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Editors Notes

Switch Staffs

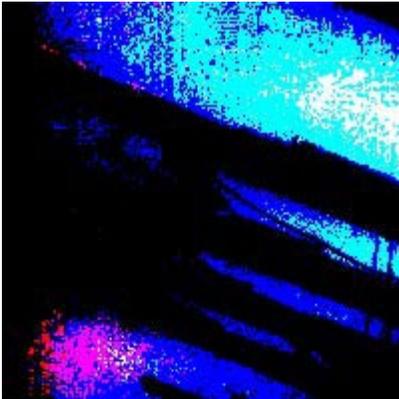
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Editors Notes

Switch Staffs on Jan 1 1998

issue 08

Co-Editors notes for Military Issue (#8)

It's a little bit like a war.

In December 1997, a series of simulated postings appeared on several mail lists, (**Rhizome, 7-11, nettime**). The writing appeared under the authorship of various art/culture critics such as Mark Amerika, Peter Weibel, and Timothy Druckrey. The posts included correct e-mail addresses, indicating that either the lists had been hacked, or that the source of the simulations came from within those organizations. This event, for a time at least, was the subject of much attention and discussion. Was it a criminal act? Was it naive? Or was it a tactical art performance whose origin was the virtual frontline? (A non-place place where the battle over issues ranging from the ontology of the still pubescent net.art form, to the meaning of the term postmodern, are being contested with the weapons of contemporary communications technology.)

The most vociferous counter-attack on the performance was posed by one of its (not)victims, Tim Druckrey, in his **REFLEX** column on **äda 'web**:

"a facetious discourse persists in the guise of faux subversion, indifferent mischief, opportunistic fraud, deconstituted history, or irresponsible defamation perpetrated through vain electronic deconstructions of identity 'theorized' in nonsensical notions of schizophrenaesthetics more deluded than deleuzian, more subjectivized by pathologies of smug hubris than by ingenious sabotage."

He goes on to adjectivize the perpetrators in many ways: shiftless, hollow, pathetic, selfish, contemptuous, reckless, and pessimistic.

Whether right or wrong, Druckrey found himself in an unfortunate but actual position necessitating flight or fight. His choice was to either concede his territory (his voice), in the face of the culture jamming and deception of an unprovoked strike, or stand his ground by taking the necessary defensive actions to protect his identity. Druckrey chooses to return fire, not only with his sophisticated tactical polemics, but indeed with a logistically achievable strategic defense and deterrence system: "initiating a forum concerned with this issue... organizing responses from those affected and soliciting legal opinions... investigating the use of reasonable security measures to insure the reliability and accuracy of the materials posted."

Where will this and other similar escalations lead? The event is clearly representative of the kind of ferment that is now taking place over the ontology and critical status of art as it emerges on the network medium. This particular event, which we shall call the "Ersatz posting scandal of late 1997", demonstrates that even among a few clear-eyed proposals to reach a diplomatic solution that would let net.art develop a more healthy economy, the stakes are (or at least seem), so high to those involved that the skirmishes, dogma and full frontal assaults are likely to continue. It seems that we are approaching a period of polemics regarding net.art. But in what contexts can these kinds of debates be given form?

In this version, Volume 3 Number 3, Winter 1997, Switch is proud to present an interview with philosopher, technologist and former front-line artist Manuel De Landa. In his latest work, **One Thousand Years of Non-Linear History**, De Landa challenges methodologies that view history through the lens of linguistics, texts, and economics by instead examining the relationship of societies to the flow of matter, energy, information and the related technological escalations. In his previous book, **War in the Age of Intelligent Machines**, he had explored the life-like qualities of physical phenomena at points of singularity, along with the mechanical physics of military conflict viewed from various organizational levels, in order to speculate on the convergence of the biological phylum and machinic phylum in a contingent and ultimately inseparable evolutionary complex. There are interesting perspectives here for anyone interested in net.art, both because the technology used derives from military origin, but also as the art of the network is being created from within the same human-machinic complex.

Just as success on the battlefield is increasingly mediated by intelligent human/machinic/software combinations (cyborgs), so is success in high-tech societies being dictated by a contingent yet unavoidable technological determinism. The new cultural battlefield of electromagnetic waves, jamming, sensors and deception is an unavoidable electronic plane which intersects even the most ardent luddite, (remember how the unbomber's manifesto was available on the internet before being published in the press?) Clearly artists have the responsibility and self-interest necessitating involvement in the critical and technological development of the digital network and electromagnetic spectrums; yet structural/cultural barriers within the techno-human complex often prevent the artist from attaining the capital or power to exert significant influence except within the limited sphere(s) of the artworld.

Following this, Gary Singh's **Cyberthuggee and the Ridiculous World Order** suggests that artists and others resist the decentralized power of late-capital by engaging in the shadow tactics of ridicule and anonymity inspired by the Thugs in their resistance to the centralized authority of British colonial rule. His recommendation that the 19th century tactics of assassination by strangulation be replaced in the contemporary network context by character assassination has of course been synchronistically preceded by the "Ersatz posting scandal of late 1997". What questions may this kind of tactic, in turn, raise regarding the balkinization of net.art discourse? Is this part of a self-organizing process, or an unnecessary friction? We will all have to wait to see.

A very different strategy makes itself apparent in Monica Vasilescu's work on artist **Michael Naimark**. Rather than lob ridicule grenades from behind the veil of the internet, Naimark has concentrated on a strategy of infiltration and tactics of cooperation. Having worked for many high-tech companies to produce art, which also helps serve the development of commercial technologies, Naimark is able to recount his experience from the front-lines of silicon valley business culture.

Of course, as in the the past, Switch has sought to clarify some of the sensitive issues surrounding art and technology by providing our visitors with useful links. In both versions v3n1 and v3n2 we collected intelligence on web art; most succinctly culminating in the first Switch Web Art Taxonomy (v3n2). We persist. The **Taxonomy** presented in the current version has been curated by 1997 CADRE institute MFA graduate and current art faculty member Jan Ekenberg, with ample assistance from MFA candidate Matt Hoessli.

Finally, we have many projects for you to infiltrate on the projects page. Special mention should be made of the latest derivation of the **Stillman(tm)** projects. With Stillman, CGI artist Lisa Jevbratt, (also a 1997 CADRE institute MFA graduate and current art faculty member), captures the information generated as users navigate Switch and uses it to provide you with alternate ways to consume the site, as well as tautological visualizations wherein the site itself becomes a form of information regarding its traversal. **Bruce Gardner**, the Information Technology Coordinator for the School of Art and Design at San Jose State, reports on his recent work in capturing and modeling global positioning satellite data. Co-editor Brett Stalbaum has some fun helping you to spam error logs on military web servers with the **Joint Tactical Disinformation Distribution System**. The **Area210/Area51**, Landscape Painting as Counter-Surveillance project documents and extends a 1997 site-specific conceptual performance done for the officially non-existent, unmarked, and heavily armed security forces who patrol the border of the remote and infamous U.S. Airforce base known as Area 51. And finally, a site documenting the **CADRE-SV1** microsatellite, which was put into orbit late last year by the CADRE institute.

Thank you for your visit, and peace to you all in 1998.

The co-editors



::CrossReference

last 5 articles posted by Staffs

- :: Curator's Statement** - Mar 27 2003
 - :: Douglas Engelbart Transcript** - Mar 25 2003
 - :: Marisa Olson Transcript** - Mar 25 2003
 - :: Peter Lunenfeld Transcript** - Mar 25 2003
 - :: CADRE Invitational 2002-2003** - Mar 25 2003
 - :: Jan Hauser Transcript** - Mar 25 2003
 - :: Margaret Morse Transcript** - Mar 25 2003
 - :: Oliver Grau Interview** - Mar 10 2003
 - :: Interview with Tim O'Reilly** - Mar 10 2003
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