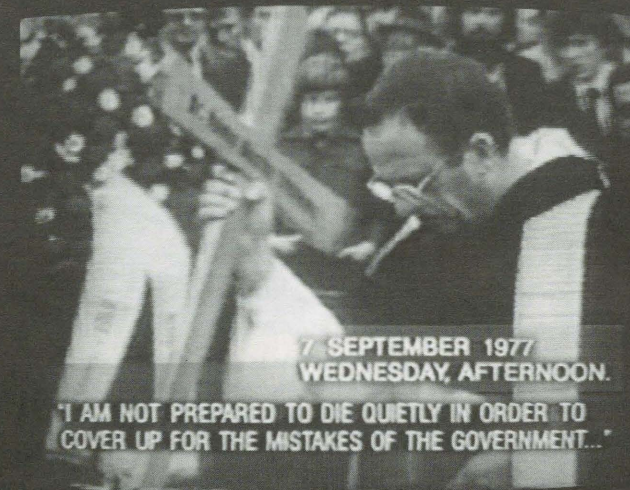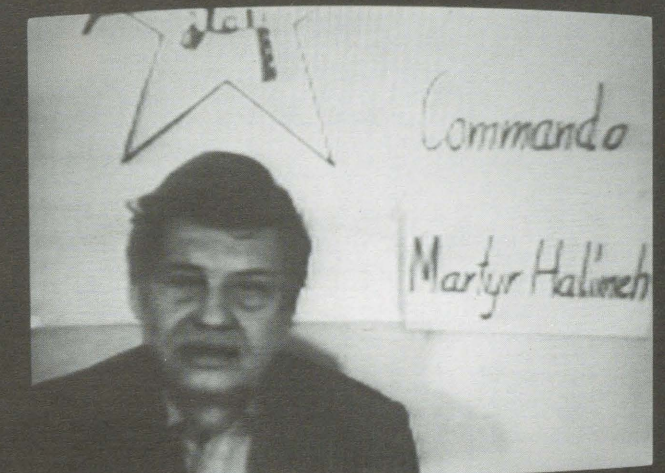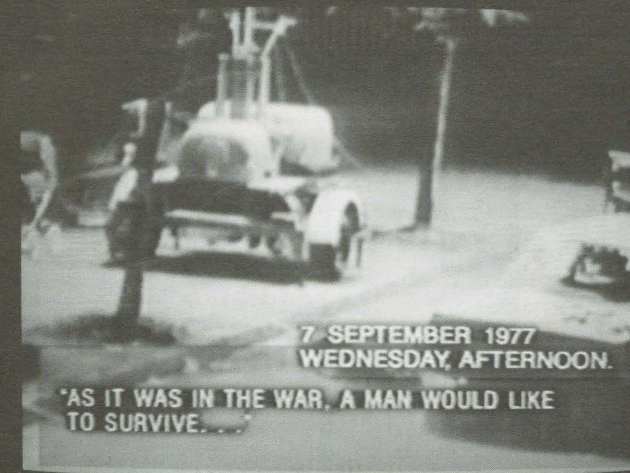
Video stills from the installation tapes for *Hostage*, Dara Birnbaum, six-channel video and interactive laser disk, 1994. The images are from the press coverage of the events surrounding the 1977 Red Army Faction kidnapping of German industrialist Hanns Martin Schleyer and the resultant "suicides" of jailed Baader-Meinhoff members.
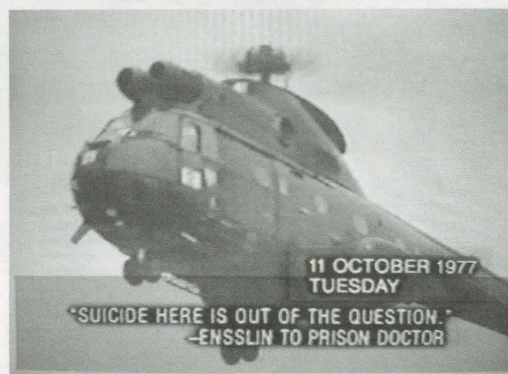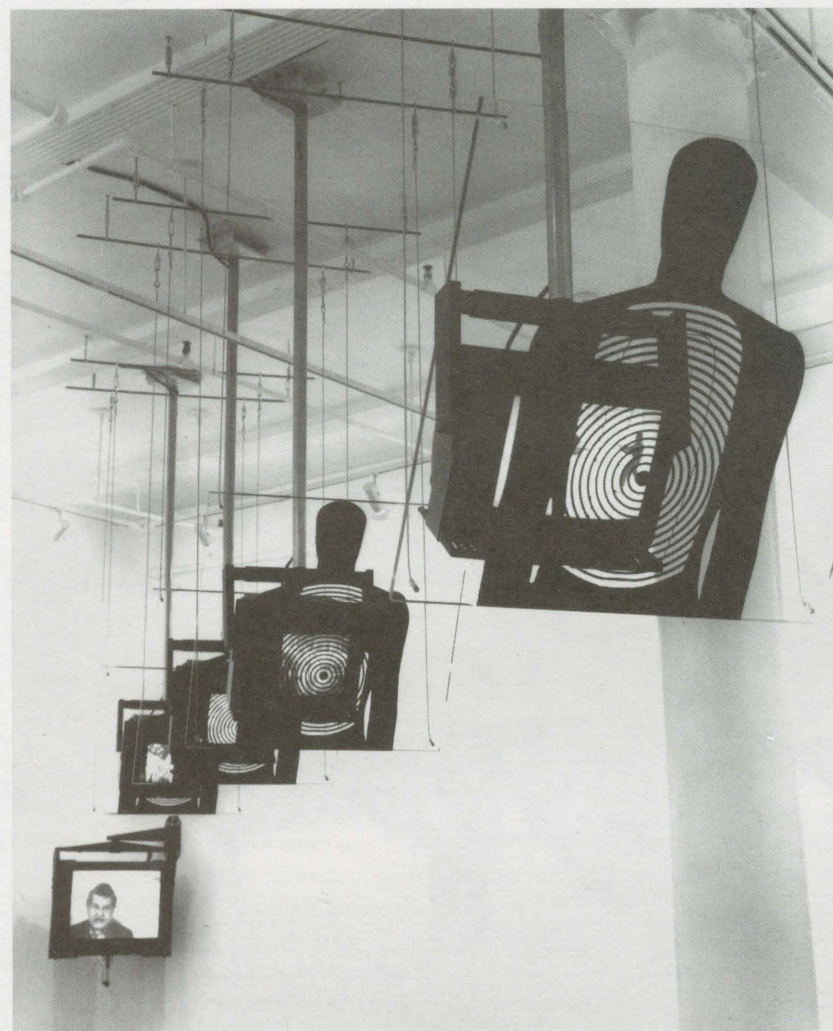
Installation shot and stills, *Hostage*, Dara Birnbaum, six-channel video and interactive laser installation with Peerless ceiling and wall mounts, and designed ceiling mounts and Plexiglas shields, 1994. Channels 1–5: videotape, colour. Photo by Geoffrey Clements, courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

global nervous system at its most nervous ensues. First exhibited at the Paula Cooper Gallery in 1994, *Hostage* takes as its subject matter the controversial kidnapping of the German industrialist Hanns Martin Schleyer by the Red Army Faction in 1977, and the subsequent "suicides" of three of the Baader-Meinhof members who were in Stammheim prison during the hostage-taking crisis. Conjuring image phantoms from history to reveal the internal logic of the simulacrum, Birnbaum escalates a flow of images to the point at which the interface of the screen becomes a death space in which the copies of the simulacra stare down at each other.

In *Hostage*, six video monitors diagonally span the gallery space. Four of the monitors are suspended from the ceiling at the same height as television sets installed in airport waiting lounges. The other two monitors are mounted on opposite corners of the gallery at eye level. A laser beam stretches underneath the four ceiling monitors and connects the two wall monitors. On the four monitors

suspended from the ceiling, self-contained videos running about five minutes long are simultaneously screened. In each a rapid fire montage of television footage from the period of the kidnapping, mug shots of the Red Army Faction, and drawings of the high security wing built at Stammheim to contain members of the Baader-Meinhof group, creates a perceptible chaos from archival images.

At the far corner of the gallery the fifth monitor features clandestine footage of Schleyer that was shot by the kidnappers and then rebroadcast on television by the West German state to "prove" Schleyer was still alive. Below the monitor is located the sender signal of the laser beam. Across the room the sixth monitor plays twelve minutes of fast-cutting news clips from various American newspaper reports on the hostage taking crisis and the Red Army Faction. Beneath it is located the laser's receiver signal. When the viewer passes in front of the laser beam, the news clips on the sixth monitor are frozen in time and space for as long as the viewer remains in the line of the laser's light.

In Birnbaum's installation, only the most determined viewer can piece together from the disparate images of the six monitors a coherent narrative. Fragmented, disjointed, nervous-making, the installation positions the viewer in a place where all the images are collapsed into ubiquity. The viewer, as much as the Germans at the historical moment of the kidnapping, are held hostage to an image machine. It is as if the interface of the screen had gone awry, no longer assuring control but producing anarchy. Here the convergence of simulation and experience is not manifested in the allure of a technological integration but in the shock of finding oneself a target of the simulacrum.

In turn, the role of the viewer as a target is mirrored by Plexiglas silhouettes of a human figure placed in front of each of the ceiling monitors. Resembling firing range targets, these silhouettes are marked with elongated circles that approximate fingerprints. This added layer of simulation evokes another form of ubiquity in which the imprint of the body's contact with the state entangles identity with the flow of classification as well as information, presaging the increasing use of DNA testing, and closer to home, the announcement in Ontario that the Conservative government wants to fingerprint citizens for purposes of welfare fraud control.

At the beginning of each videotape, this target is also reproduced and superimposed upon an electronic identification countdown for the broadcast transmission of United Press International. Serving as an image map for the information flow on the monitors, the superimposition is keyed with the words "roving reporter," a codename for an independent news gathering service. It was from this news service that Birnbaum was able to obtain documentary evidence after all the major mass media sources and German television refused to release their archival footage. As the electronic countdown on each tape reaches zero, the target is riddled with bullet shots, adding to the noise and confusion of the viewing experience.

In making a concerted effort to view each of the videotapes individually, the viewer becomes aware of the way in which the German state used television as an interface of social and political control. Despite the proliferation of images that ensued during the hostage-taking crisis, television did not provide analysis but withheld it. Through the filtering of information, it became an arena of simulated negotiation with the kidnappers that masked the lack of a political will to actually achieve a resolution to the crisis.

As the transmission site for the clandestine images of Schleyer pleading for his life, television served to sensationalize the drama of the situation rather than delineate the issues that lay behind the kidnapping. After the murder and recovery of Schleyer's body, it also served to resurrect the body of Schleyer as a martyr to the nervous system's collapse. During Schleyer's funeral, the *New York Times* reported that "television canceled programs and substituted funeral music," while the *Chicago Tribune* reported on

October 26, 1977, that "the ceremony was televised live into the factories of Daimer-Benz, of which Schleyer had been a director."

In contrast to the spectacle that television created out of Schleyer, there was no media access to the members of the Baader-Meinhof group in prison during the hostage crisis. For them, the television screen was an interface of hidden surveillance witnessed only by the guards at Stammheim prison. As a result, their motives for embracing "terrorism" and their supposed "suicides" were enveloped in a media wrapping of pseudo-psychologizing. Reports on the Baader-Meinhof in the print medium filled in the image gaps of television by constructing a narrative in which gender became the dividing line of monstrosity and violence.

On the sixth monitor in *Hostage* (the one in which the image flow is interrupted by the viewer's presence blocking the laser beam), factual reports on the hostage-taking crisis are interspersed with news stories from American sources that construct a psychology of West German "terrorism" based upon women's participation in the Red Army Faction. *Newsweek* attributes the phenomenon of women's participation in the Baader-Meinhof "to the typical emotional fervor of the female," reporting the denunciation of a German woman politician who declared that "these women negate everything that is part of the established feminine character." The *Chicago Tribune* quotes a German police official in saying "women's participation (in terrorism) is the dark side of women's emancipation." A *Los Angeles Times* headline, "A new generation of deadly young women" is accompanied by an assessment of a German criminologist who links their feminine pathology to "the influence of domineering mothers, and fathers who were often described as dictatorial and absent." Perhaps the most succinct commentary is proffered by a neighbour of a Baader-Meinhof member who describes for the *L.A. Times* how her infamous neighbour "sang communist songs all night and never cleaned the stairs."

By reordering data through the simulation of an historical moment, Birnbaum reveals the paradoxical determinacy and indeterminacy of gender within a flow of information. Holding up a mirror of the nervous system to itself, she also unveils a deadly embrace of sameness that underlies a surface appearance of difference. Through the interface of the screen, the Baader-Meinhof group and the state engage in a game of mimicry in which each imitates the other in a constant escalation of violence. As a witness to this game of mimicry, the viewer is confronted with the coercive mechanisms of image control that underlie an image proliferation. Caught in the light of the laser beam, s/he experiences a contact with the materiality of information. Alerted to what anthropologist Michael Taussig describes as "the visual contract with reality"[10] in which the copy has the power to influence the original, the viewer sifts through archival data to decipher an historical moment in which an image map of
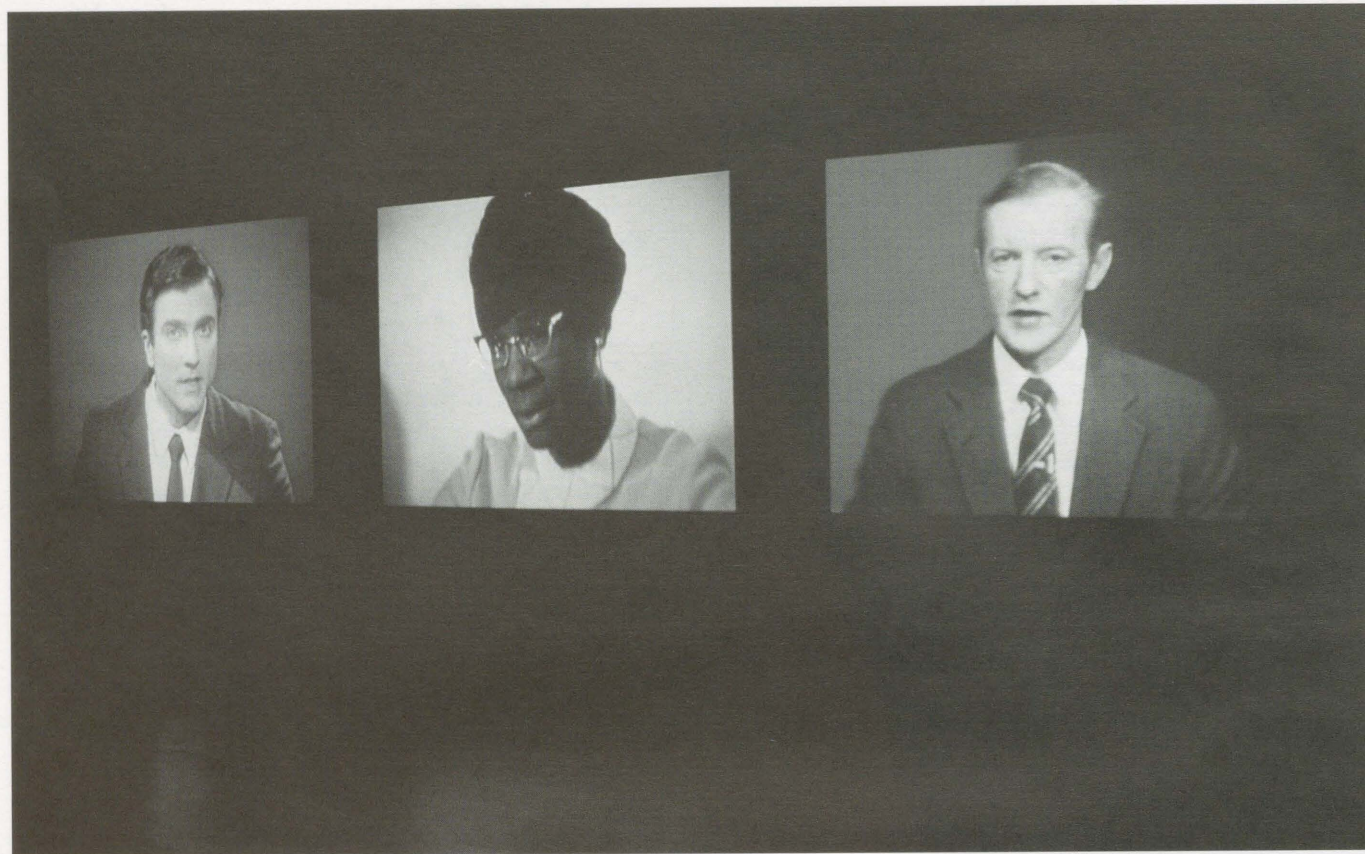
Evening, Stan Douglas, 1994, three-channel video installation, colour. Photo courtesy David Zwirner gallery.

simulation bled over into the body politic to entangle image and response, terror and repression.

In Birnbaum's use of news reports what also becomes transparent is the inability of the mass media at that historical moment to offer an explanation for the global nervous system's sudden nervousness (outside, of course, of an analysis of women guerrillas as the unfortunate by-product of female emancipation). Time and Newsweek reports from 1977 can provide "no ready explanation for the terrorist movement except that it grew out of the Vietnam War," noting that the "emergence of a fanatical minority has baffled analysts." Such bafflement was not ingenuous. In the attempts by leading European theorists in Semiotext(e)'s 1982 German Issue to disentangle the ideological and technological strands that led to the mimetic escalation of violence in Germany, a sense of uneasiness and confusion prevails. The visual design of the journal itself reinforces this unease by dividing each of the pages in half to mimic the division of the Berlin Wall. At the same time, it was here that Paul Virilio first developed his analysis of the ubiquitousness of a contemporary field of vision and Jean Baudrillard began his slippery theoretical slide toward a hyperreal of models without origins.[11]

In this light, it is interesting to note that when Paul Virilio published L'Espace Critique several years later, he contextualized his initial analysis of the ubiquitousness of a contemporary field of vision by arguing that the image architecture of a global system was generated as a response to the euroterrorism of the late 1970s. For Virilio, the lived experiences of ideological confrontation preceded a blueprint of simulation. It was the collapse of the nervous system upon itself that produced a shift in the deployment of new technologies whereby "the screen interface of computers, television, and teleconferences, the surface of inscriptions, hitherto devoid of depth, becomes a kind of 'distance,' a depth of field of a new kind of representation, a visibility without any face-to-face encounter."[12]

In Stan Douglas's recent video installation, Evening, it is this conjunction of ideological confrontation with a shift in the architecture of image proliferation that is examined. Commissioned as a site-specific piece for Chicago's Renaissance Society Gallery, Evening combines archival footage with actors playing news anchors to simulate three newscasts broadcast by three fictional local television stations on January 1, 1969, and January 1, 1970. The three newscasts are screened simultaneously side by side on ten-foot screens so that the viewer can choose to listen to one or all three news broadcasts at the same time. Through a carefully orchestrated chorus of gesture and speech, Evening explores a formal shift in the delivery of televised information from print-based editorial news reporting to a "happy talk" format of sound-bite journalism and informal chatter

that became the prototype for today's info-entertainment and personality-driven news.

As a glimpse backward in time, Evening is as fascinating in its evocation of image phantoms as Hostage. Similar to Birnbaum's installation, Evening amplifies a flow of information to leave the viewer disorientated, shifting between viewpoints and copies. But while Hostage identifies an historical moment in which the interface of television was unable to contain a political crisis, Evening examines how a transition in image delivery successfully defused an escalating ideological confrontation. Making the headlines in Evening are the Black Panthers, the MiLai massacre, The FLQ crisis, the Yippies, the Conspiracy Seven Trial, Ross Perot's failed attempt to deliver Christmas hampers to Hanoi prisoners of war and the escalation of the space race between the U.S. and the USSR. Fear of Soviet technological superiority is propagated by a report of the launch of a Russian supersonic airline, then assuaged by photographs taken by NASA of the moon's landscape. The infiltration and framing of the Black Panthers by American internal security services is mirrored in the media framing of the Black Panthers as preachers of "riot and revolution."

In the transition from a print-based journalism to a happy talk format that takes place between 1969 and 1970, the stories making the headlines and the images of conflict do not change substantially. What does change in the intervening year is the analysis of ideological and racial differences. In 1969, the Black Panthers and the left-wing student activist movement are presented as serious challenges to an ailing political system. By 1970, they have become one-dimensional stereotypes of a fringe revolutionary menace to an otherwise stable democracy. Through a reordering of archival footage, Douglas points to the way in which the lived experience of racial and ideological conflict are reshaped and restrained by the architecture of a global nervous system. Reflecting an ongoing concern in his work "to understand what kind of reality has been effaced by something else, because a particular kind of representation supposes a kind of understanding of the world,"[13] Evening pries the viewer from a fascination with the spectacle of the media to reveal in his words "the fragmentation of interrelated events and atomization of historical processes"[14] engendered by an image map of simulation.

View of the Ruskin Plant and the Stave River, Stan Douglas, 1992, C-print photograph, 46 x 41 cm. Photo courtesy of David Zwirner gallery, New York.

In an earlier work by Douglas, Fear, Pursuit, Catastrophe: Ruskin, B.C. (1993), a conjoining of a silent film with ghostly atonal music provides further insight into his preoccupation with exploring how history and representation are intertwined. In this installation, a recreation of a melodramatic film in the style of the last silent cinema of the thirties is keyed to Arnold Schoenberg's 1930 Accompaniment to a Cinematographic Scene. Conceived by Schoenberg as an accompaniment to an imaginary film intended to express emotions, it is played by a computer-programmed grand piano. The film, an oblique detective story without an ending, is based on archival police records of an unsolved mystery of a Japanese worker who disappeared from Ruskin, B.C., in 1929. The valley in which the film takes place habours a history of successive displacements and migrations. Named

Still from Pursuit, Fear, Catastrophe: Ruskin, B.C., Stan Douglas, 1993. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Still from *Pursuit, Fear, Catastrophe: Ruskin, B.C.*, Stan Douglas, 1993. Photo courtesy of the artist.

after the British art critic John Ruskin, it is the disputed territory of a First Nations land claim, the home of a brief utopian experiment based on Ruskin's vision of a communal socialism, the temporary location of a Chinese work force and later a community of Japanese Canadian berry farmers who were forcibly removed and interned in camps in 1942.

Through the disjunctures of the silent film and the rifts of Schoenberg's music, Douglas creates an eerie dreamscape filled with invisible phantoms of the past. Evoking sensations of inexplicable loss and pathos, his allusive and fragmented image map reverberates with another echo from the history of early modernism: the anti-geometric, anti-logical impulse of an avant-garde to link expression to emotion and to align art with the unconscious and the spirit world. For Aragon and the surrealists, this impulse envisioned the collapse of an ordered hierarchy of representation into a mythic flow of simulation. Through the mimicry of Europe's "primitive" other, they sought to unleash a magic coterie of

copies that Plato had banished so long ago. When this modernist echo is linked to the hidden memories buried beneath the surface images in *Fear, Pursuit, Catastrophe: Ruskin, B.C.*, what emerges from a mythic flow of simulation is the lived experience of colonial oppression. Embedded in the mimetic structure of Douglas's installation are the legacies of conquest that brought the technological mastery of Western culture and the "primitive" other into visual contact.

Viewed in the context of *Fear, Pursuit, Catastrophe: Ruskin, B.C.*, *Evening* becomes an examination of how the history of anti-colonist and anti-imperialist struggles is excised from technology's web of mediation. Mimicking a global nervous system in order to excavate the image remnants of these struggles, Douglas materializes what Taussig describes as the "unsettling and unsettled interpretation in constant movement with itself" when "the West as mirrored in the eyes and handiwork of its Others undermines the stability

which mastery needs."[15] Locating in the simulacrum a meeting between an image map of simulation and a territory of oppression, Douglas traces the reordering of sameness within a global nervous system to render visible the invisible repressions of difference.

The historical moment that Douglas conjures in *Evening* was also the moment in which video's utopian beginnings sought to open a window on the world through the self-determination of "guerilla" community television and cable initiatives. It was at this time that heated discussions were taking place at UNESCO around the McBride Report in which the non-aligned movement of post-colonial states called for the establishment of a New World Information Order to reign in the "open" and "free" access to communication technologies enjoyed and deployed by the United States of America. It was also at this time that the U.S. Congress passed an amendment in 1970 prohibiting government funding for technological research that was not directly linked to military concerns. In an ideologically polarized world, freedom and access were clearly dependent on one's political and economic resources in a global system of centres and peripheries, of postindustrial and non-industrialized nations.

Twenty-five years later, the call for a New World Information Order to reshape a global circulation of images has been supplanted by the economic demands of a New World Order. The ideological bipolarity revealed at the heart of the nervous system in *Evening* and *Hostage* has collapsed into a diffuse embrace of technology as a tool of enhancement for the human race. As such, we stand at a crucial crossroads in negotiating the relationship between the worlds we embody and a manufactured realm of images that envelop us. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War constructs an arena of representation in which the ghosts of history repressed by ideology emerge. The Internet, conceived as an infrastructure for the dissemination of classified military information, has become a site of global interchange. Yet if the interface of the Internet and the promise of cybernetic harmony are not to fall prey to the same dystopic fate as television, offering an illusion of the reordering representation that ends up affirming sameness in the guise of promoting diversity, it is paramount that issues of access and resources, of historical legacies and cultural differences, are integral to an image map of simulation.

In Birnbaum and Douglas's multimedia works, the examination of these issues is central to their vision of an interaction between machine and consciousness as one of dialogue rather than mastery. Constructing from archival images artistic interventions within a global nervous system, they create blueprints for the past and future in which it is not the interface of the screen that dematerializes identity and destabilizes experience, but the lived experiences of ideological confrontation and colonial oppression haunting an ordered hierarchy of representation.

Notes

1. Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema*, trans. Patrick Camiller (New York: Verso, 1989), p. 71.

2. Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life" (first published in 1863), *Selected Writings on Art and Literature* (New York: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 403.

3. Umberto Boccioni quoted in Majorie Perloff, *The Futurist Moment: Avant-garde, Avant-Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1986), p. 6.

4. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 3.

5. Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra" in *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), p. 2.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

7. I would like to acknowledge Paul Patton's superb synthesis of Gilles Deleuze's critique of Plato and Seth Benardete's commentary on Plato in formulating my summary of Deleuze's theory. See Paul Patton, "Anti-Platonism and Art" in *Gilles Deleuze and the Theatre of Philosophy*, eds. Constantin V. Boundas & Dorothea Olkowski (New York: Routledge, 1994), and Seth Benardete, *Plato's Sophist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

8. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Athlone Press, 1994), p. 265.

9. Cited by Paul Patton in "Anti-Platonism and Art" in *Gilles Deleuze and the Theatre of Philosophy*, op. cit., p. 152.

10. Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 70.

11. See *German Issue*, Semiotext(e), volume 4, no. 2, 1982.

12. Paul Virilio, *The Lost Dimension* (first published as L'Espace Critique in 1984), trans. Daniel Moshenberg (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), p. 12.

13. Quoted from an interview with Stan Douglas by Jean-Christophe Royoux, *Galleries Magazine*, February/March, 1994, p. 46.

14. Quoted from Stan Douglas's proposal for *Evening*, unpublished.

15. Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 237.

Dot Tuer is a writer and artist living in Toronto who has written on issues of technology, art and postcolonialism. She teaches courses on art history, postmodernism, and Latin American art at the Ontario College of Art & Design.

A Small Protest...

BY Deborah Waddington

The technology is available… a technology endlessly in search of a meaningful application…A range of so-called biometric technologies… identifying individuals by reading the pattern…converting index fingers into an encrypted numerical sequence…a mathematic algorithmic code [making for] infallible administrable identities…a genetic brand… *After all, the overriding paradigm of the information age is DNA and the code.*

"A political question not a technological one"… Metro "voted overwhelmingly" to be the first government in Canada to fingerprint welfare recipients…A consortium of Unisys Canada Inc., the Royal Bank and Great West Life Assurance Company were awarded the contract… Shares have jumped substantially in value.

Combating fraud…reduce fraud…prevent "double dipping"… escalating the fight against…curtailing fraud… "This will give legitimacy to the welfare system", said Councillor Fotino. "All citizens should be finger scanned if they have nothing to hide" said Councillor Chong. *The black market has become the only accessible economy for welfare recipients.*

Saving millions of dollars…estimates fraud costs 14.5 million a year…save at least 27.5 million… save a further 1.7 million…cost of installing is 4-8 million… savings would be 4.25 million net… *Net savings 4.25 million. Guinea pigs? Scapegoats?*

Continued…
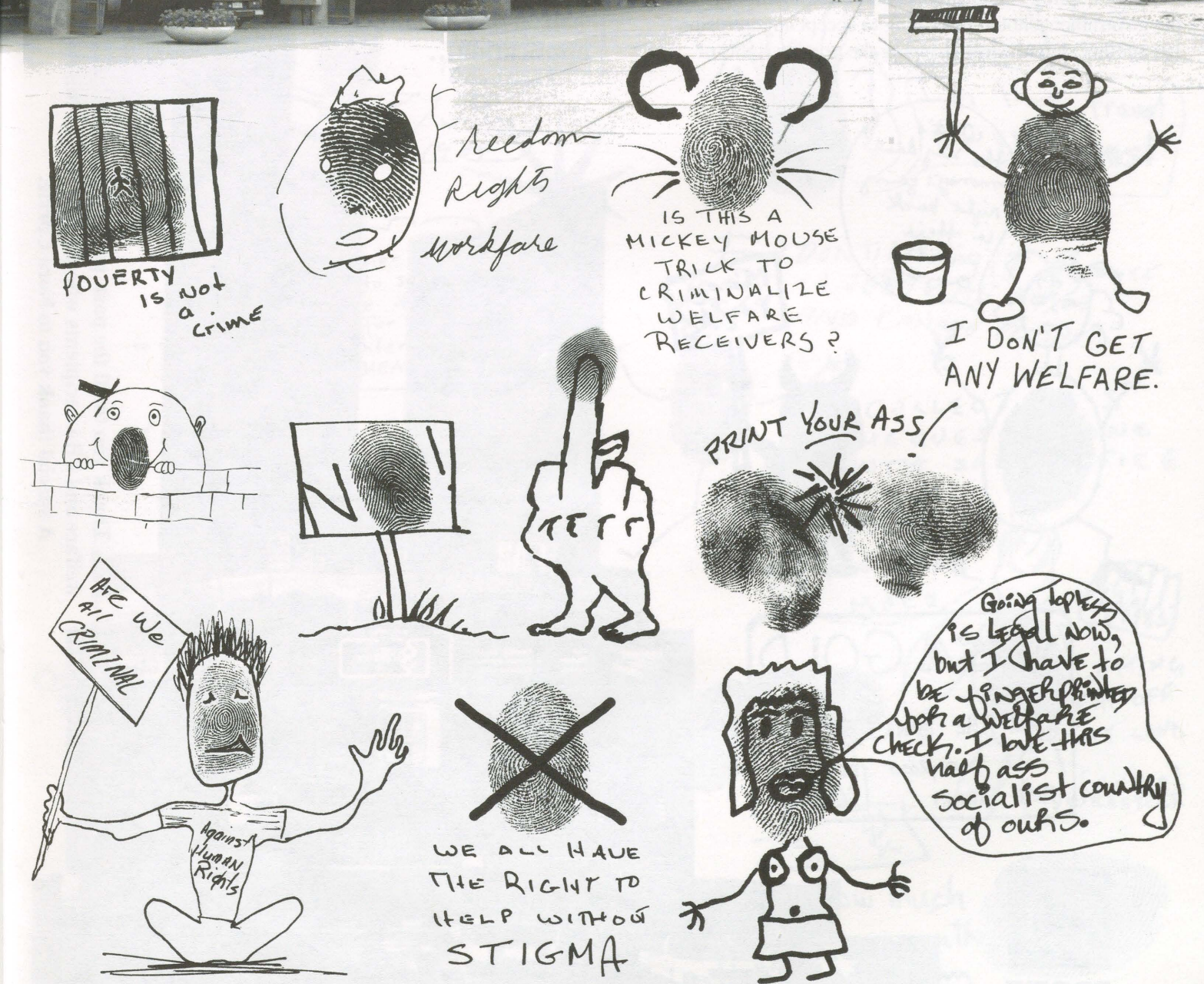
…Eliminating the paper shuffle…streamline paperwork…automate some services…ease the burden on overworked staff…"Will further ensure that workers spend their time helping people become independent"…

A small break for welfare recipients stung by recent cuts… Metro considering a discount with big clothing and food retailers. The advantage, an almost assured boost in clientele. 100,000 adults on welfare. "Focus those 100,000 they become a major source of consumer power"
Parkdale Community Audit Project learned from [small] business [in Parkdale] that people on welfare are very important to the local economy.

Anti-poverty groups argued that finger scanning stigmatizes. It's the digital age equivalent of the scarlet letter. "The assumption is that anyone who is taking money from the government should be willing to accept any intrusion". It's another step towards stripping the privacy rights of someone on welfare. They are surrendering more and more of their privacy. Privacy experts fear fingerprints would be used by authorites…secret files…
When Ottawa invented the social insurance number in 1964, policy makers assured Canadians they would only used for unemployment insurance and Canada Pension but Parliament has never set legislated limits on the use of SINs.

Ontario government announced smart cards: "it's coming"! The wave of the future! *Encoded with the wealth and power accrued during a lifetime.* An executive on the short list to provide the technology said, "As Canadians, we're just going to have to get over our problem with it." It's another means of identification. "Just another piece of data attached to your file".

A technology endlessly in search of a meaningful application…

Thank you to all the past, present, and imminent welfare and FBA recipients who participated in this protest. A special thank you to Nora Currie.

PROFIT
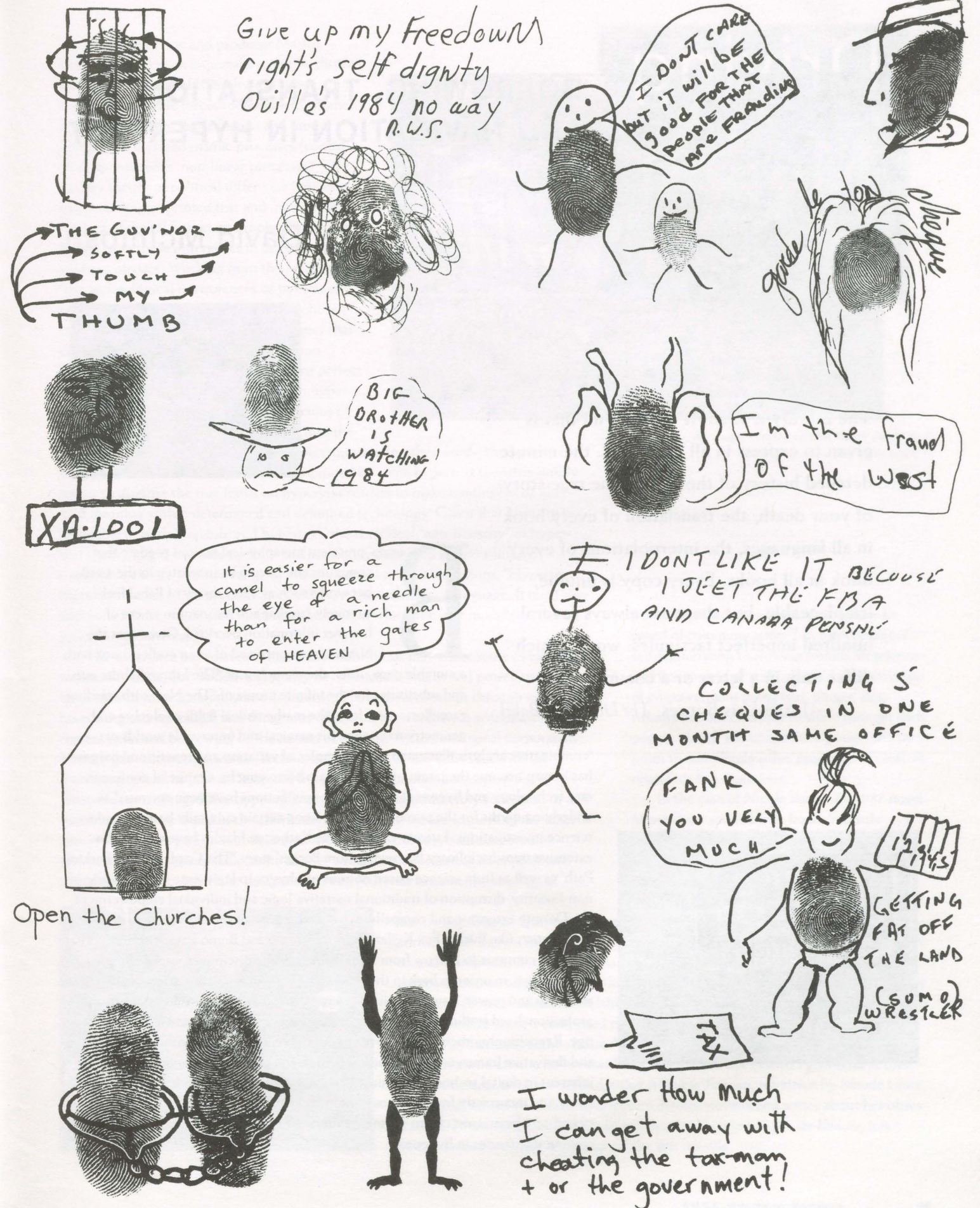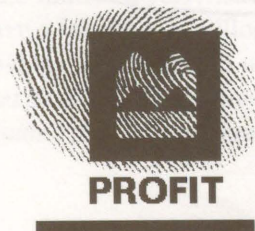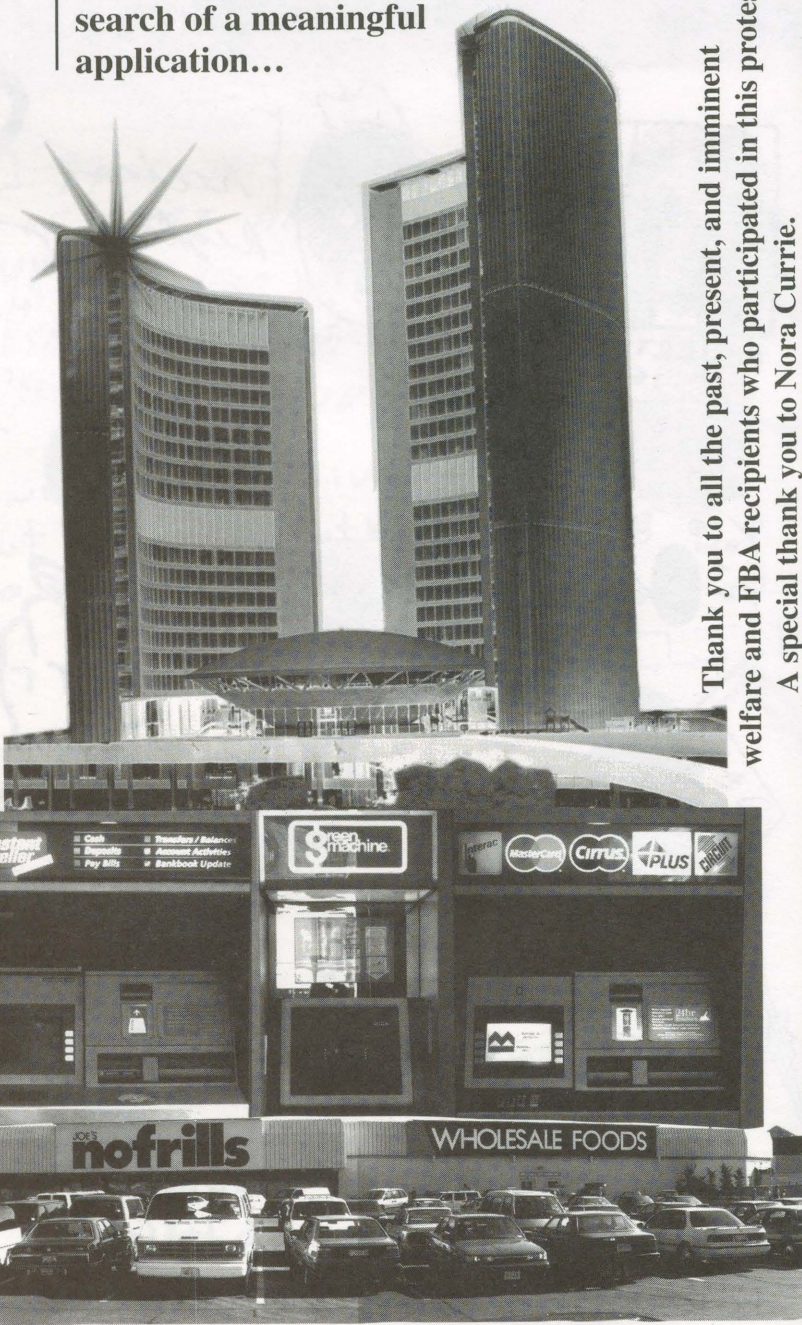
Driving Mauve Desert

BORROWING, TRANSLATION AND NAVIGATION IN HYPERTEXT

by David McIntosh
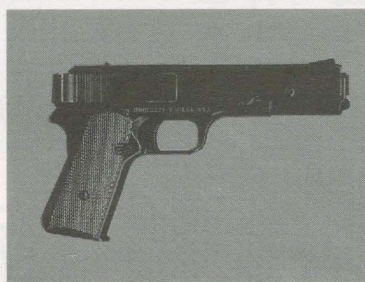
> The Library is total. It contains all that is given to express in all languages: the minute detailed history of the future, the true story of your death, the translation of every book in all languages, the interpolations of every book in all books. Every copy is unique, irreplaceable, but there are always several hundred imperfect facsimiles: works which differ only in a letter or a comma.
>
> —Jorge Luis Borges, *The Library of Babel*

Borges' prescient metaphysical fictions predate the computer era, having been written in the 1940s, but works such as The Library of Babel feel strangely familiar and resonant in an era of Internet information overload. Given that the Net is often conceived of as an endless book with a mutable page order, the metaphor of "The Library" shifts into and substitutes for the infinite utopia of "The Net" with startling ease. Borrowing from the mathematical fields of algebra and geometry to conjure his magical and impossible worlds of "combinative analysis illustrated with examples of variation and repetition," Borges has in turn become the target of more prosaic borrowing by a range of contemporary technology and hypertext theorists. Borges' fictions have been activated as underlying myths for the purpose of legitimating certain culturally based pseudo-science investigations. Literary theorists like Katherine Hayles have engaged in extensive transdisciplinary borrowing from Borges' story 'The Garden of the Forking Path' as well as from science-based notions of physics to legitimate their rhetoric of non-linearity, disruption of traditional narrative logic and individual empowerment.
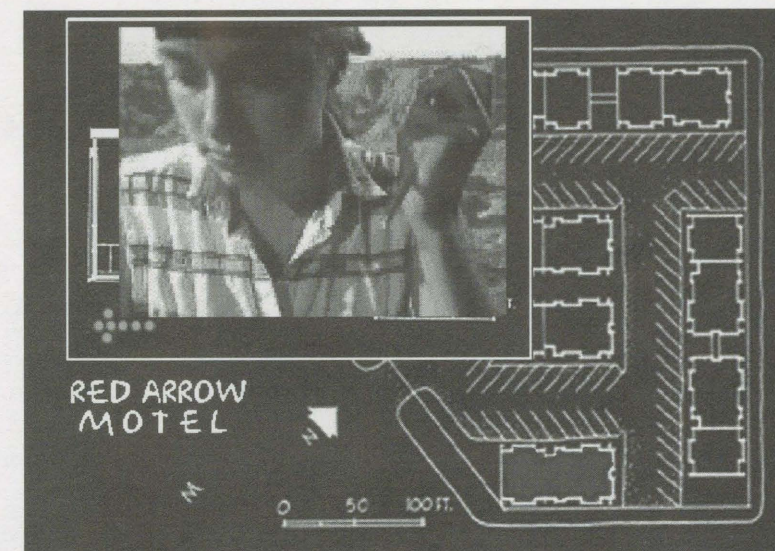
Despite extensive and compelling deconstructions of the fictiveness of science by scientists like Evelyn Fox Keller, Sandra Harding and Bruno Latour, some cultural theorists continue to borrow from fashionable science disciplines, especially physics and genetics, in order to bask in the reflected glow of a dominant discourse of authority and power. Some parasitic hypertext theorists have institutionalized and professionalized leading-edge physics theory for purposes of personal gain and prestige. Repositioning their overdone postmodern literary theories within a self-serving and derivative framework of the radical democratic potential of random access inherent in digital technologies, most of these hypertext theorists borrow extensively and incorrectly from notions of non-linearity in physics to support their jacked-up liberationist claims for intertextuality and the divergence of writing and reading trajectories in hypertext.

Hypertext critic and producer Martin Rosenberg makes an important scientific distinction between two fields of physics: time-reversible dynamic forces (determined, geometric and symmetrically linear forces) and time-irreversible thermodynamic processes (contingent, spontaneous, non-linear processes). The literary theory of political difference between linear reading of printed text and "non-linear" reading of digital hypertext simply does not follow from these differences in fields of the study of physics. Working from the premise that "the technological environment of hypertext remains functionally indifferent to the chosen trajectory of the reader," Rosenberg argues that cultural misreadings of the physics of non-linearity render the theoretical desire for perfect freedom and control over experience in hypertext just another seduction into the calculus of leaping backward and forward in time, into the physics of symmetry, reversibility and determinism. In other words, the science of the physics of non-linearity as misappropriated by some hypertext theorists simply serves to disguise the true limits on hypertext readers to make contingent or liberated meaning within determined and delimited technology. Given that linearity is inevitable in both literature and hypertext, the rhetorical "non-linearity" of hypertext theory might be more usefully and accurately described as multi-linearity —multiple choice within a range of linearly constitutive units/options. "Hypertext rhetoric must take into account more than just the ordering of language. It must also address a more complicated meta-management in which the user modifies ordering processes themselves."[1]

The difference between non-linear and multi-linear may strike some as baroque techno-minutiae, but, as fictive as it may be, science maintains real power and it must be borrowed from accurately and cautiously. Theoretical missteps through imprecise borrowing can have clear and dangerous effects on lived reality, as witnessed in the current nefarious borrowing of the notion of "nomad" by technological corporatists from elegant theoretical works. Techno-skeptic Sean Cubitt fears that with the increasing spread of "nomad" inspired Internet culture and its accompanying "unstable form of regressive hyperindividuation [and] contradictory formation of a narcissistic culture found in the affirmation of selfhood, we are witnessing the emergence of a subject position modelled on the nomadic transnational corporation." Cubitt describes the nomadic tactic as one "which had appeared as an appropriate use of weakness to defeat the designs of power, [but] has become the strategy of power itself, now rendered free of place by speed of communication."[2] In this context of self-legitimating borrowing from both science and fiction, and of technology-driven theories of empowerment going bad, Borges' algorithmic fictions continue to shine through with poetry, clarity and imaginative power, and to point to completely other processes of creative resistance in a digital era.

In the case of Nicole Brossard's 1987 novel *Mauve Desert* and Adriene Jenik's recently published hypertext CD-ROM *Mauve Desert*, the process that is integral to the poetic power of each piece as well as to the relationship between the pieces is that of translation, not borrowing. One of Quebec's most accomplished poets and novelists, Brossard is perhaps best known for the lush, seductive beauty of her language and for her experimental disruptions of traditional narrative forms; she has pioneered an artistic approach to intertextuality, multi-linearity and multi-media in print that is exemplary for digital projects. *Mauve Desert* (the novel) is structured around a series of translation processes. The book is comprised of three separate novellas: the first, titled *Mauve Desert*, is by fictitious author Laure Angstelle and tells the story of fifteen-year-old Melanie, a wild child who lives with her mother and her mother's girlfriend at their Arizona desert motel; the second, titled *A Book to Translate*, is written by Maude Laure, a Montreal school teacher who discovers the first novella and writes about her obsession with translating it into French; and the third is titled *Mauve, the Horizon*; it is Maude Laure's eventual translation of the first novella.

All images from the CD-ROM *Mauve Desert* by Adriene Jenik. Courtesy of the artist.

In conversation with the author of *Mauve Desert*, Maude the translator claims "Reading gives me every right" to which Laure Angstelle the author replies:

> But as a translator you have none. You've chosen the difficult task of reading backwards in your language what in mine flows from source.

Brossard conjures the complex process of translation in exacting and evocative detail:

> [Maude] suddenly had the feeling that she was going to be nothing but a resonance instrument.... She progressively got accustomed to the idea of becoming a voice of both other and alike in the world derived from Laure Angstelle. She would be alone in her language. Then would come substitution.

Maude contemplates her translator's voice as one which would "activate the hypotheses, adapt the adornment, adjust the folds, the ornament, the anecdote ensuing from it like a work, regulate the alternating movement of fiction and truth."[3]

In many ways, former Paper Tiger TV video producer and now CD-ROM artist Adriene Jenik has taken over and extended Maude Laure's role as translator. Jenik began work on adapting Brossard's novel as a film script some years ago, but soon realized that the irreversible time and space constraints inherent in the film medium prohibited her from adequately translating the subtleties of the intricate structure and process of Mauve Desert. The combination of random access and multi-media potential (simultaneous moving image, graphics, sound and text) of the CD-ROM medium allowed Jenik to develop what amounts to another language to translate into. Paralleling the CD-ROM's unique capacity for user-directed navigation, Jenik has established a central motif of a map of a corner of the Arizona desert where "the heat, the inexorable light transforms lives of flesh into the bare bones of narrative" and where we enter the next layer of the piece by driving into the desert horizon with Melanie in a white Meteor, escaping her mother and the Motel, contemplating the beauty and horror of her young life:

> Here in the desert, fear is precise. Never an obstacle. Fear is real, it is nothing like anguish. It is localized, familiar and inspires no fantasies. At the Motel though, fear is diffuse, televised like a rape, a murder, a fit of insanity.

Jenik speaks to us from behind the map, warning us as we drive Mauve Desert to "keep in mind where you sit and what drives you to understand." The sensually coloured central map is the access point to any number of Melanie's drives into the desert, to places like Desolation Canyon, Two Guns Highways, Jackrabbit Pass and Petrified Forest. Once we are in the car with Melanie, the screen takes on multiple
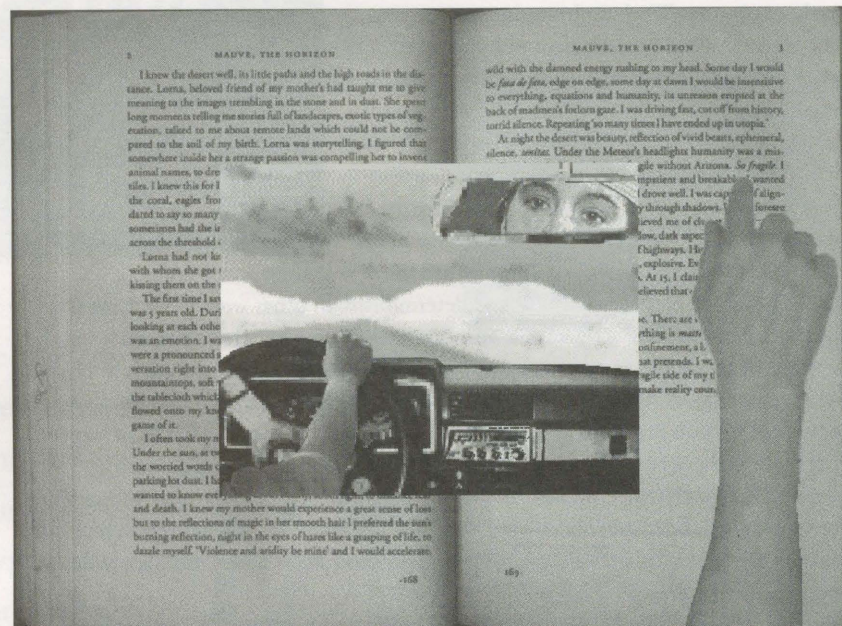
layers. The background is a double page spread from a copy of the actual book Mauve Desert, marked up with Jenik's handwritten comments like "guns & pornography." Layered over this book background is an image from inside Melanie's car looking out the front window; we see her hand on the wheel, her eyes in the rear view mirror, the road and the desert horizon in front of us. We can tune the radio in the dashboard as we move down the highway. The AM band gets us local right-wing talk radio, the FM band gets us music. Three additional tuning buttons allow us to play Melanie's voice-over in English, French or Spanish, giving the notion of translation an immediate reality. "Fear, it doesn't matter when you accelerate; fear vanishes like a dark spot in the rear-view mirror."

Entering the rear-view mirror through Melanie's eyes brings yet another layer up on the screen, inside the book pages, inside the image of Melanie driving: live action encounters of a confrontational nature between Melanie and her mother, and of a seductive nature between Melanie and Angela Parkins, geometrist and head of the oversight committee at the Yucca Mountain Radioactive Waste Depository (a

factual site, also visitable from the central map). Sometimes the image inside the rear-view mirror is not live action, but sections of dialogue in text form from a shooting script. As we accompany Melanie on these drives into the desert, fragments of her life begin to accumulate into a tentative and mutable narrative in an order we have determined. There is a fixed end point, however, in which Angela Parkins is shot dead on the dance floor of the Red Arrow Motel bar, as Melanie watches in horror.
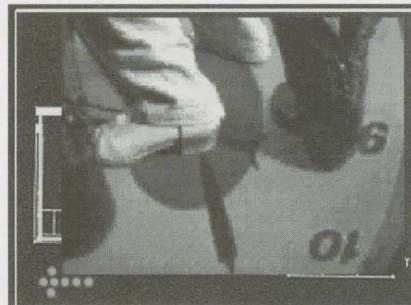
The last access point inside Melanie's car, the glove box, opens to take us into many other realms. There is a revolver that is always loaded. We can flip through a notebook filled with petulant thoughts and poems written by the young actor who plays Melanie in the live action sequences to find scribbled entries like "I hate computers" and "Who's scared, who stared, who cried, who lies, who cracked, who slacked, who's behind those eyes." A map in the glove box takes us into a completely other world, that of translator Maude Laure in Montreal as she struggles with her

obsession with language and with Melanie's story. The books in Maude's library can be pulled off the shelf and paged through. A book titled "The American Southwest" contains brilliantly coloured illustrations of Arizona flora and fauna. Another book involves detailed scientific examination of the true, nightmarish story of the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste burial site, located near the fictional Mauve Motel and built on an unpredictable fault line. This book provides a website address for further connection to the ongoing saga of Yucca Mountain. Other books on the shelf are more theoretical works on technology, even hypertext theory, by authors like Paul Virilio and Rosanne Stone. One of the most intriguing places inside Maude's office is a set of two simultaneous moving images of women's lips, both speaking the same phrases like "humanity—nothing but deserted skin," but one set of lips speaks English, the other speaks French, rendering the space between languages visible, audible and finally, sensual.

The glove box map also takes us to self-reflexive sites, where Nicole Brossard and Adriene Jenik examine their own creative processes. Brossard appears seated in a green summer garden, surrounded by floating heads of herself. Each head

A BOOK TO TRANSLATE

UN LIVRE A TRADUIRE

offers Brossard speaking on a specific topic: narrative, desire, the symbolic. On language and imagination, Brossard suggests that "I have no imagination, it is language which has imagination." Jenik offers a self-portrait of her face in close-up surrounded by a snake pit of twisting roads and highway signs. Her large glasses become screens for revisiting her process of making this work. She offers us fragments like: "Death Valley Survival Hints" an evocative notebook of her personal experience with the project; a "making of Mauve Desert" series of video imagery; and an extensive archive of correspondence between herself and Brossard, comprised of letters, faxes, postcards and e-mails. The most startling image in Jenik's self-portrait is a single frame map or flow chart of the structure underlying the entire CD; this is a complex image that can be pored over endlessly without ever fully comprehending it, an abstraction that only partially demystifies the elaborate structure and fluid processes built on it.

Intermittent references to science, technology and theory throughout both Brossard's novel and Jenik's translation take on an ominous coherence in a particular component of the CD-ROM that has been designed to slash through every other layer and trajectory outside of the will or choice of the user. The only male figure in the piece, Longman is an armed, insane scientist experiencing a meltdown in a grimly impersonal room at the Red Arrow Motel. Attached to the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste project in an unstated but extreme way, he represents "the civilization of men who came to the desert to watch their equations explode like a humanity." Jenik has fashioned Longman as the ghost in her machine; he cannot be summoned, but simply appears randomly at points of his own choosing to interrupt whatever significatory trajectory the user/driver may be on. A shadowy, desperate figure in hard edge black and white stills, "Longman knows the magic value of formulas. He thinks about the explosion. The slightest error could have disastrous consequences. I/am/become/Death.... Longman rests his head on the equation."

Mauve Desert is unique and original work in the CD-ROM format. It is neither a game nor a mathematical puzzle, but rather an invitation to navigation and discovery. Jenik's digital media work does not operate on the false premise of a borrowed scientific superego, as the parasitic work of some hypertext theorists does; instead, Jenik has set up a dynamic inside her work, as well as between her work and that of Nicole Brossard, that opens a dialogue between languages and media through the processes of negotiation, translation and imagination. Mauve Desert, the CD-ROM and the novel, constitutes two related and overlapping but distinct art objects which resonate with the poetics and sensuality of translation, expanding the potential for collaborative creative resistance in an age of digital dislocation. Mauve Desert invites us into "a sumptuous dialogue, an unreasonable expense of words and expressions, a suite, built around an idea which would drift.... Mauve Desert decomposed, recomposed."

Translation is so far removed from being the sterile equation of two dead languages that of all literary forms, it is the one charged with the special mission of watching over the maturing process of the original language and the birth pangs of its own.[4]

Notes

1. Martin E. Rosenberg, in *Hyper/Text/Theory*, ed. George P. Landow (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

2. Sean Cubitt in *Future Natural: nature/science/culture*, ed. George Robertson et al. (New York: Routledge, 1996).

3. All quotes unless otherwise indicated are from *Mauve Desert*, Jenik's CD-ROM distributed by Video In, or from *Mauve Desert*, the novel by Nicole Brossard published by Coach House Press in 1990.

4. Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator" in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Random House, 1988).

David McIntosh is a Toronto writer and curator. He is currently writing a book on recent Canadian cinema.

GENDER IN TRANSIT

"BRANDON" PROJECT CONCEIVED BY SHU LEA CHEANG IN DEVELOPMENT WITH THE GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, SOHO WEB-BASED MULTIMEDIA—BEGINNING 1998

Cylena Simonds

PLAN

Reggie Woolery

SITE

This winter Shu Lea Cheang embarks on a multimedia project with the Guggenheim Museum in New York that introduces a new approach to web-based art endeavors. "Brandon" (working title) is a highly ambitious collaborative "web narrative" as Cheang describes it. The title refers to Brandon Teena/Teena Brandon of Humboldt, Nebraska, who was raped then murdered by two men who discovered that Brandon was anatomically female but living as a male. A year-long event, "Brandon" the "web narrative" incorporates many layers including a Road Trip with the fictional Brandon, a mock chatline discussion, and a virtual courtroom culminating in a public trial for Brandon's accusers, as well as other issues concerning transgender rights. The piece also draws from two events that occurred in cyberspace: the controversy surrounding a man impersonating a disabled woman in an online community, and the rape of a character by another character in a virtual world.

This non-linear narrative seeks to reveal the problematics of gender as performance, introduced by these events into real and virtual
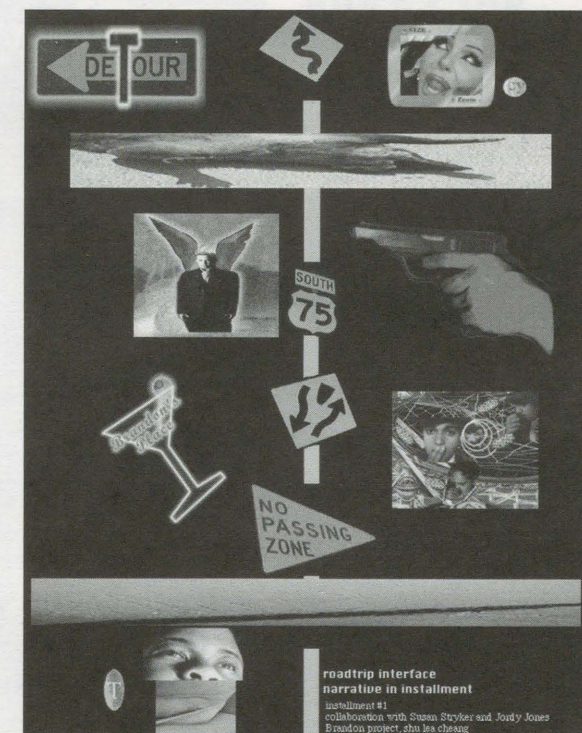
CITE

Compiled by Reggie Woolery

No identity remains entirely outside of or uncolonized by technology and its ideology; however, pockets of individual and collective identity based in bodily realities have resisted complete absorption into the machine. Exiled from preceding stages of identity technologization and denied commodity status in mass media representations, these pariah bodies have negotiated unique relationships with technology in order to sustain and evolve flesh identities.

More extensive digitalization of Queer identity will be highly problematic; the ideology of the mutable, meatless, intellectualized and loathsome virtual body that propels digital technologies is on a collision course with a resistant Queer identity grounded in the non-negotiable pleasures of specific, inflected, flesh bodies.

David McIntosh, "Pornutopian Premises, Positive Practices: Michael Balser's Video Art and Activism" in FUSE 18, no. 5, 1995, p. 21.

Roadtrip interface, "Brandon," Shu Lea Cheang, Jordy Jones, Susan Stryker, 1997–98.

Neo-Minimalism & Virtual Site Specificity

If '50s Minimalist art returned to the viewing subject a physical corporeal body, formerly eclipsed by the conceits of modernist primitivism, and '70s conceptual art, installation, process work and institutional critiques exposed that subject's social matrix, then recent Queer web-based works dissolve those movements' attendant ambivalences and undecidability by appealing to the virtual world's unique opportunities for interactivity, masquerade, and direct critiques of the law. Shu Lea Cheang's "Brandon," a "hypernarrative in transient mode," elaborates both site specificity's parochial traditions as well as its more recent worldly diversions.

SITE

"Brandon" takes up a real site within the Guggenheim Museum, more specifically a virtual space in memory on the museum's computer server. The Museum offers two essential features to Cheang's cyber intervention:

1) the '70s exposure of the museums' role in assigning legitimacy,

communities. Brandon Teena is a perfect locus for this exploration on the Web for in his lifestyle he attempted to act out the fluidity of gender that cyberspace has promoted as one of its utopian aspects. The Web has been fertile ground for many to play with gender performance within virtual communities. Sandy Stone has eloquently argued that these personae are no less legitimate than our bodily ones. And it is evident from the LambdaMOO (MOO: Multi-user dungeon—Object Oriented) rape case that virtual gender has many of the same vulnerabilities. Although "Brandon" proposes a solution to the crimes—a public trial for the perpetrators—this raises more questions than it answers. Can public consensus be used as a more legitimate vehicle for justice when majority consensus perpetuates the invisibility if not criminalization of the transgender community?

In "Brandon," Cheang plans to include several important historical trans-medical records of GRS (gender reassignment surgery), as well as theories of the body as social construct and gender as performance. The real and fictional are complicated throughout the piece by the interweaving of actual facts from the three events with fictional characters, dialogues and scenarios. "Brandon" is a work with many authors. Collaborators include science-fiction writer Pat Cadigan, cyberfeminist artist Gashgirl of VNS Matrix and Bomb Magazine editor and writer Lawrence Chua.

> It is precisely at the legislative frontier between what can be represented and what cannot that the postmodernist operation is being staged—not in order to transcend representation, but in order to expose that system of power that authorized certain representations while blocking, prohibiting and invalidating others.
>
> In order to speak, to represent herself, a woman assumes a masculine position; perhaps this is why femininity is frequently associated with masquerade, with false representation, with simulation and seduction. [Michele] Montrelay…identifies woman as "the ruin of representation."
>
> **Craig Owens, "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism" in The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983), p. 57.**

bigdoll interface
collaboration with Jordy Jones
javascript by Cherise Fong
Brandon project, shu lea cheang

Bigdoll interface, "Brandon," Shu Lea Cheang, 1997–98.

> "If one has lost a love-object," Freud writes, "the most obvious reaction is to identity oneself with it, to replace it from within, as it were, by identification." What is the status of this object that has already been lost to the subject, yet nonetheless remains present as the grammatical object of the sentence "it" that must be replaced from within by identification?
>
> Lacan explains that it is not the object itself that the subject takes inside but a likeness or facsimile: "What one cannot keep outside, one always keeps an image of inside. Identification with the object of love is silly as that." Identification in other words, invokes phantasms. By incorporating the spectral remains of the dearly departed love-object, the subject vampiristically comes to life. To be open to an identification is to be open to a death encounter, open to the very possibility of communing with the dead.
>
> **Diana Fuss, "Figuring Identification," in Identification Papers (London: Rutledge Press, 1995), p. 1.**

panopticon interface
developed with Beth Stryker, art design by Auriea Harvey
Brandon project, shu lea cheang

Left and below: Panopticon interface, "Brandon," Shu Lea Cheang, Beth Stryker, Auriea Harvey, 1997–98.

authority, and authenticity is transvalued into a reflexive device for defining and authoring a new Queer space.
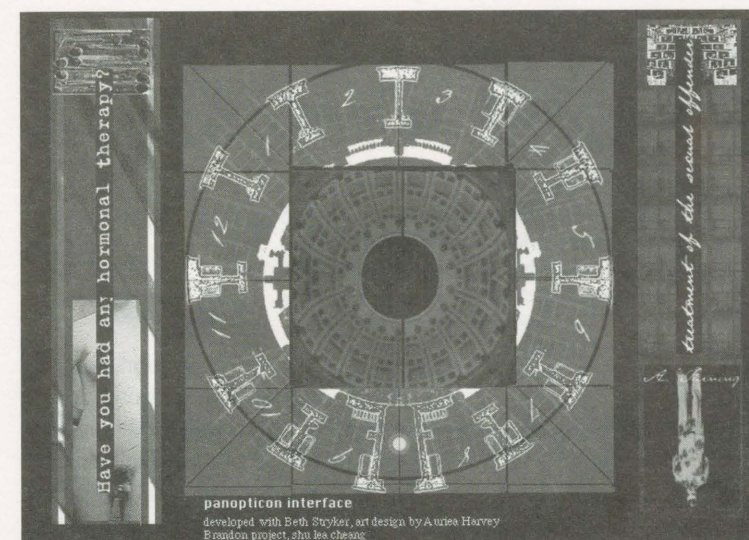
2) the museum as ruin, as mausoleum for dying works, is in synch with Cheang's vital resurrection and (re)dissemination of "Brandon" at the operating table of the computer screen and keyboard.

Site-work's engagement with the outside world, seemingly non-art issues, concerned with an integration into the realm of the social allows Cheang to posit online stalking, rape and homophobia as cultural sites deserving of investigation. As a Chinese American lesbian, probing the depths of cyber-melancholia, she seeks to link private emotional spaces with public spheres of debate. In the process, Cheang (re)invokes Brandon Teena's civil and human rights, drawing on a wealth of Black, feminist and Queer activist practice.

In addition, "Brandon" extends the field of site-specificity through drawing on a number of disciplines—law, psychoanalysis, computer science, narrative film—in order to discursively render an ultimate site of public debate tied to Brandon Teena's real-life murder trial. Cheang foregrounds mobilization and transferability, central to computing and mechanical reproduction, as aspects of site-specific practice that unhinge the original work from its fixity of place and paradoxically re-render it contextually and visually elsewhere—equivalent to the original.

> Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology.
>
> Performance's being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here, becomes itself through disappearance. …performance occurs over time which will not be repeated. The document of a performance then is only a spur of memory, an encouragement of memory to become present. …the performative quality of all seeing.
>
> **Peggy Phelan, "The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction," in Unmarked: The Politics of Performance (London: Rutledge Press, 1993), p. 146.**

> Sitting through long hours of debate in the council chamber and moving out into the political community, we tried to pinpoint a key organization, an old-boy network, a group of leaders who could determine the candidates and policies of the Monterey Park city council. Instead of a coherent political structure, we found a shifting set of networks touching many sites; the city council, neighborhood organizations, civic and political clubs, and public events and festivals.
>
> The political center had fallen out. We had arrived at a moment of transition. Its course was unclear: a rebellion of disgruntled old-timers against newcomers and developers? The replacement of Anglo by Chinese power? A new ethnic diversity of uncertain political direction?
>
> **John Horton, "Political Breaks and Transitions," in The Politics of Diversity: Immigration, Resistance and Change in Monterey Park, California (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), p. 59.**
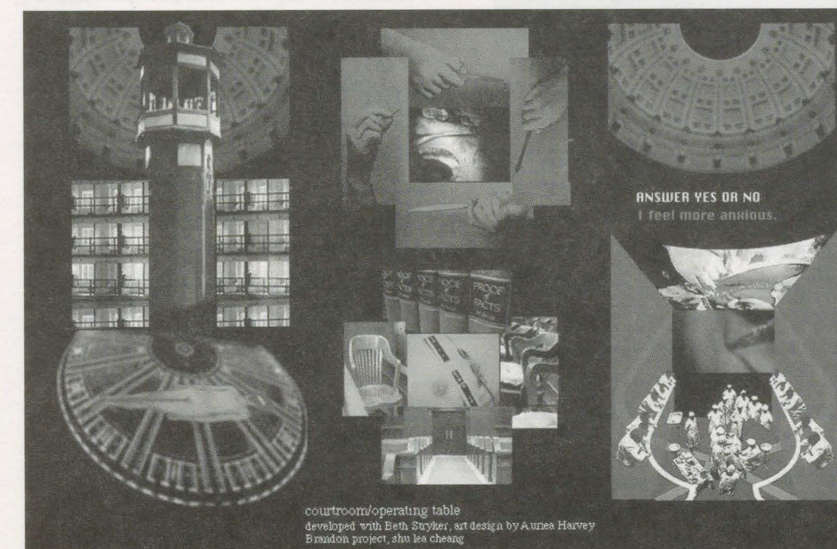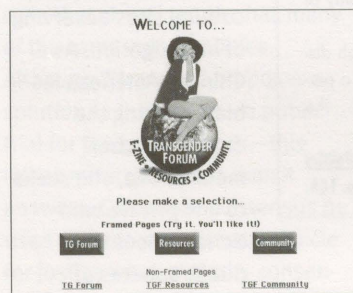

courtroom/operating table
developed with Beth Stryker, art design by Auriea Harvey
Brandon project, shu lea cheang

http://www.actlab.utexas.edu/~sandy/
Transgender writer & performance artist Sandy Stone's website.

http://www.tgfmall.com/
Transgender Forum.

WELCOME TO...

Please make a selection...

http://www.yak.net/third/links_tg.html
"Third" includes links to Third Gender sites; spirituality & gender; gendericious art; Gender, Culture, Society & Language; FTM sites; Bibliographies.
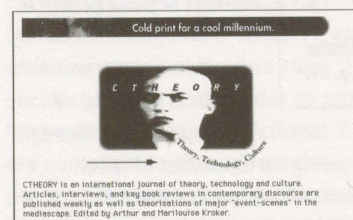
http://www.ctheory.com/a-kate_bornstein.html
"Kate Bornstein : A Transgender Transsexual Postmodern Tiresias," an Interview by Shannon Bell.

http://199.171.16.53/gender3.html
Gender 3 website is "devoted to abolishing the 2-sex system."

http://www.ftm-intl.org/
Female-to-male transsexual and transvestite support group.

In attempting to imagine the experience of reading and writing with (or within) this new form of text, one would do well to pay heed to what Mikhail Bakhtin* has written about the dialogic, polyphonic, multivocal novel, which he claims "is constructed not as the whole of a single consciousness, absorbing other consciousness as objects into itself, but as a whole formed by the interaction of several consciousnesses, none of which entirely becomes an object for the other." This technology—that of the printed book and its close relations, which include the typed or printed page—engenders certain notions of authorial property, authorial uniqueness, an a physically isolated text that hypertext makes untenable. The evidence of hypertext, in other words, historicizes many of our commonplace assumptions, thereby forcing them to descend from the ethereality of abstraction and appear as corollaries to a particular technology rooted in specific times and places.

George P. Landow, "Hypertext and Critical Theory," in Hypertext: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 11.

* Mikhail Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 18.

Concurrent with this move toward the dematerialization of the site is the ongoing de-aestheticization of the art work. Going against the grain of institutional habits and desires, and continuing to resist the commodification of art in/for the marketplace, site specific art adopts strategies that are either aggressively antivisual—informational, textual, expositional, didactic—or immaterial altogether—gestures, events, or performances bracketed by temporal boundaries. The "work" no longer seeks to be a noun/object but a verb/process, provoking the viewers' critical (not just physical) acuity regarding the ideological conditions of that viewing. In this context, the guarantee of a specific relationship between an art work and its "site" is not based on a physical permanence of that relationship (Serra), but rather on the recognition of its unfixed impermanence, to be experienced as an unrepeatable and fleeting situation.

Miwon Kwon, "One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity," in October 80, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Spring 1997, p. 91.

Cylena Simonds is an artist, curator, and writer working primarily with new media technologies. Graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and the Whitney Independent Study Program, she has worked with New York art institutions The New Museum of Contemporary Art and the World Financial Center Arts & Events Program. She is currently based in Leeds, England, where she is pursuing a MA in the Social History of Art.

SITE

Itineration, the process of locating work in distant places, can be found in the contemporary practice of artists traveling on commission from Europe to Japan to Canada producing temporally and/or geographically specific works. In some cases, as the art itself dissolves into immateriality, the artist "stands in" as the commodity object or tourist attraction for the sponsor. Using the notion of the itinerate in hand with the performative masquerade of virtuality, the "Brandon" project, by way of the World Wide Web, conjures up a multitude of potential distant yet fixed viewers, authors and collaborators.

Reggie Woolery is a visual artist and writer living in New York City.

"Brandon" is a co-production with the Banff Centre for the Arts and a collaboration with Theatre Anatomicum, DeWaag, Amsterdam.

Major collaborators are:
Jordy Jones, Susan Stryker (Brandon roadtrip);
Beth Stryker, Auriea Harvey (panopticon interface);
Francesca da Rimini, Lawrence Chua, Pat Cadigan (mooplay).

Technology ≠ Art

BY NANCY PATERSON

Right: Image of a 3-D environment used in *Placeholder* (dir. Brenda Laurel and Rachel Strickland, 1993), from a formation of hoodoos overlooking the Bow River.

Below: Map charting narrative elements of *Placeholder* with respect to features of the virtual geography. Photos courtesy Rachel Strickland.

One consequence of the recent proliferation of new electronic technologies is the erosion of philosophical distinctions between the body and the brain that dominated scientific and philosophical thought for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As the Cartesian body/mind split between physical/biological and rational/intellectual processes is challenged, the debate which distinguishes between chemical processes in the brain and more abstract mental operations such as metacognition and creativity is also in a state of flux. New electronic media compel us to re-think the body's relationship to technology.

The body is far from absent in the discussion of the political, economic and cultural impact of interactive media such as virtual reality technologies and their application. But whose (generic) body are we talking about? Issues of representation, access and diversity of cultural experience are undermined attributes of our bodies in these debates.

The experience of interaction in a computer-generated environment, a definitive paradigm of VR, was inaugurated in the early 1960s when Ivan Sutherland, working out of the University of Utah, developed a head-mounted display that allowed the user to look around a virtual landscape. Two small cathode ray tubes driven by vector graphics generators provided the appropriate stereo view for each eye. In the early 1970s, Fred Brooks at the University of North Carolina created a system for handling graphic objects using a mechanical manipulator. Around the same time, Myron Krueger began experimenting with interactive environments for unencumbered, full body, multisensory participation in computer-generated events. The intense (although
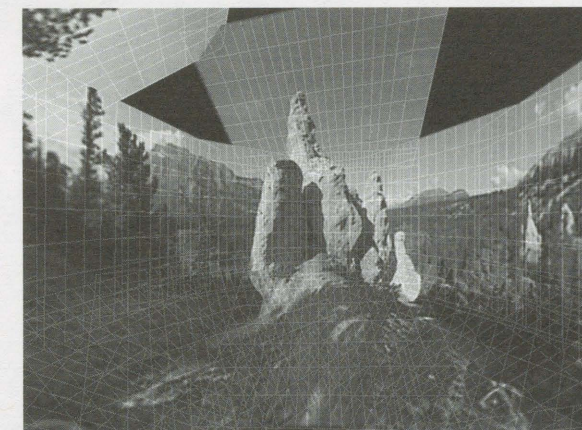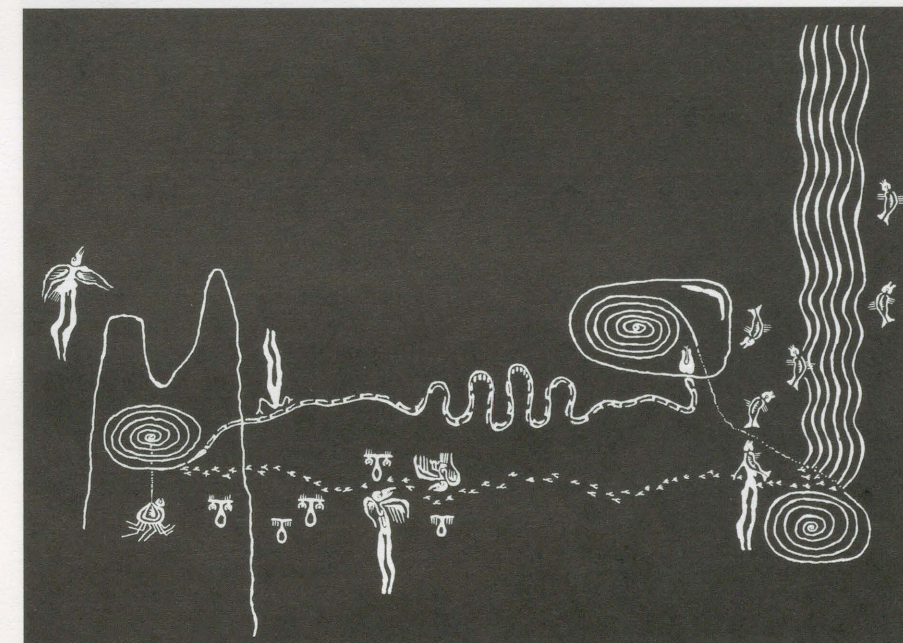
not widespread) excitement inspired by such experiments was accompanied by confusion and a sense of unease. Not since the Industrial Revolution had new technologies so directly challenged our sense of physical being as well as consciousness.

What is new about cyberspace is not so much the underlying technologies, but the way they are packaged and applied to a new way of thinking about computers and their relationship to human experience. Under the old

way of looking at things, computers were regarded as tools for the mind, where the mind was regarded as a disembodied intellect. Under the new paradigm, computers are regarded as engines for new worlds of experience, and the body is regarded as inseparable from the mind.[1]

Head-mounted displays, data gloves, body suits—these systems oversee the user's spatial position and orientation with devices that track eye movement, heart rate, depth and rate of each breath

Osmose, Char Davies, 1994–95. In the subterranean world with rocks, roots, and underground stream. Photo courtesy of the artist and Softimage.

logical research and design have dictated the type of work being done in these fields. Aesthetic considerations and questions about content have taken a back seat to concentration on performance improvements in personal computers and the development of low cost yet powerful 3-D rendering engines. The need for support (primarily funding) has meant that the applications chosen for development reflect the influence of the U.S. military, which invested heavily in the potential of these media for battlefield simulations and training.

As a case in point, the Architecture Machine Group at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology produced the revolutionary "Aspen Movie Map" in 1978–79, funded by the U.S. military's "Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency" (DARPA). Numerous artists participated in this and related projects—their justification being that they could not otherwise afford or gain access to the expensive, high-end tools of the trade. Many individuals who benefited from the military funding for such projects went on to become permanent fixtures of the new media art scene, receiving sponsorships at media arts organizations in the U.S., Germany and Canada for projects showcasing the latest in VR and other new electronic technologies.

Drawing on her background in theatre, Brenda Laurel describes the central controversy in VR as "the question of whether virtual worlds and the experiences people may have in them are or are not designed."[2] If we forgo involvement in system design, allowing our experience of virtual worlds to be limited to systems designed for us, what responsibility are we willing or able to undertake for the types of experiences triggered by these systems?

It is no coincidence that the first Canadian "Playdium" opened by Sega is in a suburban mega-mall, thirty minutes by car outside of Toronto. Anyone looking for a quick, cheap (video) thrill can find satisfaction on the Yonge St. strip. But for those who can afford a more substantial investment of both time and money, more intense (virtual) pleasures await at the "Playdium." It offers an opportunity to experience the twenty-first century body—hard-wired and in an intimate relationship with technology—in a context designed by and for a very specific sector of the population. The bodies it speaks to and about are white, Western and mostly male, reinforcing the debt owed by the designers of VR to capitalist and military mentors.

Notable as exceptions are the VR artworks of Char Davies and Brenda Laurel. Although these women are working from positions of privilege within the software industry, they must be credited with having taken the first tentative steps toward addressing an aesthetic that has been otherwise dominated by consumerism and militarism.

Char Davies, a principle in SoftImage (Montreal) prior to its purchase by Microsoft, created *Osmose* which she proposes as representing an alternative aesthetic for VR—one that encourages reflection and contemplation as well as a profound awareness of the body. This work is experienced in solitude. The immersant can explore several interconnected worlds, but cannot touch or change them. Translucency, subtlety of texture and spatial ambiguity describe the objects and environments that are encountered. There is no goal or mission in *Osmose*. Wearing a head-mounted display and a vest that monitors breathing, the immersant navigates through lush and abstract landscapes, utilizing the underwater breathing and leaning techniques of scuba diving. Encouraged to let go of habitual perceptions of space, the immersant must re-experience the body and its relationship to the world.

Brenda Laurel of Interval Research recently started a company called Purple Moon that designs software specifically for girls and young women. It is one of a handful of companies that are considering womens' needs, as compared to the many hundreds of thousands that are designing software for an adolescent, male audience. Laurel's work at Interval Corp. and Purple Moon has placed her, like Davies, in a position to challenge (at least) the gender bias that has dominated VR design and development. In residence at the Banff Centre in 1993, Laurel designed a VR work with Rachel Strickland titled *Placeholder*. In this work, unlike *Osmose*, multiple users interact with each other as they explore, separately and together, several "worlds" that are connected by portals. Each participant is originally assigned a pictographic representation of an animal, for example, "snake," "crow" and "spider." This is how they are seen by the other participants. These "costumes" lend certain powers to the wearer, but also certain limitations that quickly become apparent. "Costumes" may be exchanged or discarded, and so the participants are empowered to choose the body in which they are most comfortable. The interaction between people (and animals), the places that they choose to inhabit, and the way that this relationship is described and manifested ("the places here are marked with many voices") is the focus of this work.

Both *Osmose* and *Placeholder* are exceptional media works that attempt to contribute to the development of a critical aesthetic in this field. Artists experience the same challenges as the rest of the population in gaining access to new
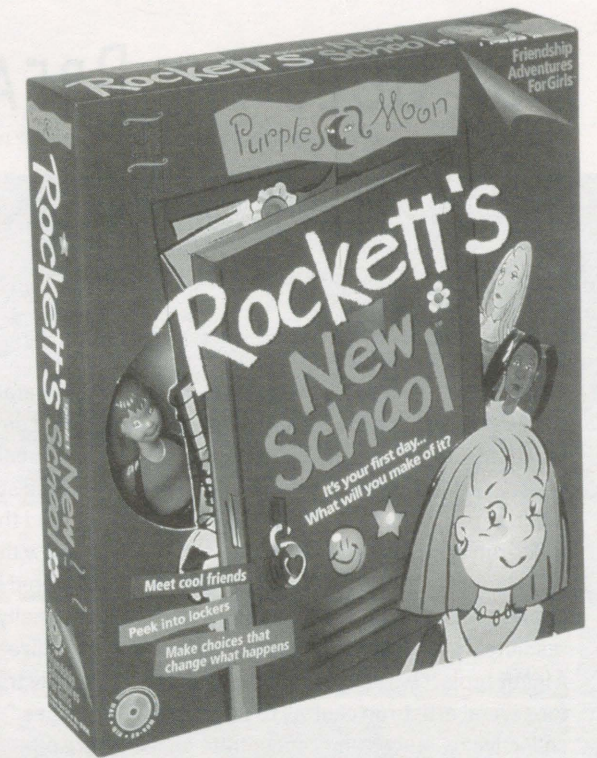
"Rocket's New School," a newly-released CD-ROM for girls age 8–12 from Purple Moon. Photo courtesy of Purple Moon.

technologies and maintaining a competitive level of media literacy. However, simply putting new electronic technologies in the reach and hands of artists does not equal art. Whatever our class, race or gender, we all take our bodies with us as we approach the millenium. We can only buy so much technological confidence. The rest must come from art and artists like Davies and Laurel who critically envision a creative future in which we all take part.

Notes

1. Randal Walser, "Elements of a Cyberspace Playhouse" in *Virtual Reality: Theory, Practice and Promise*, ed. Sandra K. Helsel and Judith Paris Roth (Westport, Connecticut: Meckler, 1991), p. 53.

2. Brenda Laurel, "Virtual Reality Design: A Personal View" in *Virtual Reality: Theory, Practice and Promise, op. cit.*, p. 95.

Nancy Paterson is currently Associate Artist at the Bell Centre for Creative Communications, an Instructor at the Ontario College of Art & Design, and Facilities Manager at Charles Street Video. Her website is at: http://www.bccc.com/nancy/nancy.html.

taken. In VR, the body becomes an essential component of the cybernetic cycle of data input, analysis and feedback in what has been described as a systemic relationship of surveillance and control. The presence and significance of the body is indisputable. The early designers and proponents of virtual reality expressed an interest in utilizing these new tools and systems to break down barriers between class, race and gender. The disappearance of the body, however, was not an original intention. Although Hollywood seems determined to sell us a vision of VR as a means for escaping from the body, it is increasingly apparent that the body

itself has never been more present. Our physical attendance and participation has become the interface itself.

Perhaps discussions around the "disappearance" of the body have taken our attention when we should be thinking about the disappearance or nonexistence of critical and aesthetic discourse in the field of new media art itself. An appropriate question is whether artists have missed the critical moment in the development of these new media when these issues might have been raised. Have we missed the boat entirely? For many years, the economics and politics of techno-

POP GOES THE BREAST SURGERY

BY ANNE GOLDEN

"Breast Wishes," Montreal-based Shari Hatt's photo exhibition at Vu in Quebec City is a succinct candy-coloured pop documentary look at breasts and breast surgery. Both Quebec City and *Méduse*, the name of the building that groups several artist-run centres, including Vu, under the same roof, are interesting and unlikely settings for a show like Hatt's, which is resolutely low tech and in-your-face. The *Méduse* project was born out of the desire for several artist-run centres to pool their collective resources and concentrate on artistic practices that involve high technology-based new media. "Breast Wishes" does not belong to the tradition of theory-driven or technologized work offered as regular fare by most influential galleries and artist-run centres in Quebec City.

Hatt's exhibition is partly about using photography and video as a form of non-verbal direct address. The content is key and speaks of a body that has been transformed surgically, but has not been altered through technological means. For a show that is about a changing and changed body, the gallery space has been minimally altered as well. The artist chose to utilize only the gallery walls for her relatively traditional installation of "Breast Wishes." Hatt's stills and video images are offered straight up, provoking no site-specific revelations as one approaches or steps back from the walls.

Hatt's large-format photographs are mounted unframed on three of the gallery walls inside vividly coloured rectangles painted directly on the wall. Two facing

"Breast Wishes," Shari Hatt, 1993–96, photography. Photo courtesy of the artist.

walls represent before and after breast surgery photos of one woman: the artist. In the middle a painted rectangle on one wall is a huge still of the artists' breasts prior to surgery. Displayed all around are photographs of Hatt being prepared for surgery as a doctor draws lines on and around her breasts and one of her during the operation in which her arm is flung out in a quasi-crucifixion pose. This series of photos is placed on orange, yellow, green and pink painted backgrounds. Some of these painted backgrounds boast caption tails emerging from the central breast photo. These tails resemble dialogue balloons in comic books or photo-novels. But instead of a comely young woman placed under a hovering text, it is a pair of breasts doing the "talking." Pop goes the breast surgery.

The facing wall is made up of photographs of the artist striking a series of poses dressed in a variety of outfits: red halter top, black tee, bathing suit, bustier. There are also shots of her obscuring her naked breasts with crossed arms or the palms of her hands. The large middle photo from which all the smaller size prints spin out like satellites is of Hatt's scarred breasts, post-surgery. Hatt poses playfully in a parody of display-your-tits fashion photography. The colours mirror those across the gallery in the other photo-novel montage, but the overall sense is one of warmth. The dominant blue-green sterility of the operating room is replaced with red and white backgrounds used in the stills.

The last photo element is an enormous rectangular montage that takes up most of the third wall and is made up of breast portraits of women of all ages and body types. The women were shot against an
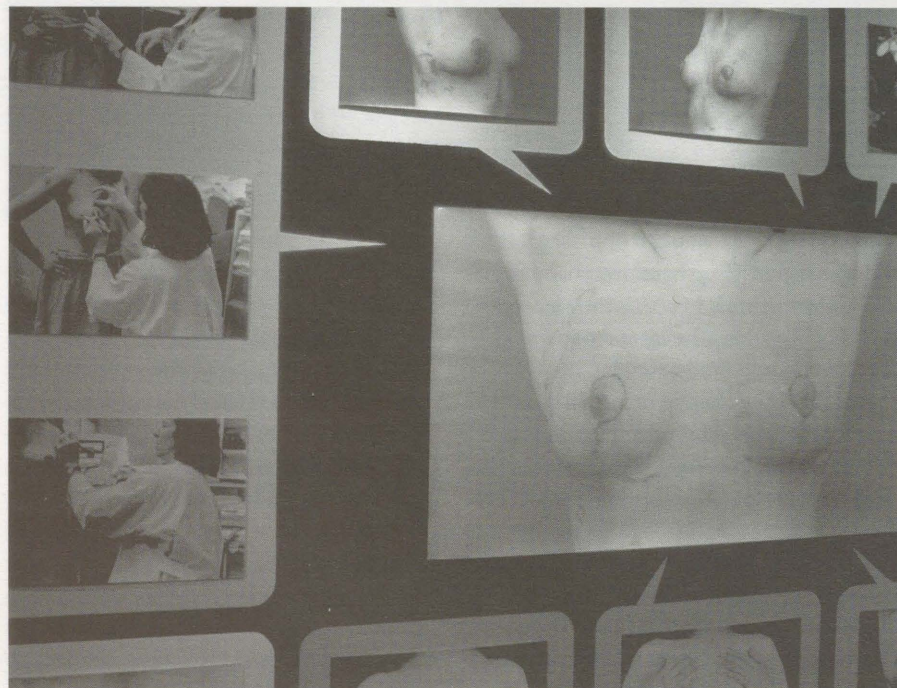
"Breast Wishes," Shari Hatt, 1993–96, photography. Photo courtesy of the artist.

amber background in identical framing—neck down, waist up. Both anonymous and intimate, this wall casts a warm glow over the entire room. It is a wall of fixed and finite moments between the two other walls that represent pre-op and post-op. All the photos begin to resemble a skewed fashion shoot in which the models are captured on film baring all while preserving their identities. These are like mug shots of chests, all different yet all posed in essentially the same manner.

Two monitors are pushed up against the fourth wall. On the left monitor is a loop of the artist removing her bandages, which resemble an elaborate old-fashioned bra, to reveal scarring and still bloody breasts, post-surgery. On the right

monitor, a series of women framed from the waist up and the neck down remove tank tops, shirts and bras. The image of each woman is held for a moment. Hatt then cuts to a different woman and the action is repeated. Some remove their clothing decisively while others betray a certain hesitation and self-consciousness in their movements.

In the video loop of Hatt removing her bra-bandages, her tentative gestures become a focal point for the show. Her hands flutter and pause before gingerly tugging and pulling at her dressing as she removes her bandages for the first time on camera. In a room full of flat out photographic documentation, this loop repeats her stylized gestures to the point that

they become compellingly hypnotic and a hint at narrative. The story that emerges from this repetition is Hatt's own: it is a recounting of the promise of improvement (a much-desired breast reduction) and repeated botched surgery. "Breast Wishes" may be tongue-in-cheek parody and celebration, but it is also about continuing to reveal when it appears that there is nothing more to be known.

"Breast Wishes" boasts symmetrical and repetitive elements, but the whole is thrown off kilter by the artists' adherence to a rigorous and formal layout in which breasts are de-sexualized. There is no hinting, no set-up and no seduction. Images of clothing removal appear only in brief shots. Hatt herself plays at

exhibitionism in her poses, but the sheer quantity of photographs erodes this interpretation. It is insistent and obsessive, but the only visual story is Hatt's. The show is like a parody of a Life magazine layout in which the classic full face photographic portrait is of bosoms. It concentrates on breasts as the body part that women are told they should prize, but often feel they must hide or alter. The portraits of other women's chests are the most mysterious. We learn nothing of these women, and are only able to identify some scars, tattoos and piercings. In a time when fear of breast cancer is justifiably high, it is almost reassuring to see five long rows of anonymous and unscarred breasts.

The only dangling element in the installation is what viewers hear. An audio loop is played in which the artist and other women tell breast-related anecdotes about being harassed on the streets and on the job, about when their breasts started sprouting and about surgery. One woman laughs at the notion of being identified by one's breasts and says "it's not your brain, it's just your chest." These voices fill a space in which all the work has been flattened against the walls.

"Breast Wishes" is an inspired offering and a photographic journal about a body part. Shari Hatt uses her own version of direct address to great advantage, improvising on the artistic tradition of self-documentation with wit and wisdom. In an age of relentless encroachment of technology on both bodies and artistic practice, "Breast Wishes" asserts that the simple personal acts of recording, showing and telling can reveal a powerful central story that influences the perception and interpretation of many otherwise hidden body stories. Hatt has lifted the rock of Pop Art to peer under and examine her own squirming story. The scientific-medical world has failed the artist and the implication is that it may well fail the

"Breast Wishes," Shari Hatt, 1993–96, video installation. Photo by André Barrette.

women represented in the neat film strips across the gallery wall.

"Breast Wishes" will be presented by Floating Gallery as part of the Festival of Photography in Winnipeg, curated by Jake Moore (May 22–June 20, 1998).

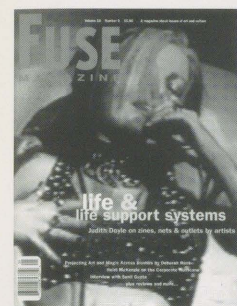*Anne Golden is a videomaker and curator living in Montreal.*

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...at the beginning
stripped naked but in
silhouette eventually,
I speak, you see my face