

a cycle with no beginning with the enteric participant

This publication is intended as a companion to the exhibition of interactive works of Ken Gregory and Brad Todd. The text, the collection of references and the descriptions of the works by the artists themselves are woven together to enhance the whole project and not to impose a single reading. As independent parts which can be read in any order, it is a cycle with no beginning, no end, with the option of entering at any point. It simulates the non-hierarchical, continuous jump-cut routing of ideas and information in a centerless manner. If one part is absent, the other elements hopefully reconfigure into new directions and meanings for understanding what is still an emerging art form.

Ælab 2002

ken gregory – 12 motorbells

Computer controlled electromechanical audio installation

Microprocessor technology, machines, intimacy and the human body collide in this exploration. 12 Motor Bells is an audio installation consisting of twelve fire alarm motor bells with their original ringers removed and suspended from the ceiling on long wires. Small AC motors with soft brush wheels attached to the drive shaft are suspended beside each bell. A computer activates AC relays attached to each motor which when current is applied, start spinning the brushes. The brush mechanism rubs the bell edge causing the bell to 'shimmer'; vibrating acoustically at a low volume. Over time, the computer switches the motors off and on in with various combinations, creating a performance of layered bell vibrations radiating throughout the space. The motor bells sway and pulse creating movement physically in the form of rhythms and modulating timbres.

machines, intimacy and the human body

Temperature sensors and infrared heat detectors installed in various places in the room monitor the ambient temperature and the movement of heat in the space. The computer monitors the status of sensors and influences the performance of the motor bell system. As the sound of the bells emanates into the room, the room dimensions and material makeup affect the way the sound emanates throughout. Harmonic resonances and standing waves build up at different frequencies as the waves of sound from the motor bells reflect off the walls, ceiling, and floor. The motor bells resonate harmonically with each other. As bodies move through the room, the sound is subtly modulated by their presence as the human body absorbs sound and radiates heat. As the temperature rises in the vicinity of the sensors, the computer responds with more 'alarming' activation of the motor bells.

Ken Gregory acknowledges the generous support of the Manitoba Arts Council and The Canada Council for the Arts, Media Arts Section.

feedback

participatory

We are still in a transitional moment in art production with regard to new media work. These pieces do not constitute a single medium or mode of art making. As an open field of possibilities where the viewer is the participant, the artists offer contrast in their/our use of the computer. Gregory's approach is slightly more abstract, beyond a point-and-click scheme. We sense that we are affecting it, but it is not necessarily clear how the process is being analyzed. Following the cycle of entropy, Todd's moldy bread will eventually dry up and be replaced, and Gregory's sound dissipates into heat. With turbulence and movement, further chaos is provoked which leads to an extreme, exhausting itself and then returning to a latent state. The presence of the participant is the potential for the process to begin again. Context is also unique for Todd's web-based screening. Online streaming video is generally the mode for multiple user access, but in this case, it is a solo experience at a fixed time, where only one person controls various robotic elements from a distance. Our telematic participation is clear even if a delay is felt, nested within an intensified condensation of elements and altered randomly in dialogue with a 'projectionist' who leads us on with a selection from a video database. The work is both 'framing' and being 'framed' in a multi-layered sequencing of events, emblematic of life.

Proust's arguments in favour of museums also have as their point of reference not the thing itself but the observing subject. It is not coincidental that it is something subjective, the abrupt act of production in which the work becomes something different from reality, that Proust considers to be preserved in the work's afterlife in the museum.
Theodor W. Adorno, *Prisms*, Valéry Proust Museum, Cambridge : MIT Press, 1967, p. 183.

[...] Wiener may have conceived the idea of considering the operator as part of the steering mechanism and of applying to him such notions as feedback and stability, which had been devised for mechanical systems and electrical circuits... As time passed, such flashes of insight were more consciously put to use in a sort of biological research... [Cybernetics] has contributed to popularizing a way of thinking in communication theory terms, such as feedback, information, control, input, output, stability, homeostasis, prediction, and filtering [...]
Hans Freudenthal, *Biography of Norbert Wiener*, *Dictionary of Scientific Biography*, New York : Scribner, 1970-1990.

intensity

Brad Todd lives in Montréal. He studied at the ACAD from 1986-1990 where he completed an undergraduate degree, going on to complete a MFA from Concordia University in 1992. His area of interest in the arts is in using digital technologies to animate physical objects and tableaux on the Net and in actual environments. Todd has been making Net based projects since 1997, which incorporated more "traditional" forms of technology driven media such as video, audio and animation and now makes telerobotic works which are experienced and manipulated via the Web and screening venues. Todd has been the recipient of numerous grants and was awarded the Canada Council Paris Studio in 1999. Recent exhibitions of his projects include: INFOS (2000) in Ljubljana, FILE (2001) in Brazil, FCMM (2000) in Montréal, The New Museum for Contemporary Art (N.Y.C., 2001), ISEA 2002 (Nagoya, Japan), Viper (Basel, Switzerland, 2002) and Galerie Oboro (Montréal, 2003).

www.mobilegaze.com/zero/

Winnipeg artist Ken Gregory has been working with DIY interface design, hardware hacking, audio, video, and computer programming for over ten years. His provocative and creative performance and installation work has shown publicly in Winnipeg, other parts of Canada and many international media and sound art festivals. Anything is part of Gregory's palette and using cut and paste techniques, random juxtapositions, and careful manipulations he crafts unique and provocative art works. These works are presented in the form of gallery installations, live performances, live radio broadcasts, custom computer software and audio compact discs. Gregory has performed at many clubs, music and art festivals and has done extensive work as a sound editor, composer, and audio designer for independent film, performance, media and video.

www3.mb.sympatico.ca/~gregoryk/

Screen is a telerobotic boxed construction, which sporadically comes alive for screenings and interaction. The piece is viewed and controlled simultaneously via a web page interface and is also enhanced through a kind of performative element which consists of live manipulation of the image and audio elements of the streaming video/audio feed, using a broadcast streaming video software.

The work consists of robotic armatures which control a series of events inside a boxed grid-like construction. There are four elements which are controlled via remote manipulation. These are:

- 1 The watering of a small plant.
- 2 The sprinkling of water on a small piece of bread, which in turn generates mold, thereby forming a kind of rudimentary life/ecosystem.
- 3 The control of a clothesline-like apparatus which laterally moves the wings of a butterfly in one direction and an old photograph of a plane in the other.
- 4 The control of a drawing machine which endlessly transcribes circles on a wall of the box.

brad todd

screen

During an exhibition, Screen would be online no more than one hour at a time and this will constitute a viewing. The performative aspect of the work is handled by LiveChannel, a broadcast software which enables one to mix seamlessly between archived footage, the live stream and audio elements (both live and archived as well). During the course of a screening, the stream is manipulated with imagery and video which enhances the content by introducing elements which complement the idea of the grid and box such as beehives, industrial construction, Cornell boxes, modernist grids, segments of early cinema, etc.

For a closer look and to view the contents of Screen please visit the site directly and click on the small question mark on the lower left side of the window to bring up a detailed legend of the work.

Brad Todd acknowledges the generous support of The Canada Council for the Arts, Media Arts section.

ælab

In the summer of 1996, Æ was initiated as a research and communication unit by artists Stéphane Claude and Gisèle Trudel, with the regular participation of other collaborators. "Ælab" refers to their presentation and publication projects. Their work has been shown in Holland, Finland, Germany, the US and Canada.

Gisèle Trudel is an independent director. She also works as a video editor, digital compositing artist, website designer and was the New Media Coordinator at Oboro (97-01), a contemporary art centre in Montréal. She currently teaches Digital Image and Sound at Concordia University. She is very active in the national and provincial network of artist-run centres and has been invited for presentations, artist talks, exhibitions and screenings in the international media arts scene.

Stéphane Claude is a video artist, electronic musician and sound engineer. His interests gravitate around a formal aesthetic of communication, a phenomenological and symbolic experience of the electronic medium. He has produced soundtracks for moving images, theatre and multimedia projects. Since 1992, he has been preoccupied with the presentation of electronic art, by favouring the notion of 'active listening'.

He is presently concentrating on the production of a series of conceptual recordings and sound installations. He works under the name Suna and also with the artist collectives Æ, the Oral label and mmebutterfly.com. Recent releases have appeared on two compilations, Goem/Gast (MutekTime) and Montreal Smoked Meat (Force Inc, Germany).

In the artifact's capacity for disintegration Proust sees its similarity to natural beauty. He recognizes the physiognomy of decomposing things as that of their second life. Because nothing has substance for him but what has already been mediated by memory, his love dwells on the second life, the one which is already over, rather than on the first.
Theodor W. Adorno, *Prisms*, Valéry Proust Museum, Cambridge : MIT Press, 1967, p.182.

The emergence of digital technologies encompasses a huge shift in contemporary culture and permeates several aspects of daily life. In a poetic confrontation between past and present, the discrete worlds created by artists/collectors Todd and Gregory are an assemblage of everyday objects, which now includes the computer. They trace an individual as well as a collective past with memory, space, commodity and industry in dynamic and unexpected associations. Recycled into new contexts, the objects beckon to stop and look and listen. From a remote setting, Todd uses the condensed space of the computer screen to present a boxed collection of artifacts and mementos. With the ghostly delay inherent in the transmission of the data, it also recalls the early experiments of cinema with its fragmented temporality, mapping out conceptions of 'progress' with a surrealist sensibility and memory's innate ability for calling up an unordered network of signs and symbols. Gregory retrieves the alarm bells of institutions, often a forbidden object linked to danger and potential chaos, and presents them in the most unthreatening manner. Stripped from their original use, the bells create repetition and rhythm with the audio patterns which can be musical, mantric, mechanical. Moving around in a calm browsing, we write our own fiction.

A society is defined by its amalgamations, not by its tools... tools exist only in relation to the interminglings they make possible or that make them possible.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1987, p.90.

amalgamations

Current projects include Hex/Édre, a graphic and print collaboration with writer Chantal Neveu for Ec/arts (Paris, Fall 2002); curating a special survey video program on the theme of Catastrophe in collaboration with Florian Wüst, Oberhausen Short Film Festival (Germany, May 2002); a sound collaboration with Atelier InSitu Architects (Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal, April/Sept 2002).

Recent exhibitions of their previous projects include The Media Lounge, New Museum of Contemporary Art (New York, 2001), Het Wilde Weten (Rotterdam, 2001), DEAF (V2, Rotterdam, 2000), Mutek (Montréal, 2000 and 2001), ACREQ (Montréal, 1999), InterAccess (Toronto, 1999), expanded media, HBK (Germany, 1998).

www.aelab.com

research communication collaboration

For example, one fifth-grader named Sara [...] was considering whether her machine would sound a signal when its touch sensor was pushed, and she said, "It depends on whether the machine wants to tell... if we want the machine to tell us... if we tell the machine to tell us." [...] Sara had quickly cycled through three perspectives on her creature (as psychological being, as intentional self, as instrument of its programmer's intentions). The speed of this cycling behavior suggests that these perspectives are equally present for her at all times.
Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen, Identity in the Age of the Internet*, New York : Simon & Schuster, 1995, pp. 172-173.

dead or alive

The criterion of duration is the here and now, the present moment. For Valéry art is lost when it has relinquished its place in the immediacy of life, in its functional context; for him the ultimate question is that of the possible use of the work of art. [...] The pure work is threatened by reification and neutralization. This is what overwhelms him in the museum.
Theodor W. Adorno, *Prisms*, Valéry Proust Museum, Cambridge : MIT Press, 1967, p.180.

Experiencing new media work, we are often confronted with a certain occultation of the medium. This can lead to a notion of surreptitious methods belonging to software, logic boards and network connections. Todd's work 'comes alive' with images, sound, live manipulation for about an hour a day, but what exactly is animate(d)/inanimate here? Gregory's bells and brushes are looping, duplicating and repeating their motion. The room resonates even as we enter it. The relationship is intensified by questioning the interface, connecting the present to our presence and revealing meaning in multilateral movements. Echoing an uncertainty on how to act or proceed, the technology gives us actions and choices in time, affecting the growth and building of these works and transforming them into components of duration.