CRITICAL INFORMATION: MAPPING THE INTERSECTION OF ART AND TECHNOLOGY

Graduate Student Conference at the School of Visual Arts || 3 December 2011

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December 3, 2011
Presenters

John Ball || Arizona State University, Environment, Design, and the Arts, PhD
Fulfilling the Promise of the Bauhaus: Integrating the Arts and Building-Making Through BIM Technologies
Site and Subjectivity

The Industrial Revolution cut artisans out of the building-making process. Until that point artisans provided the visual content in buildings. Purposefully designed-in understandable meaning (visual content) is critical to aesthetic engagement between user and environment. Reliable aesthetic engagement over long periods is a precursor to successful urban cultural ecologies. The lack of artisan-provided content in buildings has resulted in architectural neutrality and the diminished dialogical power of spaces. Fortunately, recently developed open access Building Information Modeling (BIM) technologies, including 3D visualization, laser scanning, and very large scale 3D printing, make it possible for contemporary artisans to be profoundly re-engaged. A significant remapping of building-making politics will be required. This paper will briefly unpack the events that created the current situation, and then propose a dialogue and methodology for re-integration of the arts and building-making through BIM technologies.
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Erin Bell || Wayne State University, English, PhD)
"The Ghost in the Machine:" Blogging Beyond Death
Mediated Memory

In today's virtually enhanced world of "tweets," "instant messages," and "viral" videos, it almost seems redundant to comment on the ways that the digital revolution continues to alter our cultural milieu. In addition to enumerating the aforementioned technological trends that new media has introduced to society, one might also (again—without surprising anyone) comment on how the internet has changed a host of other aspects of being, ranging from online banking, to virtual counseling, e-diets, and even cyber classes at the virtual campus—indeed, one would be hard-pressed to name a discipline that has not been in some way re-imagined in terms of the digital revolution. These transformations are familiar and will not be discussed further in this essay. What will be interrogated here, however, are not the manifold uses of new media in our lives, but how the new media—specifically social networking sites—is transforming our deaths. The use of weblogs and websites like Facebook and Carepages (a site dedicated to assisting those who are "coping with illness" to "share their story") allows for patient expression through the death

process and even after, therefore allowing for a type of communal grief, but also, perhaps, a virtual life after death. The question remains, when a person dies, who, if anyone deletes their profile? In many cases the profile remains as a vestige of the person's former being. So, then, what the ethical implications of this intersection of virtual reality and death of being and non-being online? What are the images of death and dying presented online? Because this project will be comprised of several theoretical considerations; this essay will be relying on a series of suppositions from both image theory and post-structural theory in order to suggest that in the world of new media, the oft-quoted theorem from Martin Luther is quickly changing. While Luther posits "every one must fight his own battle with death by himself, alone," it is arguable that the images of the dying and deceased on social networking sites present a new way of "fighting death."
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Dorrie Brooks || University of Massachusetts, Program in Architecture & Design
Situated Architecture in the Digital Age: Adapting a Textile Mill in Holyoke, MA
Site and Subjectivity

The City of Holyoke, Massachusetts is one of many aging, industrial cities striving to revitalize its economy based on the promise of increased digital connectivity and clean energy resources. But how do you renovate 19th century architecture to meet the demands of the information age? This architectural study explores the potential impact of sensing technologies and information networks on the definition and function of buildings in the 21st century. It explores the changes that have taken place in industrial spaces since 1850 and argues for a use of digital technology that supports local relationships and environmental awareness.
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Alex Braidwood || Art Center College of Design, Media Design, MFA
Listening Instruments
Visualizing the Invisible: The Art of Sound

With increases in urbanization comes an increase in noise. It is primarily the result of resources, services and activities that make our way of life possible. Considering this along with the necessity of certain noises required for navigating and orienting oneself within a space, complete cancellation or elimination is not feasible. As a result, research into the affect that these noisy environments have on communication, behavior and health continues to emerge. Informed and inspired by this research, Listening Instruments is a project that is not concerned with canceling or eliminating unwanted sounds. Instead, the project is a collection of critical investigations that explore methods for transforming the relationship between people and the noise in their environment.
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Liam Considine || New York University, Institute of Fine Arts, PhD
Flowers and Stripes: Warhol and Buren in Paris circa 1965
Visualizing the Invisible: The Art of Sound

In May 1965 Andy Warhol confounded audiences at the Sonnabend gallery in Paris by exhibiting his 'decorative' mechanically-produced Flowers and, echoing Duchamp's performative gesture of 1923, announced his retirement from painting. In the fall of that same year, Daniel Buren also abandoned easel painting, replacing it with the 'readymade' vertical awning stripe that would thereafter serve as his 'decorative' sign for art that could be dispersed throughout the city and gallery as both artwork and advertisement. Both artists cited Duchamp in reducing painting to a semantically-charged 'decoration' or visual code, killing it off (or keeping it alive) by mimicking conditions of mass media production and display. The Duchampian legacy thus served as an endpoint and a new beginning for painting practice in Paris circa 1965; Buren's homage to Warhol at the 1967 Biennale de Paris suggests that the latter's mechanized serial production and fusion of art and advertising provided a model for the younger artist's reduction of painting to visual code that could travel outside the gallery, and bring painting into contact with the readymade.

Jeremy Eichenbaum || Art Center College of Design, Media Design, MFA

Existing in a Dual Consciousness: A Personal Account…
Art, Technology and Identity

I have come to realize that my physical existence has a virtual counterpart and that it is starting to have a greater impact on my life and those around me. Existing in a dual consciousness I can't help but pay attention to how I've been directed toward the networkedscape*. Through our decentralized environment, social behavior, emotional attachment to personal computing devices and the illusion perpetuated by representation, the shift from the physical being to the virtual presence has become seamless and inevitable. This constant back and forth, arrival and departure influence and alter our sense of identity, how we function and our perception of time, place and everything in between. Hopefully with the constant advances in technology and ubiquitous computing we don't lose what makes us human and our sense of reality.

Tiffany Funk || University of Illinois at Chicago, MFA (ABD), PhD
The Prosthetic Aesthetic: An Art of Anxious Extensions
Digital Costs

The difficulty in ascertaining how the "prosthetic" functions across disciplines derives from the sometimes parallel, and often antithetical definitions given for what it constitutes. Many art historians use the prosthetic to illustrate psychoanalytical methodologies, largely ignoring physical technological devices, cybernetic body augmentation and its social effects – subjects expounded upon by many influential media and cybernetic theorists. Prosthetics are not merely psychic trauma nor virtual signifier, but material artifacts marking autonomy, ability and disability, amputation and extension. A re-evaluation of prosthetics in contemporary aesthetics brings us closer to narrowing the uneasy gap between art historical and media discourses, and greatly enriches undervalued or mis-read artworks meant to explore subjectivities and their uneasy relationship with their various extensions. Prosthetic artworks, by such artists as Paul Thek through Matthew Barney, populate the end of the 20th century into the 21st, gesturing toward a long and rich history of technological mediation.
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Erin Gee || Concordia University, Visual Arts, MFA
Repetition as Radical Referral: Echo and Narcissus in the Digital Environment
Future of Signs

Theorists such as Rosalind Krauss and Lev Manovich have described media arts as defined by the psychological condition of narcissism. Whereas some perceive narcissism as unhealthy self-obsession, Narcissus' downfall ultimately resulted from an unhealthy prioritization of his visual feedback over that of other senses, or ocular-centrism. Ocular-centrism is common to academic, text-based analysis of artworks, and has proven historically useful for "reading" visual art; however, it is necessary to recognize and evaluate frameworks beyond the narcissistic-ocular in order to fully assess self-referral in multi-sensory, mediatized arts practice. Whereas visual methodologies may fail to address sonic, haptic, and virtual content within their particular zones of affect, other sensory methodologies may be developed to promote frameworks of critical embodiment suitable to media arts analysis. In this paper, narcissism's ocular-centric reflection is expanded through aural reflection, and a respective echoism, introducing differing notions of audience, authorship, and objecthood inferred by sonic referral.
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Chris Handran || Queensland University of Technology, Creative Industries Faculty, MA
Reinventing the Apparatus in the Expanded Field of Photography
Digital Costs

This paper explores the role of the technical apparatus in the creation and mediation of experience in contemporary art. A model of the apparatus is adapted from Vilem Flusser's use of the term in relation to photography and 'technical images'. This idea of the apparatus is then used as an interpretive lens to consider the experiential focus of artists Carsten Holler and Olafur Eliasson. The models of subjectivity put forward by these artists are discussed, with reference to the histories of the apparatus they use. In this

way, I contend that the 'lens' of the technical apparatus can be applied to develop fresh insights into a range of contemporary art practices.
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Faith Holland || School of Visual Arts, Photography, Video, & Related Media, MFA
The Pixel Museum: The Crop, Cut, Paste of the Meaning of Paintings in Google Art Project
Information Art

This paper will historically ground Google Art Project by specifically looking at theories of art's reproduction, as postulated by Benjamin and Malraux, and discuss how this fits into the trajectory of photography modifying the status of painting. I will then discuss how this new technology—the gigapixel sized image—has again changed our relationship to the original object. By looking at this technology's specificity and its ability to magnify artworks, I would like to examine both how this level of detail, user control and interaction is demystifying, and how it empties the painting of meaning rather than inflecting it with a new one. I will consider the way that the Google Art Project interface frames and invades the space of art; how loading and manipulating the image becomes a time-based and quasi-cinematic experience; and what are the commercial implications of presenting "priceless" art in this fashion.
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Lee Johnson || Rhode Island School of Design, Ceramics, MFA
ProVide Marketplace, 2011
Digital Costs

The sign reads, "ProVide Marketplace – Coming Soon!" Appearing on the oldest indoor mall in America, it promises a new farmers market in the long-dormant Arcade Building in downtown Providence, RI. This announcement creates public excitement, resulting in extensive online and televised news coverage about the re-opening.

As collective group, our concept is to create a site and garner an audience using our skills as visual artists and designers. Through a fictitious website, Twitter and Facebook accounts, posters, flyers, promotional events and surveys, ProVide Marketplace is one of many socially-focused public artworks I have collaboratively produced as a creative outlet for artists and makers in our digital culture.

As the trail of physical and virtual information unravels, the promised opening incites public debate about abandoned retail spaces in the community. This presentation looks at ProVide Marketplace, The Yes Men, the War of the Worlds and other media-based artists who practices intentinally distort social perception. This type of art raises a difficult question, "Is it ethical to manipulate the public's perception of a social issue through media infrastructures to create dialogue?"

Matthew Lange || School of Visual Arts, Photography, Video, & Related Media, MFA
PAssemblage 6: The Plummet Machine as Manifest in Neo-Industrial Media Apparatuses
Information Art

This presentation will be part of an ongoing series of performative lectures in which the performer (me) becomes an absurd combination of silent film comedian and performance art shaman, operating a variety of media devices to demonstrate characteristics of The Plummet Machine. The Plummet Machine is a satirical cosmological theory consisting of seven Organs, each of which is an outlandish or anachronistic symbol of power, representing order and governance in contemporary society. This particular "talk" will offer a reductivist, tautological retrospective of the audio-visual apparatuses that have served as manifestations of The Plummet Machine's Organs throughout the past 50 years. By creating juxtapositions between analog and digital technologies, I will suggest (by way of didactic, comedic inference) that despite radical changes in the shape and appearance of media devices, the structural intent of industrially manufactured "information" machines has changed very little over time.
Download Paper

Matthew Everett Lawson and Elizabeth Anne Watkins || Massachusetts Institute of Technology,

Culture and Technology, MS
"Wonder"
Site and Subjectivity

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) positions itself as the center of technological education and innovation in the United States, and a key point of entry for global investment in technology. This public face manifests a presence in media and civic space cultivating a popular trust in the role of innovation and advancement. MIT's 150th Anniversary Celebration (The Festival of Art, Science and Technology) was designed as a public platform to congratulate their role in such a future. Our video installation intervention into the Festival highlights the fragility of technological power structures maintained by civic trust and argues for responsible stewardship, one requiring an informed position such institutes play in technological advancement. The Institute gained its economic roots in a massive redirection of federal funds into research-based weapons development during World War II, a support that maintains the core of MIT, a relationship downplayed in favor of cake, champagne, and fireworks.
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Austin S. Lee and Yuseung Kim || Art Center College of Design, Media Design Program, MFA
The Everyday Story of Imaginative Time & Space
Digital Costs

Studies on the future of the Information Age often revolves around a pervasive networking paradigm. These explorations usually position technological innovation as central to the design in building a believable future of digitally enabled environments. For this reason a vast number of designers, architects, and theorists are particularly interested in employing technology in their products and in the infrastructure of the city to deliver a convincing story of the future. These possible yet fictional narratives provoke new conversations amongst professionals in the creative field and enable engineers and scientists to push the boundaries of the modern technology with a new vision.

This paper focuses on the role of design fiction, specifically which depicts the future world we can imagine through the pervasive networking technology. By covering the contexts of "stories of time and fictional space" in a networking environment, we have been conducting a two-year research project seeking ways to imagine, experiment, and create prototypes for the future and alternative presents. The paper reflects on the inquiries, insights, and discoveries of the investigation.
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Elizabeth G. Medoff || School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Visual and Critical Studies, MA
Sound Monuments: Rethinking Public Memory
Visualizing the Invisible: The Art of Sound

To date, discussion of public memory of and memorials about trauma has been centered on visual means of representation. However, what about using other media to bridge the gulf between representing a difficult past and our ability to connect to it in the ongoing present? Using Seth Kim-Cohen's notion of "a conceptual, non-cochlear sound art," I posit that such a sound art holds great potential for the future of monuments to trauma – sound monuments, as it were. The notion of listening to a sound monument intersects with trauma theory's notion of witnessing, the act of listening to and engaging with one's trauma narrative – listening implores contemplation, without which a monument is unsuccessful. By expanding our notions of representation to include media practices that foster collaboration with the audience, we may enable ourselves to empathize with instances of trauma, and in turn, better support its survivors.
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Sara Moore || Art Center College of Design, Media Design, MFA
In Absentia
Mediated Memory

While technological and scientific advancements are being made everyday, few exist to provide support for basic human values and beliefs in the face of adversity. For example, the use of tiny, networked

sensors for data-collecting is a development adopted by the military. Energy-harvesting, while a significant step for the environment, can have a greater purpose than simply charging one's cellphone.

In Absentia explores how these technologies can assist in the processes of personal grieving. Through the tracking of a departed's dust using tiny sensors and weather patterns, and the preservation of one's kinetic energy in the form of a battery, In Absentia creates a system of tools that allow us to question our current constructs around death, grieving and the act of "moving on" after a loved one dies. These new rituals provide duration, storytelling and more individual ways to remember our loved ones.
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W. Elysse Newman || Harvard University, Architecture, PhD
Phantasmata Poetica or Images as Objects of Knowledge in Early Theories of Aesthetics
Future of Signs

In the context of eighteenth century sign-theory Gottfried Ephraim Lessing outlines a theory of the arbitrariness of the sign reflected in the general concern about the ambiguity of the sign in Enlightenment culture. As David Welberry points out in Lessing's Laokō on: Semiotics and Aesthetics in the Age of Reason, the sign proves to be at once that which allows man to elevate himself beyond immediate experience, at the same time it points to the essential limitation of his finiteness and propensity for delusion and error. Rather than deny the arbitrariness of the sign Lessing makes a distinction between the arbitrary signs of language and the natural signs or emblems of painting. Signs as images in the twenty-first century acquire additional resonance as the role of cognitive perception as an active agent in the subjective status of representations in relation to the objects of non-discursive nature. This re-reading of the Laokō on offers a ethodological analysis of the way an aesthetic philosophy could work as a science of signs in a contemporary context at the intersection of technology, art, and language.
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Jennifer Pranolo || University of California, Berkeley, Rhetoric/Film Studies, PhD
Tagging the Index: Image and Information
Future of Signs

This paper will examine the changing status of the photographic "index" as it shifts away from denoting a visual trace of the "real" (Peirce's "indexicality") towards an abstract index of information in the digital/internet age. From Barthes' claim that the photograph is a "message without a code"; to Benjamin's insistence that the caption must politically anchor the "free-floating" nature of the photograph; to Vilem Flusser's idea that the photograph is a meta-language for texts—this paper will take up the legacy of theories on the text/image relationship in order to comment on the contemporary culture of virtualized image production. The paper will look at *Visual-Aids*, a collective artist's website that plumbs images from internet keyword searches and other blogs to create an unending flow of unsettling and contingent visual links. In its perpetual "tagging" of the image, *Visual-Aids* dramatizes the transformation of photography into an increasingly autopoietic system.

Ryan Raffa || Parsons The New School for Design, Design and Technology, MFA
RhythmSynthesis
Visualizing the Invisible: The Art of Sound

Originating as an investigation into the relationships between rhythm and technology, RhythmSynthesis uses color, shape, and sound to demonstrate how our understanding of visual music, computation, and tangible, audio-visual interactions can be applied as considerations in musical compositions. As an electronic musical instrument, the piece allows for experimentation, rewards for mastery, and is a vehicle for expression.

By asking questions about how visual music can be used to perceive rhythm, what ways visual rhythms can be used for composition, and what ways composition can be intertwined with performance and experimental notation, this thesis illustrates that sound is a reliable and effective way to provide users feedback for making visual composition decisions, judgements, and actions. From amateur to professional

musicians, the instrument allowed for unique, personal interactions and expressive choice.
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Rotem Rozental || SUNY Binghamton University, Art History, PhD
Social Engagement, Visual Participation and Perception
Future of Signs

In this day and age, our instant communal interaction is mediated by images posted on social networks. Flickr, Facebook, Instagr.am and Twitpic are just a few examples of technologies creating a vast transformation in the way we experience both online interrelations and our daily lives. It seems that no moment we experience is complete without documenting it, posting it and waiting for an online friend to press like or comment about it.

Jean-Luc Nancy perceives the image as a unique being which also exposes our being as being-with. In my proposed research, I wish to stem from Nancy's perspective and view the image in social networks, where it opens a possibility for being-with, whilst it becomes a part of an interface which has a set of predetermined practices. This transformation, re-defining our social interaction and experience as spectators on the one hand and the practice of photography on the other, does not take place only within the web. Meaning, technology does not only make us re-define our social engagement, it may also indicate that our epistemic perception is on the verge of transforming itself to a Shared one.

Victoria Salinger || University of Chicago, Art History, PhD
Gendering the Machine: Hanne Darboven's "Higher Knitting"
Art, Technology and Identity

I discuss the role of gender in the perception of art, science and technology in the 1970s by comparing the work of conceptual artists Hanne Darboven and Sol LeWitt. In her calendar drawings, Darboven is quite literally a computer as she adds up the numbers in the date for a given period of time, writing out the resulting computations. The computer here is gendered female, mindless, merely mechanical, as typified by art critic J.A. Thwaites' warning that Darboven's work "could easily degenerate into a kind of Higher Knitting, with the female quality of patience, detail – and not much else." LeWitt works by similar computational means in pieces like Variations of Incomplete Open Cubes of 1974. Yet, the same patience and detail associated with the supposedly mindless woman's work of knitting for Darboven is associated with the mathematical mind for LeWitt, – the other, masculine side of technology and the machine.

Adam Scher || Parsons the New School for Design, Design and Technology, MFA
Lost in Performance: Performative Processes to Save the Lost Bytes
Mediated Memory

Lost in Performance is a series of critical art works that explores the relationship between human and computer performance. The main focus of the collection is to draw attention to the temporal aspect of our memories, questioning the process with which we save and store information. Performing and processing become interchangeable actions as each piece is continuously repeated using a variety of digital and analogue methods. Personal photographs and home videos are used as the core content in each work, suggesting the relationship between performance/process and memory. The visual aesthetics of the work expose the deteriorating effects of time and repetition, suggesting that memory, human and digital, is imperfect and does not last forever.

Portia Seddon || Hunter College of the City University of New York, Anthropology, MA
The Aesthetics and Politics of Popular Music MP3 Blogs
Visualizing the Invisible: The Art of Sound

Within the past five years, popular music-themed audioblogs have emerged as complex spaces of cultural debate and representation. MP3 blogs dedicated to the collection and sharing of "rare groove" recordings from the 1960s and 1970s, in particular, are important nodes of experience in contemporary sonic and visual landscapes, displaying new articulations of visual and material culture. This paper examines the

intersections between image and sound within particular media spaces through the practice of "crate digging," or collectors' expeditions to cities of the global South in search of obscure vinyl records. Suggesting emergent aesthetic ideologies in digital culture, "rare groove" MP3 blogs constitute a new convergence in the digital sensorium. By examining the ways in which sounds, images, and technologies are embodied, and how this embodiment may resonate on ideological levels, this paper thus considers the construction of media infrastructures in terms of sonic, visual, and material cultural practices.
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Evelin Stermitz || University of Ljubljana, Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, M.A., M.Phil.
ArtFem.TV: Art and Feminism ITV [www.artfem.tv]
Art, Technology and Identity

ArtFem.TV is an online television programming presenting art and feminism, founded by Evelin Stermitz in the year 2008. The aim of ArtFem.TV is to foster women's media works, their art and projects, to create an international online television screen for the images and voices of women. Linda Nochlin wrote her article "Why have there been no great women artists?" in 1971 and many more women artists gained overdue recognition since that time. But what has actually changed? New media offer new possibilities and chances, but also comprehend old restrictions and patterns. Works in the field of cyberfeminism are a way to subvert the public economic tradition of a male technocratic society and offer views, perspectives and possibilities to use new media with female agendas. Within this context, ArtFem.TV is an attempt to break with a male dominated net-culture and media landscape to highlight women's emphases in art and media works.

Aurora Tang || University of Southern California, Art and Curatorial Practices in the Public Sphere, MA
Site, Nonsite, Website: Technologies for Perception / "Navigating Nonspace"
Site and Subjectivity

American artist Robert Smithson's site and nonsite dialectic (based on the relationship between his abstract artworks in the indoor gallery and their corresponding physical sites outdoors) utilizes the aerial perspective and other sensorial phenomena to both orient and disorient the viewer, relocating his or her focus back and forth between the normative corporeal perspective and more unfamiliar peripheral viewpoints. With the advent of Google Earth technology in the 2000s, users explore the surface of the terrestrial globe, including Smithson's earthworks, through the digital interfaces of the internet. With the addition of these networked virtual spheres, the site and nonsite dialectic, in the 1960s, is reinterpreted as a site, nonsite, website "trialectic." While the mechanical is updated by the digital, the conceptual mechanisms persist, providing the tools to navigate these distinct, yet converging realms and find order amidst the disorder.

Robert Yang || Parsons the New School for Design, Design and Technology, MFA
"Handle with Care": A first Person Video Game About Gay Divorce
Art, Technology and Identity

Handle with Care is a non-violent first person video game about theater, memory and LGBT identity, intended for hardcore video game players, typically 14-30 year old heterosexual men. In-game, the player acts as James, one half of a same-sex couple seeking marriage counseling with Dylan. During this time, the player must also repress memories that appear in his mind — successful repression or release influences the game narrative and progress through the counseling session.

The game successfully provoked substantial online dialogue among audiences traditionally averse to such discussion; player reactions ranged from outright homophobia, to inventing a female player persona to avoid playing as a gay male, to hyperbolic near-epiphanies of self-discovery.

In this way, Handle with Care argues for a critical role for video games and associated new media, to co-opt the same channels and strategies as commercial mass media while reaching new audiences and negating the need for a gallery or museum context. (… Though the game has been featured internationally

in exhibitions at museums.)
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Gillian Young || Columbia University, Art History & Archaeology, PhD
LeWitt and the Machine
Information Art

This paper focuses on the relevance of Sol LeWitt's wall drawings to the historical intersection of visual art and information technology in the 1960s and contemporary questions of "re-performing" time-based artworks created during this time. Unlike many of the live actions and happenings made by artists at the turn of the information age, LeWitt's wall drawings—based on sets of instructions devised by the artist and carried out by a network of trained draftspersons—resist the documentary logic of analog media. Taking programmer Casey Reas' recent interpretation of LeWitt's wall drawing instructions through Processing code as a point of departure, I consider how LeWitt's practice engages the algorithmic, interactive principles of digital technology as well as task-like, embodied technique to reconfigure artistic authorship in the age of information. On the one hand, by inviting interaction and contingency, LeWitt's instruction-based work participates in the critique of performance and new media practices on the traditional notion of the artist's hand and the stable art object. On the other, the disciplined execution and quasi-mechanical technique required to execute his wall drawings allowed LeWitt to delegate craft and authorship while maintaining control over his artwork and its distribution. While LeWitt's strategic authorship may have tempered the radical exhibition and distribution of the wall drawings, I argue that it simultaneously enabled him to leverage his art politically.
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