POST ME_NEW ID

The post human condition of modern Europeans

Post Me_New ID
The posthuman condition of modern Europeans

Edition TOX, Year 14, No. 30

Post Me_New ID

The post human condition of modern Europeans

Main partners

body>data>space   CIANT   TMA Trans-Media-Akademie Hellerau   KIBLA MULTIMEDIA CENTER   Culture Programme   Culture

Associated funding and associated partners

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND   PRA HA PRA GUE PRA GA PRA G   Ministry of Culture Czech Republic   HELLERAU   European Year of International Dialogue 2008   Culture Programme   Education and Culture DG   Culture   ministry of culture www.mk.gov.si   MESTNA OBČINA MARIBOR   rescen

Associated partners

Brunel UNIVERSITY WEST LONDON   Hellen sky   m2f   multiplace

FUNDATIA CULTURALA PROIECT DCM   rehearsal.org.uk   rescen   ska culture   FUNDATIA CULTURALA PROIECT DCM   TOKYO GEIJUTSU DAIGAKU Tokyo University of the Arts

Contents

The Background Of This Book

In 2007-09 a collaboration between body>data>space (London, UK), CIANT (Prague, Czech Republic) TMA | Trans-Media-Akademie Hellerau (Dresden, GER) and KIBLA (Maribor, Slovenia) looked to examine the complexity of 21st century European human identity – with an exploration of the evolution of cyborg culture through technologies of the body. These 4 organisations worked closely together to identify and investigate the challenges this poses to contemporary creation and the emergent artistic practices.

The 14 international associated partners for Post Me_ New ID were A4 - nulty priestor – Bratislava, Brunel University – London,UK, Charles University – Czech Republic, Grains and Pixels – Sweden, Hellen Sky – Australia, Leeds University – UK, M2F Creations – France, Multiplace – Slovakia, PROJECT DCM Foundation – Romania, Rehearsal.org and Ignite – London, UK, ResCen Middlesex University – London, UK, SKA CULTURE - China, Swap-Project – Portugal, Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music – Tokyo, Japan.

The Associate Partners played a key role in the dissemination of Post Me_New ID also helping us to network the knowledge of the project to a far wider group of global connections. Partners also attended Post Me_New ID Forum and encourage others to attend. They help target other participants through PR and publicity and encourage the involvement of young students and professionals – Europeans and others.

The co-organisers (involving 15 people from the 4 organisations and 12 people from the artist team) wanted to practically explore the physical and digital networking of creation processes for interdisciplinary artistic projects in a way that questioned and nudged at the oblique border that lies today between the human and the post human. The use of body based and mobile digital tools, multi-ids, avatars, user generated content, mix, rip and burn culture, artificial intelligence, cyborg citizens, i-generations were investigated through the Research Engines and Creation Processes that fed into the end results.

Through POST ME_NEW ID we created learning exchange between diversely skilled experts working together in a value chain of shared expertise from process to product and to the public. The long-term aim of the project, and one which is moving forward now into new co-operations, is a knowledge network that will continue to deepen awareness and strengthen of understanding of the identity of the 21st century posthuman (digital) European.

Research Engines

Two practical and debate-led Research Engines took place in Lisbon and Prague in October and November 2007. During these sessions the key team members from the organisations came together to discuss and debate the main themes of the project. The structure of these Research Engine's was based on the possibilities of transferring knowledge through participating in physical and debate-led sessions. In part a workshop format, part a team meeting, the core team explored the themes (detailed below) deeply together in preparation for all onwards creation activities. During these sessions we were able to finalise the methodologies for the exchange of skills and experience, pooling the best practice from the Core Team members.
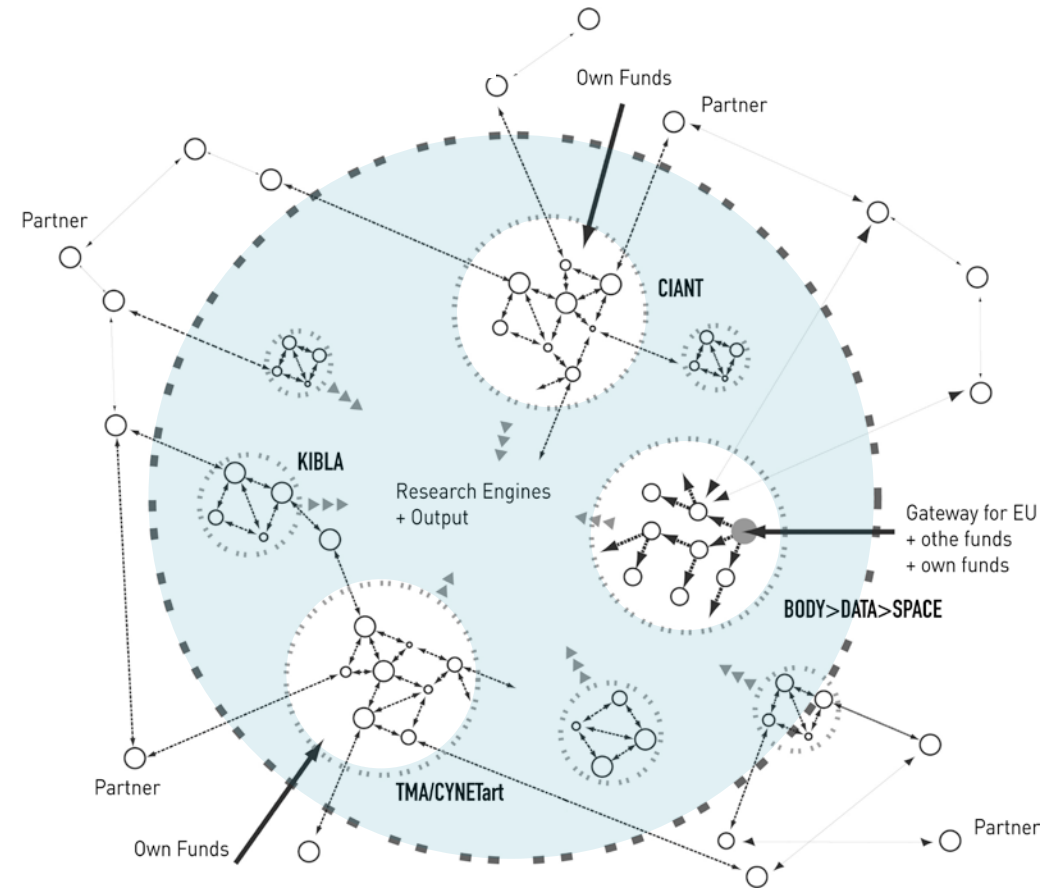
Creation Processes

3×2 weeks Creation Processes (rehearsal workshops) took place for the team to explore the theme deeply together in preparation for all onwards creation activities leading to the final performance / installation piece. These workshops took place at the ICA, London (March / April 08), Interactive Institute, Prague (June / July 2008) and again at the ICA (February 09). During these sessions we were able to finalise the methodologies for the exchange of skills and experience, pool the best practice from the co-organisers, and build trust and working knowledge of each other and consolidating the team working with the interauthorship methodologies (body>data>space and previous companies shinkansen and Future Physical have worked with this interauthorship or group process methodology across many projects over the past 15 years).

The 12 artists involved in the Creation Processes were a mix of performance, video, sound, visual, digital and interaction artists (see in appendix Creation Process Participants list), and

were also an international mix of artists from UK, Hungary, France, Croatia, Czech Republic and Sweden. The age group ran from 23 to 48 – an inter-generational and inter-cultural grouping of Europeans, all representative in their own ways of the Post Me target of modern Europeans. One key performer was a gaming avatar called Orla Ray, made specifically for involvement in the work. The group process was very successful with an excellent team feel and much hard work and energy out into the creation of the performance work by the whole group.

The connection between the live and virtual body was key as a reflection on digital and physical mobility through the transfer of data and people across Europe, as we had first set out in the application for the EU. The 20 minute performance piece "DARE WE DO IT REAL-TIME" evolved from working using a multiple intelligent screen environment of live bodies integrated within digitally networked and reactive graphics. Audio-visual mixes using interactive sound, visual and motion components such as mobile phones and multiple cameras were used to track the live body (see more information on piece in Performance section).

Public Forum

The Forum for Post Me_New ID was designed to debate and explore the outcomes from the project. Invited international speakers and moderators presented on the themes of Networked Creations, Multi-Identities and Future Visions during the 3 days event which took place from 31st October to 2nd November 2008 in Dresden as part of the international media art festival CYNETart_08.

Co-organising partner TMA | Trans-Media-Akademie Hellerau e.V. (Dresden, GER) hosted the Post Me_New ID Forum at the world famous Festspielhaus Hellerau, Dresden. Interdisciplinary practitioners in art and technology were brought together to discuss in various formats, from keynote speeches to Quickfire presentations, issues concerning contemporary and future forms of networked creations and multi-identities. Among the speakers and performers there were kondition pluriel (Germany/Canada), Mika Satomi (Austria), Steve Dixon (UK), Yacov Sharir (USA), Masaki Fujihata (Japan), Hellen Sky (Australia), Denisa Kera (Czech Republic/Singapore), Michael Takeo Magruder (US/UK), Fiddian Warman (UK), Sita Popat (UK), Susanne Berkenheger (Germany) and many more. Full information about the debate panels and topics and the speakers can be found at http://www.postme-newid.net/foru/

This Forum had an equal emphasis on artistic results, debate and networking. All co-organisers including body>data>space from UK, were able to bring a group of younger artists to the Forum, furthering the involvement of younger professionals into the final outcomes. Associate Partners of the project also attended the Forum or sent representatives from their countries. In total 130 participants attended the Forum from approximately 20 countries. The attendees were very active and took part in the very engaging and interesting discussions. As well as the more formal keynote presentations, and "In Conversation" duo's, where key speakers coming from diverse backgrounds were paired up to debate, we also invited younger artists and Forum participants to present their new projects or ideas during a Quickfire presentation, each speaker permitted 14 slides or jpegs of their work and 7 seconds per slide to present their work. This was very successful and allowed newer and emerging artists to present alongside more established ones.

Live documentation of the Forum took place, in part to gather visual materials and texts to feed into the Book and DVD outcomes but also as a marketing tool which allowed information from the Forum to be video blogged onto other performance websites such as

dance-tech.net http://www.dance-tech.net/ and various others. TMA & CYNETart_08 festival website also features links to vox pops, interviews and photographs from the Forum. http://cynetart.de

Performance

The premiere of the performance outcome "DARE WE DO IT REAL-TIME" from the project Post Me_New ID took place at Kinetica Art Fair http://www.kinetica-artfair.com/ on 27th and 28th February 2009 at P3 exhibition space, in Marylebone London. The Kinetica Art Fair provided collectors, curators, museums and the public a unique opportunity to view and purchase artworks from leading international galleries, artist's collectives, curatorial groups and organisations specialising in kinetic, electronic and new media art. body>data>space and the Post Me_New ID collective presented "DARE WE DO IT REAL-TIME" 3 times during the art fair to a total estimated audience of 750 people.

The performance emerged from an interauthored group process involving the 12 European artists specialising in performance, video, sound, virtual world and interaction involved in all three of the Creation Processes. The title "DARE WE DO IT REAL-TIME" is reflective of the work in that it is a 20mins presentation of a series of fragments using many realtime processes and playfulness is part of that. The piece centralises around a series of programmed / structured improvisations between dance, sound, video and virtual world artists and the performance happens live and realtime in an interactive chain of humans and machines – watching, listening, feeling each other.

In the piece "DARE WE DO IT REAL-TIME?" we looked at the challenges of the ideas of the self and of our multi-identities, both off and online. How do our avatars in the virtual realm reflect on ourselves? What do they teach us about ourselves and how can we use that knowledge to extend our understanding of others? In a topical world, the performers travel through personal and public space, working with the individual and the community. In close and distant environments, they simultaneously operate locally and globally. Their habitat is an intricate virtual/physical place of body/mind orientation. Their live bodies can mimic and perform chosen identities – morphing between avatar, cyborg, humanoid, robot, using the electronic, the bionic, the digitronic. Within the panoramic intelligent environment, digitally networked and responsive graphics combine real-time with the performers on stage to create a multiplex of outcomes. Interactive sound, video and motion components seek out and catch the live bodies, urging them to respond, retaliate and re-act.

body>data>space

Creation Process, London 2008. Photograph by By Post Me_New ID crew

Yacov Sharir. Photograph by Vera Batozska

Yacov Sharir
Choreographer & Associate Professor of Theatre and Dance at the University of Texas-Austin (USA)

Identity, the Posthuman Body & digital Practices
Keywords: Gestures, Rippled/Waved Bodies, Interactive Visual Language, Cognitive Linguistics.

"A journey from the physical to the virtual and back again"

The initial pursuit of the journey from the physical to the virtual and back again is based on a unique ongoing research process that had to be conceived, constructed, and tested over a period of ten years. It included several technologically mediated productions, design elements, performance space, content and meaning. Dance practitioners and choreographers are traditionally engaged in an on going process specifically designed to discover how else the human physical body can be challenged and move in so many ways that are yet to be conceived. This ongoing practice takes place in the physical realm/space whether being performed in a theatrical, alternative or site-specific space. The technologically charged mediation employed in the pursuit of this on going research and work such as the use of sensory devices, wearable garments, smart intelligent textiles and computation is dramatically affecting the outcome of what we currently know as formal dance. The perception of what is possible and or what it might lead toward strictly as organization of bodies- physical and virtual - in space and time - are re-examined, allowing us to greatly contribute to this very important effort and other related new options.

Background

As a dancer, choreographer, media artist, and researcher in the mid to late 1980s, my work has been in the forefront arena of technological development. I was one of the first artists to conceive, manufacture, and interact with cyber-human performers and employ virtual reality technologies for the pursuit of performative dance/arts events. The research and creative works presented in this lecture have been experienced and operationalized, and they continue to explore physical and performance augmentation with the use of wearable computers, real time interactive systems, computer animation, 3D worlds designs, and virtual reality/environments; thus, my dance artwork, research, and technologically charged practice are profoundly embedded within the emergence of the larger trans-disciplinary community of practitioners. This background is central to the work outlined in this document, leading toward the realization and completion of my pending and future works. It provides the resources that fuel the methods of this body of practice and research.

This lecture also addresses the practical performance practice, the thematic ideas, and the theory base that specifically attend to the **"technologically manufactured cyber-humans and their co-existence with physical-human/counterparts while engaged in performance."** These concepts were set to examine, establish, and gain experience that applies not only to the cyber-human but primarily to the human dancer/performer and to the way his/her ability can be augmented in order to exceed the physical boundaries of what is defined as "dance" in the way we currently know it. Questions arise as to how is the art of dance affected when we employ interactive systems? How is the act of choreography altered while immersed simultaneously in a physical and in a virtually constructed environment? Is it

possible to design/create a highly intelligent mover (cyber-human), which is indistinguishable from a human dancer?

My over all research/work/interest lies in the following four areas:

- The use of multiple interactive systems distributed over multiple locations
- The creation of wearable computers/devices
- The design of animated characters/cyber-human performers
- 3D worlds and virtual reality/environments

These research categories are created for the sole purpose of monitoring controlling, and augmenting all aspect of production/performance in real time.

Convergence Identities

For dance practitioners the interface between mind and body is a field of energy "vital force" often referred to as the "Core". Through practice and performance dancers acquire the skill to apply and manage "vital force" by mobilizing several body and mind centering techniques, and acquire the ability through increased awareness to productively distribute this power where it is needed at a specific moment. Together they create a link between the physical existence and the spiritual state of transcendent consciousness, assuring a coordinated operational continuum between the two.

Dance, movement, yoga, and martial arts, are all forms of somatic practices. All can be used as physical performative communication modalities by uniting the physical and the spiritual as an integrated whole. It is important to note that although all of these practices require a simultaneous physical, and spiritual connection, it is the act of performance that grounds them in the body, which is continually engaged in a transformative process. Questions arises as to what are the opportunities presented to us when we consider interactive technological mediation? How can performance be augmented with the use of these technologies? How can the physical human body and the artificially constructed cyber body can operate autonomously?

"One of the aims of the cutting-edge French experimental performance group "The virtual Tightrope Walker" team[1], Michel Bret, Marie-Hélène Tramus and Alain Berthoz" is "to create arts installations showing virtual actors who are endowed with artificial perceptions that enable them to react in an autonomous way to the cues given by spectator (or by the physical performer/operator), thus opening art and cognitive science to a whole new range of possibilities for the exploration of virtual life". Further more, they now believe that "the sensorial aspect also may be envisaged from the point of view of the work of art itself, as the work has become endowed with perceptions of its own". This raises one of the most crucial questions in contemporary digital arts: that of the relationships between natural and artificial "perception-movement-action" and "function".

This important notion of the virtual actor endowed with "artificial perception and autonomy" is consistent with my attempt to share similar experiences that arises from many years of shared performance space and practice with multiple generations of computerized cyber

human characters. I have continuously experienced the presence of a shared energy field (of sort) that is present in performance much similar to the energy shared between two physical human bodies/dancers as they interact in more traditional dance forms, partnering work, and as practised in dance contact improvisation.

Steve Paxton. One the most influential pioneers of contact improvisation. Describe "Contact Improvisation (CI) as a means to explore the physical forces imposed on the body by gravity, and by the physics of momentum"[2].

"Touch is a non- verbal language and very richly evocative in intention, direction, suggestion, and refusal, through the point of contact there is a two way system of communication, listening and responding, commitment and questioning, leading and waiting".

In this situation, trust becomes a top priority. The improviser Paul Langland adds "the performers need to release tension and uncertainty and meet one another in an open, relaxed way, otherwise they will not be able to establish the connection that is essential to the process of reciprocal improvisation"[3]. Similarly to CI, in addition to the obvious electronic connection, the partnering movement actions between a physical human and a cyber-human is improvisational, and sensational.

While in performance a 'reflection' of my own physical representation is projected on a see through surface in the form of a cyber-human. My physical actions, movements, and gestures are enacted; at this point, the wireless electronic and physical contact (from afar) between my cyber partner and myself become more intensely intertwined and committed to the moment-by-moment unfolding of the "duet". Through repetition these enacted gestures and moves are muscle memorized and can be performed intentionally or unintentionally by either one of us depending on the situation at hand. As in CI, the success of such tactile, physical, virtual, and spiritual interaction necessitates mutual support and trust, which is to say that there are many levels by which we are interacting over and beyond the range of our ability, our experience, inhibition, and electronic connection.

Definition

By attempting to define my shared experience, I am seeking to identify other artists and scientists that are conducting similar or related research that can shed some light or suggest ways for sharing similar performance experiences.

I work in the context of interactive performance, and in relation to the artificial construction of virtual worlds and performers that eventually can take on life and actions of their own beyond the electronic connection. At this time I am speaking from my own performance experiences, but I am also relying on research, performances and a series of references that I am now presenting (non exhaustively at first) by other practitioners, ultimately leading toward the delivery of clarity in definition and realization of my stated assertion, question and purpose.

My research is not limited exclusively to how my assertion is supported through technological mediation; I am also looking at alternative communication modalities such as in "cognition",

1   "Interacting with an Intelligent Dancing Figure": Artistic Experiments at the Crossroads between Art and Cognitive Science Michel Bret, Marie-Hélène Tramus and Alain Berthoz, 2005 ISAST LEONARDO, Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 46–53, 2005 47

2   Steven Paxton, "My Rise and fall in Contact Improvisation" Contact Quarterly winter, 1990
3   Paul Langland, The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Body-Mind Disciplines, Nancy Allison, CMA Editor, "The Develpment of Contact Improvisation"

specifically in the realm of the body mind centering techniques, "energy expansion" within the context of dance, duet partnering, and contact improvisation, "transformational, and transcendental actions", researching exciting dormant powers, primitivist and spiritualized vision of "action patterns", zero gravity, inertia, friction (between two bodies), centrifugality, and momentum within the context of ever-varying internal and external states. Thus I hope to demonstrate the need for better understanding of this phenomenon.

Interactivity and suggested "Second Interactivity"[4]

I do not necessarily consider interactive art as highly communicative in its principal practice, but rather I am fascinated with the option for the construction of sort, and the introduction of certain type of sensorial understanding. More specifically, I am interested in the consequences of audience participation and their contribution to the process of shaping performance in real time. They too develop a point of view that may need to be considered more seriously. Although (traditionally) the same type of sensorial understanding and practice is primarily exercised by the physical actor/activator, I am looking at the model of arts installations emerging as a more suitable forum for attendees to better understand the importance of their contribution.

In order to move toward what they suggest as "second interactivity," in reference to "second cybernetics"[5]. "The Virtual Tightrope Walker" team, conducted research drawn "from cognitive science and biology, especially connectionism, genetics, and the physiology of perception and action". "Second Cybernetics" as in dance improvisation also "deals with more complex and fuzzy relationships that are closer to intuitive human behavior, compared with previous cybernetics".

Like in dance practice, Tramus leads us to an often unknown and undervalued form of thought that she calls "body-thought"[6]. To that notion I would add the term often used in dance practice as "muscle-memory" and unplanned "action-patterns", in order for us to better understand how an artificial construct/counterpart can begin to behave on his/her on. Berthoz calls this counterpart the "doppelganger". "To self-configure, would be favorable for the development of experiments on the body-brain-environment and interactions of a virtual creature[7].

It is within that context, that my artistic practice have converged—literally and figuratively—in this realm of utilizing interactive sensorial based systems that are activated through human postures; gestures, movement and communication between real and the perceived/virtual.

"Communication scholar Sheizaf Rafaeli suggests that "Interactivity is an expression of the extent that in a given series of communication exchanges, any third (or later) transmission (or message) is related to the degree to which previous exchanges referred to earlier transmissions". Sheizaf Rafaeli[8].

4   "Interacting with an Intelligent Dancing Figure": Artistic Experiments at the Crossroads between Art and Cognitive Science Michel Bret, Marie-Hélène Tramus and Alain Berthoz, 2005 ISAST LEONARDO, Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 46–53, 2005 47
5   E. Couchot, M.H. Tramus and M. Bret, "La seconde interactivité," in Arte e vida no século XXI, Organizadora Diana Domingues (Brasil: Edition UNESP)
6   M.H. Tramus, "La question de la multisensorialité dans les arts numériques interactifs," paper presented at ISEA 2000, available on-line at Actes ISEA 2000 <http://www.isea2000.com>.
7   A. Berthoz, La décision (Paris: Editions Odile Jacob, 2003).
8   Sheizaf. Rafaeli "Wikipedia" paper, Interactivity: From new media to communication, In Sage Annual Review of Communication Research: Advancing Communication Science, Vol. 16, eds R. P. Hawkins, J. M. Wiemann and S. Pingree, 110-134. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Rafaeli's concept of three way communication exchanges clearly suggests that interactivity is not merely a mouse click-web surfing mechanism but rather a more complex communication modality that must produce a three ways action/reaction in real time. Thus allowing a third party (of choice) to participate in contributing to the creative process.

To this end in his article "The Importance of Being Interactive" technologist-artist Mark Coniglio suggest "By using new technology to allow our performers to become real-time creators, and by asking our audience to be present to their on the-fly artistry, we ensure that each performance of a work is absolutely unrepeatable, which may be the boldest move of all"[9]. Interestingly Both Rafaeli's and Coniglio's notions (presented in this case from two very different sensibilities) requires the same technological support that can enable that high level of participation.

I am gradually realizing however that the technological exploration, tools and, sophisticated interactive systems alone will not lead to a final conclusion. A workable language must be developed to better understand and describe the interactive performance experience with an intelligent, autonomous, artificially constructed humans and how they can take action on their own.

The self-descriptive, self-reflexive and recursive processes of consciousness reveal themselves as a dance of real and computer manufactured (virtual), flesh and re-configuration, sensory presence and re-presentation, cognition and re-cognition. In the ordinary flow of conscious experience, these pairs are not encountered as binary oppositions in conflict, but in a continual dance of transformation, one into the other. I converge with my own creations—the technological tools—and give birth to untested tools and new gestures of both consciousness, leading to physical actions.

The Emotional, Poetic, and Spiritual Connection

The emotional engagement fto which I can attest is most potent while the physical and the virtual characters are engaged in attempting to touch, interact and or find ways for manipulating each other. These emotions and feelings are affecting the actions and the outcome of performance in ways that are unpredicted prior to the act of touching. They are situated within the phenomena of "autonomy" (for both the real and the virtual actor). According to Varela "autonomy means internal law related to self-generation, self organization and the affirmation of identity"[10].

The online Magazine for artists embracing technology "Digital Performance" fall 2004 conducted a conversation with Sarah Smirnoff and Hal Eagar the creators of "The Adaptation of The Sandmann".

"Terra, the performer manipulating the digital puppets, mentioned that she was better able to synchronize her manipulation of the digital characters when she was looking at Tony, her fellow performer, and making an emotional connection with him on stage"

"I did not feel that the characters were successful in making an emotional connection - BUT - I do think we are closer to figuring out the steps to understanding how and what the actors need to connect to each other while using the technology"

9   Mark Coniglio, "New Visions In Performance" 2004, "The Impact of Digital Technologies" (p.12).
10   F.J. Varela, Autonomie et Connaissance. Essai sur le vivant, édit (Paris: Le Seuil, 1989).

Jools Gilson-Ellis asserts, "Technology has made different kind of poets out of us, referring to his collaborator Richard Povall. Together we sing ghost songs. We have haunted mouths, and speaking flesh. Together we imagine impossible things that I can write, but not make"[11].

Alternatively, in my work I can make things that are possible to experience but difficult to describe. They can be seen they can be felt but are lacking the technological and scientific justification that can support clear definition. By that I mean what exactly takes place when a cyber counterpart behaves autonomously and take life/behavior on it's own? What (if any) is the combined mechanism that facilitate for such a phenomena?

"Together we make things that I can't imagine. We barter noisily like grandmothers. Because I am a writer, and trade in poetry, so I tempt technology to do the same".

Rational

It is important to note that because many of us in this medium of interactive performance, are usually doing quite different things, I see remarkably little mutual understanding taking place, not just in aesthetic, but also in fundamental approach. There is as yet not much of a workable critical theory around most of this work, and therefore there is little commonly understood language to describe what we are all trying to do. Consequently, too much inevitable hype and rhetoric has been introduced without any apparent "product to showcase". Beyond that, this lack of productivity is only serving to intensify some of this uncertainty and confusion that have accompanied most of the makers.

That said, great advances have been made in several areas related to performance arts and interactive "intelligent installations". Internationally recognized collaborative teams conducting important experiments at these crossroads include the following unusual combinations: cognitive science and biology (1), connectionism, genetics, and physiology of perception and action (2), neural science and networks (3), and artificial, "haptic teleoperation" (3). Also the introduction of notions such as "Second Interactivity" (4), and "Body-Thought" (5) are very important and intriguing, they can potentially lead to some very important different research areas and combinations.

The Absent Body

"The Absent Body Project"[12] is a computer generated cyber human dance that exclusively employs computer-generated characters/performers stored on a mother ship that is placed strategically in the performance space. Very clean and clear computerized animated images/cyborgs were created with illuminated passages and transitions, a kind of work that does not need a linear plot, but rather, inhabits a browser of sort, or a search engine attempting to search for the performers past experiences and or knowledge. This work did not need to be choreographed since it has neither a beginning nor an end. These characters are activated by/from a wearable suit/computer worn on a physical human performer (myself). They are activated in real time by utilizing a set of commands originated in this case as hands movement material "a way of remembering." These characters are commanded to operate in a structured improvised and random way by the wearer; they can be activated to move forward

or backward, fast or slow, start or stop, fast-forward and or rewind as needed in the moment. Additionally, the wearer/user can select to move instantly to the next set of characters/material that is waiting to attend performers. Thus, the dance is one of a kind sequence as it is experienced in the moment.

Computers typically respond to our direct commands for well-formed actions, but not to our spontaneously evolving inner desires and emergent ideas.

My way of working suggests that gestural recombinant knowledge and space visualization is a mean for augmenting creative innovation in a performative situation/set-up. My creative process is supported by a mode of textual human movement that is recognized by and through the use of multiple sensory devices and motion detectors. These devices then translate the material by numerical orders and or by an algorithm customization program(s) and mapping processes, providing me with the unique seductive power, agency, and the movement linguistic that continue to fuel my imagination.

The complex layering of language, image, and communication between worlds, both human and cyber-human, visualizes the shifting strata of memory, dream, and conscious visualization and meaning-production. The technologically supported feedback that loops between the real and the virtual have produced profound shifts in consciousness, experiences of being both embodied and disembodied at the same time "a duality of existence."

Wearable Interactive Devices

Wearable interactive devices and systems are in most cases either subsumed into the personal space of the user, controlled by the user, and or placed in a desired location where the performer can activate them as needed. They posses operational command systems when placed on the physical body of the user/performer, and interactional constancy when used as an interactive element, i.e. while used in performance they are always on and always accessible. Most notably, these devices have become an integral part and extension of sort of the user body, and into which the user can always enter commands while operating in and around the communication area.

By using/exploring the use of interactive technologies in performative conditions I am seeking to discover how electronic and sensory devices affect the way we communicate, how we can alter the mind, zone of awareness, feelings, and the walking consciousness. Interactive systems are much more than just wristwatches, jewelry devices, regular eyeglasses, different types of floor pads, and or motion tracking devices. They posses the full functionality of being a computer, a wireless communication system and by being fully interactive. They are also inextricably intertwined with the wearer either when placed on the physical body, on the performance floor, or when it functions as a motion tracking device/system.

Continuous research facilitates the augmentation of these systems operational sensory devices and attributes so they can fully function as a medium for inscription. They accept/detect human moves, morphing, scaling, making color changes, and adding new dimensions of expressivities and meaning to performance. As for members of the public/the users these systems provide them with the ability and opportunity to interact, and manipulate the display of information/images both virtually and physically. Images can be displayed onto large screens subsumed into the performance/installation space. The ultimate intention is to surrender total authorship to the user, and it is expected to be highly engaging, playful, and

---

11   Jools Gilson-Ellis and Richard Povall, "New Visions In Performance", "The Impact of Digital Technologies" 2004, (p. 55).
12   "The Absent Body Project" was first performed by the Sharir+Bustamante Dance Works at the University of Texas at Austin, McCullough Theatre, 2003.

somewhat provocative.

Considering my past experiences in the creation of virtual reality works such as "Dancing with the Virtual Dervish"[13] and my current preoccupation with the creation and use of wearable computers and interactive technologies the "Automated Body Project,"[14] I am planning to explore/research in the following areas/ways: how can we spontaneously detect evolving inner desires? How can we consciously form creative and fluid intentions and find the ways/means for interactively expressing these intentions? What kind of an interface can be created that can embody the creative, the informal, the fuzzy, and the physical?

The methodology suggested for such alternative research subjects/new work/process are as follows: An invisible/virtual door space "a means/metaphor for entering the creative process" is suggested/proposed; an interface of sorts will be created. Participant enters, sees and or experiences choreographed gestures and mappings that can recognize different degrees of intensity for single or multiple gestures. The used space is visualized through a vision-based gesture organizer and video motion captures (front and side views) using the record mode for the gesture recognition program. Eyes see simulations of creative intentions, and a model of parameter adjustment and content is facilitated.

Together they explore the interaction of gesture as language—as in dance, sign languages, and mudras—and the capacity of an inscribed language itself to embody and generate gesture. Human and cyber-dancers create and use the physical gestures and cybernetically inscribed movement intention to communicate amongst themselves. The visual language itself models sentience, having the technologically mediated property to absorb or sense meaning and then communicate, both within and to itself, and outward to its environment.

The gesturing or moving and its communicating environment become a visualization of the self-reflexivity inherent in the workings of both language and consciousness. I demonstrate and report on this dance between worlds of humans, cyber-humans, and language in the transformational domain of visible thought. The technologically mediated feedback loops between the real and virtual have produced profound shifts in consciousness, experiences of being both embodied and disembodied at the same time, both human and cyber-human, visualizes the shifting strata of memory, dream, and conscious visualization and meaning-production.

Conclusion

As I am heavily immersed in an ongoing process of technological exploration, serious questions emerge suggesting topologies of temporality. Questions arise from the physical body, resisting automatication of sort and embodiment as machines and at other times flirting with the subversive qualities of suggested magnified performance and the pleasurable pain it elicits. No matter how deeply involved I am in this process the major issues and questions remain the dramaturgy of performance content, internal and external time-consciousness, when-when is/was/will-be no longer, or at least differently, I am thinking-I think-I am- thinking I...

---

13   "Dancing with the Virtual Dervish" was commissioned and first performed at the Banff Centre for the Arts, Canada, May 1994. It was also performed as an installation at the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Athens, Greece, "Synopsis 2-Theologies" 2002.
14   "The Automated Body" was first performed by the Sharir+Bustamante Dance Works at the University of Texas at Austin, Oscar Brockett Theatre, 2000.

In Conversation 1
October 31, 2008

Moderation:
Pavel Sedlak , Curator and writer, Deputy Director, CIANT (Czech Republic / Singapore)
and **Ghislaine Boddington,** Creative Director body>data>space, Research Associate Artist
Middlesex University (UK)

Speakers:
Hellen Sky, digital choreographer / performer / director / writer (Australia) with
Sita Popat, Senior Lecturer in Dance at the University of Leeds (UK)

In the opening part of the conversation, the speakers deliberated on the issue of specifics of their line of work. They referred to Sharir's speech in which he claimed that any situation would actually involve both the physical and the virtual body and that, in his view, there was no separation between them.

What Sharir, Popat and Sky have in common is that, coming from performance history, they are all considering and dealing with the body. This is certainly a particular position when it comes to shaping their way of thinking of bodies and the extension of bodies through networks. It comes from the notion of how we move and perceive our moving, and also from

the intelligence that we build up through our sensory perception because we have been moving for a long time and in different sorts of systems.

Popat noted that we were living in a world of partial attention, constantly aware of ourselves as present through a range of multiple media: talking to another person, working on a computer, picking up a phone or sending an e-mail. We live in multiple lines and we are partially attentive and partially inattentive; this could be described as a new kind of schizophrenia.

Both Popat and Sky are using network technologies in their work and therefore deal with a large number of collaborators; one of the things that occur in such work is certainly the language barrier. Some are also using communication-over-distance, video conferencing, phone and e-mail. Hence we are simultaneously negotiating our identities *in* and *with* different media. For Sky as a practitioner, those complexities are seen from yet another perspective: they depend on the context in which she is working at the time and the resources she would have at hand. Working within institutions, as complex as it might be at times for an artist working with her/his own set of rules and regulations, proves to be fruitful in terms of providing conditions for developing new technologies and new perceptions.

Sky further elaborated on the very evolution of perception enabled by new technologies: from how we inhabit the distribution of our senses into how we consider work but also how we consider our body as data. Once we do that, a dimming of a light can be perceived as a gesture. This notion of transformation is a great palette for a choreographer to start thinking within. The change that happened in the cinematic field when the still became movie could be compared with the quantum leap in choreography that was enabled by the introduction of Motion Capture, which actually brought movement from the 2-dimensional video depiction into a 3-dimensional sphere, providing volume to virtual space. This and similar leaps were made possible because artists could work within institutions.

Popat added that such leap also happened when wires were replaced by different wireless technologies, when suddenly the interface became embodied rather than wired, which offered more options for dances and performers. So the level of quality of the merging and blending of body and technology really relies on some of the sophistications that have recently occurred. Popat's work is particularly concerned with using gestural interfaces i.e. acknowledges the body as a physical being, and then takes that and involves the motor senses. Popat together with her colleagues' focus was lately on promoting body as a subject rather than an object as present in the video-based work.

Sky made a brief overview of the evolution of distribution of senses in her performances. She started off with telematics using an ISDN line, which she had to fly to another country with a codec, and her image would be distributed via 3 different telephone lines as well as her partner's on the other side of the world. She then moved on to Motion Capture. Still, she has also worked with the whole history of movement: from ballet to circus, different relations with gravity, cellular perception, different types of postmodern attentions; she was interested to see how they would become expandable in the spaces she performed in. As she puts it in words "it is great to feel oneself as sound or light as opposed to an even non-figurative avatar". Popat and some of her colleagues were working on exactly that aspect of translating human gesture into other different dimensions/aspects.

In terms of network identities and the ways we work with other people, we are still confined to 2-dimensional video-based communication devices; we are still suffering from special

divisions and a very strong difference in the way we communicate with each other. Sharir mentioned in his keynote speech that, instead of asking a question to his colleague through a computer he would simply walk around the corner to another department. In remote collaborations, Sky noted, this "going around the corner" seems also to be necessary and of vital importance. As an example, she has had a collaboration with a colleague from Western Australia and they have actually achieved much more during a week Sky spent there than in all the time while communicating remotely.

This necessity occurs also in the gaming world. Popat has been involved with online gaming for several years – primarily World of Warcraft – and the communication with people in the virtual world has its own characteristics, rules and regulations. She made some friends through the game in Denmark and has had an exclusively text-based communication with them. When she met them she was struck by the disparity of her idea on them and how they were in reality. As opposed to that, she has had an audio communication for six months with friends she made in Norway and when they finally met, her expectations pretty much stood the reality check. The voice conveys much of the physicality of the individual and the inflexions of the voice give away much of the character. Even the 3D environments e.g. Second Life constrain so much of the body experience; they still take away a lot of our ability to express ourselves. She quoted Edward Castronova saying that "the character that we meet in the game world is the sum of physical characteristics of the avatar you have chosen, designed or created, and the non-physical characteristics of the person who is operating it".

Sky and her collaborator in Western Australia were using Second Life to do a simulation of the physical staging of a work she was beginning to develop. Her colleague built himself an avatar that looked pretty much like himself and people who saw that stage of their work were struck by this similarity because it is rare to see an ordinary person in Second Life. There is a need for making a critique of the systems that are provided to us, e.g. mobile telephony and the Internet. In all probability, they are still imposed upon us by a certain type of economy and we should think in terms of subverting them: like, for instance, the Linden dollar - the monetary unit in Second Life - that has created confusion in the American tax department faced with the emergence of another little capitalist world in the virtual real-estate.

In the concluding part of the conversation, Popat and Sky mused on the present and future of multiple identities. Popat noted that we were becoming increasingly comfortable in living multiple identities simultaneously, slipping between them as we use different modes of communication; it has become part of our everyday performance. Sky underlined her curiosity in how we were evolving as a human species regarding our usage of multiple identities. She is particularly interested in how it will evolve among young people who are dexterous and at ease with it in an unprecedented way.

Speakers :
Martin Kusch, artist, kondition pluriel (Germany/Canada) with
Johannes Birringer, artistic director, DAP Lab / dans sans joux (UK)

Birringer suggested, since the meeting was revolving around exploring the status of collectivity and new paradigms of experiences of artworks, to begin with the notion of time, on the line of necessary equipment mentioned in Sharir's keynote speech. From Kusch's perspective of an artist working with new technologies and also teaching, it is much about the lack of time for truly studying and understanding how a certain software or technology works because in a span of few months new software and new technologies come and one is forced to move on to them. There is an overall acceleration in processes and very often no time to develop a work artistically and content-wise. Presumably there is a constant pressure imposed on artists working in laboratories on collaborative projects to upgrade and use the latest versions of tools and to be innovative and new. Elaborating on the subject of time, Birringer mentioned the example of YouTube as a medium providing masses with Warhol's 3 minutes of fame but with aesthetics and an artistic content that would be forgotten the next day. At the very beginning of his work, Kusch saw some of the inherent elements in new media that had not to do with sustainability of the work but with its presence; in fact, with the ephemeral quality of their presence. As to the quality of YouTube's sustainability, Kusch noted that, by following the communication of his students via university mailing lists, where they often use the best and funniest YouTube links as citations, he discovered a whole new world of communication.

Birringer raised the question of the importance of the conditions of distribution of artworks – how the work is being shared, passed on or seen and experienced - particularly contemporary collaborative performance media interactive real-time works. Both Birringer and Kusch agreed with the point raised by Sky that online collaboration had to be fortified by encounters in flesh. Kusch is not certain on what network collaboration means in terms of changing the way people communicate or what impact it would have on future generations. Answering Birringer's question on whether collaborative network scenarios have helped him to develop better performance techniques, Kusch said that the network communities did not help in the work itself, which is very physical and tied to a concrete space, but what they did provide was answers to different questions, whether on technology or on content. Birringer also raised the question of embodiment and technique, assuming it took years to develop the capability to work in a complex sensorial interactive system; is it possible to teach and convey this knowledge? Kusch thinks it is possible to transfer knowledge up to a certain point but it all takes a long time to let loose from what one has learned before and be able to grasp new concepts and approaches.

Birringer mentioned the issue of European community project collaboration and the criteria applied in choosing partners in other countries. In Kusch's view, the basic element is the human condition, not the expertise. As a starting point, you have to step back from what you usually do in order to be able to open and share.

In the concluding part of their conversation, the two speakers focused on Kusch's work *Passages* as an example in the debate on participatory projects that involve the audience up to a point where they become co-creators. Birringer wondered whether this was the position of spectators in *Passages*. Kusch explained that the piece originally started as a trio: an installation without objects but with just three dancers featuring different approaches to choreography and using different technological interfaces. But the process of work made it clear to them that a simultaneous performance was not possible: therefore they came up with a solo version with objects in the space. Certainly, some responsibility of the unfolding of the event lies with the spectator – his/her actions define the course of action – but for the authors it was important to create conditions of listening first, then perhaps understanding something and eventually trying to intervene; in that sense, the audience is co-authoring the work.

At this point in the conversation, members of the audience entered with their questions and comments. Answering a question on the future of work as such in light of its changing nature in new media and the world of technology, Kusch thought that work itself would not change that much because even 50 years from now classical forms of artwork will still exist. Birringer finds important the existence of prizes for excellence or for expertise because they are also applicable to new media and technologies in arts. When a work is successful, it humanises the technology: suddenly everything seems all right. When, on the contrary, a work does not work, we tend to resist and blame the technology for it. Going back to the issue of institutions, he noted that while it was true that most of innovative works in the US happen within the academic institutions it is refreshing to know that in Europe young artists are developing work outside of them.

Commenting on some reactions from the audience that were rejecting the distinction between the audience and the artist, Popat said that there was still much limitation in that the audience is still bound to operate within a frame created by the author; therefore the illusion of freedom. On the other hand, in environments such as YouTube where identities and values are being negotiated, there are no boundaries – there is a constant state of becoming

-but there is also a constant changing and we may ask ourselves whether we can talk anymore about completed artworks or there is something beyond that, possibly a post-human state where we never reach conclusion just as the co-author project may never be completed.

In the dialogue between Birringer and Sky on the existing gap between the audience capability of grasping more complex interactive works and the subsequent hesitation of institutions to further programme and sponsor such works, Sky emphasised that it depended on how we would encourage the audience to be in and deal with such kind of work; what sort of mind setup and history they are bringing to this work.

Kusch stated that in his and his company's work the emphasis was not on interaction but rather on socialisation, the quality of listening and the communication between people. They are working indeed with interactive i.e. responsive media but their work is a hybrid between installation and performance where they are trying to determine what it means to combine time-based and non-time-based art and what type of aesthetics and experience they can create.

Steve Dixon. Photograph by Vera Batozska

Steve Dixon
Theatre Director and Professor / Pro-Vice Chancellor Brunel University (UK)

Multi–Identities
Performance, Virtual Environments and the Hybrid Self

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you. …
Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

Walt Whitman, Song of Myself (1855)

Walt Whitman's celebratory 'song' to the "multitudes" of identities he "contains" and embodies has become one sung by millions exploring multi-identities in online and virtual environments a century and a half later.

In my consideration of the relationships between digital technology, performance, and hybrid identity, I want to emphasise straight away that the concepts of multiple identities, and divided and plural selves are neither a new thing nor specific to our interactions with new media. I believe multi-identities are a fundamental existential condition. What has changed is that virtual technologies and online environments have encouraged more playful and deeper engagement with our plural selves – and hence enhanced consciousness of and experimentation with multi-identities.

Long before computer technologies people fantasised about becoming someone else – a hero, a goddess, a millionaire, a pop star – and as Erving Goffman pointed out in 1956 in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, we all constantly adjust the performance of ourselves according to who we are with.[1] We play quite different characters with our mothers than with our lovers, or with our boss as opposed to a friend. In 1781, Immanuel Kant's declared: "I have no knowledge of myself as I am but merely as I appear to myself. To be conscious and aware of oneself is thus very far from knowing oneself."[2] Using this formulation we might speculate that the concept of virtual multi-identities pushes the idea of having no knowledge of oneself forward - to substitute that absence with the presence of others through replacement incarnations providing new ways that one might 'appear' to oneself, and understand or comes to terms with oneself (despite the philosophical and existential problem that one can never *know* oneself).

There are numerous ways in which people perform multi-identities in virtual environments, and many different intentions and desires behind them: from the childlike pleasure of performativity to the psychologically therapeutic, from sexual gratification to the quest for the spiritual. For some it is first-and-foremost simple playacting: an enjoyable role-play game; an escapist drama; or a carnivalesque participation in a type of transgressive and liberating mas-

---

1   Goffman, Erving, 1959. The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. Garden City, New York: Doubleday.
2   Kant, Immanuel, 1929. Critique of Pure Reason. London: Macmillan, p.169.

ked ball. For others the role-playing is a strategy to enhance self-confidence, self-esteem and self-image by, for example, becoming a magical super-hero in *World of Warcraft* or glamou-rising their alter-ego avatar body in *Second Life*. For others there is a flexing of the subcons-cious, or a search for the true self (or non-self) through experimentation with multiple selves, since an "endless series of masks points both to the emptiness of the idea of the self as well as its profound depths."[3] For still others, including myself, there is an innate desire for alterity, and pursuing digital paths in multiple identity (dis)guises leads to becoming 'other'.

In my creative work using digital technologies in theatre performances and mixed-reality te-lematic events, the exploration of multi-identities is core, and indeed inherent in my compa-ny's name *The Chameleons Group*. I believe we are all multiple personalities with multi-iden-tities, and certain types of actors and performers understand this particularly well. Many of us ply our art and craft specifically because of a deep and difficult sense of an absence of self (in its traditional understanding as a solid, coherent, unitary being), and the projection and embodiment of different characters or archetypes somehow helps to fill the void, or at least build a solid bridge across the yawning gap. Projecting an alternate identity or other self ma-kes up for the lack of self, and while it may never solve the fundamental existential problem of knowing oneself, at the very least it lessens the pain, and at best it becomes an authentic and cathartic attempt at connecting with, or completing oneself.

The Double and the Spectre

In The Chameleons Group multimedia theatre performances, the digital double[4] of each live performer accompanies them almost constantly on a large projection screen. The double acts as the live performer/character's alter-ego/alter-identity and at times their double will split into yet another doppelganger, with the performers being confronted by two alternate versions of themselves with whom they engage in complex multi-way dialogues.

Our use of the digital double consciously engages with a number of concepts and theories, from Lacan's mirror stage and *corps morcelé* (body in pieces) to Freud's *unheimlich* (uncanny) and Id/Ego/Super-Ego trinity, and from Artaud's *The Theatre and Its Double* (1938) to Roland Barthes' theories of the Photograph. In his final work, the photograph became for Barthes an existential if not transcendental journey, a window into the nature of reality which finally reveals photography as:

superior to everything the human mind can or can have conceived to assure us of reality – but also this reality is never anything but a contingency ("*so much, no more*"). ... The photo is literally an emanation of the referent ... that comes to touch me like the delayed rays of a star. A kind of umbilical cord ties the body of the photographic thing to my gaze.[5]

Barthes was writing in 1980 about the analogue photograph, but his perspectives are equally applicable to the constructions of cyberidentities, since both represent alternate and, in Barthes' terms, *live* 'embodiments' to/of the subject. As a new identity (or several multi-identities) begins to evolve and mature it becomes similar to Barthes understanding of the moment of photographic capture when the camera's click represents: "that very subtle moment when ... I am neither subject nor object but a subject who feels he is becoming an

Digital doubles, spectres and merged identities in The Chameleons Group's multimedia theatre production Chameleons 4: The Doors of Serenity (2002).

object: I then experience a micro-version of death (of parenthesis): I am truly becoming spectre."[6]

Barthes' meditations on the photograph as a symbol of death, and his insistence that the Photograph is a literal emanation of the referent was expanded upon by Derrida who declared that:

We are already specters of the "televised". ... We are spectralized by the shot, captured or possessed by spectrality in advance. ... Film plus psychoanalysis equals a science of ghosts. Modern technology increases tenfold the science of ghosts. The future belongs to ghosts.[7]

The spectrality of the photograph - and its related film, video and digital apparitions – and its particular 'presence' has become a key theoretical debate in performance studies and wider cultural theory. It spans the 'liveness' debate that followed Philip Auslander's contention that the mediated body is not only equal to the live body but asserts a privileged and dominant presence over it, to Baudrillard's repeated arguments that the virtual has taken over the real.

3   Jones, Amelia, 2006. Self/Image: Technology, Representation and the Contemporary Subject. London: Routledge, p.42.
4   See "The Digital Double" (Chapter 11) inn Dixon, Steve, 2007. Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art and Installation. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
5   Barthes, Roland, 2000 [1980]. Camera Lucida. Translated by Richard Howard, London: Vintage, p.87.

6   Barthes, Camera Lucida, p14.
7   Derrida, Jacques and Bernard Stiegler, 2002. Echographies of Television. Translated by Jennifer Bajorek, Cambridge: Polity Press, p.115, 117.

In live multimedia theatre work, *The Chameleons Group* play freely with Barthes' and Derrida's complex notions of the photograph or digital image as a spectral entity, and as both a *live* phenomenon and one that marks the sense of death. We are as insistent as Barthes that whilst the photograph shows a reality of the past, of something already dead in time, the referent itself appears once again live to us, "*in flesh and blood,* or again *in person*." We attempt to theatrically evoke Barthes' alchemical ideas in sequences where the performers emerge from hidden doors within the projection screen set and are followed, overlapped and overtaken by successions of their own projected digital doubles. A live character may enter through a door on the right at precisely the same moment her digital double enters from a door on the left. Here, the live actor meets the supposed absence and the past tense of her projected double, but the 'spectre' asserts itself as doubly present – both temporally and in terms of equal theatrical presence. As the real meets the virtual, absence becomes presence, and past becomes present.

It is interesting to relate the digital double to the Narcissus myth, and its particular relevance to the digital age. In our technologised culture we are increasingly projecting ourselves and watching ourselves on screens and in cyberspace, and creating doubled identities in arenas such as *Facebook, YouTube*, and *Second Life*. Like Narcissus, we are increasingly hypnotised by our own reflections. But where Narcissus peered into natural reflective matter – water – we are drawn to our doubles through a new, *technological sublime*, which we now find equally hypnotic as the natural one. Human vanity is replaced by the new technological vanity – or perhaps as Baudrillard insists, the power of the virtual *over* the real. For Baudrillard, the technologized, mirrored double:

is the fantasy of seizing reality live that continues – ever since Narcissus bent over his spring. Surprising the real in order to immobilize it, suspending the real in the expiration of its double. ... We dream of passing through ourselves and of finding ourselves in the beyond: the day when your holographic double will be there in space, eventually moving and talking, you will have realised your dream.8

Performing Multi-identities

The exploration of multi-identities has of course been quintessential to performance for millennia, from the earliest tribal rituals where participants enacted and attempted to embody gods, spirits and animals, to the art and craft of acting throughout theatre's history from ancient Greece to contemporary Broadway. In experimental performance art during the 1960s and 70s a number of artists including Jackie Apple, Martha Wilson and Adrian Piper presented work based on the notion of entirely changing their own identities; and in 1970 pioneering feminist artist Judy Gerowitz publicly rejected her father's surname and changed her identity to Judy Chicago in a full-page advert in *Artforum* protesting against the oppressively patriarchal art world. In the late twentieth century changing identities became as much a political act as an aesthetic one, and the body soon became as central a site for change when piercings, tattooings and cosmetic surgery began to proliferate. In the 1990s, French performance artist Orlan pushed the zeitgeist to an extreme by undertaking a series of satellite-transmitted operating theatre performances designed to surgically transform her face into a composite woman, a physical multi-identity jigsaw made up of different pieces of classical paintings:

Her forehead is from Leonardo's Mona Lisa; her chin is from Botticelli's Venus; her nose from an attributed sculpture of Diana by l'École de Fountainebleau; her mouth from Gustave Moreau's Europa; and her eyes from François Pascal Simon Gérard's Psyche. ... Everything about Orlan is artifice, from her name to her body, which remains a work in progress. ... No longer does art imitate life. In Orlan, life imitates art.9

As increasing numbers of artists and performers (as well as 'ordinary' people) began to explore alternate identities on the web, some of the most interesting work emerged from artists who subverted and satirised the multi-identity paradigm. In *be right back/The Stolen Identity Project* (2000), Austrian company Bilderwerfer 'stole' the web identities of various real people (including the shah of Iran, a death row inmate and a deaf housewife) and spent an anarchic year 'being' and misrepresenting them (while pointing to the shallowness of online multi-identities) both in live performance and online contexts:

We spoke their words publicly, we aired their confessions live on stage, we invaded their privacy without their permission. ... We seduced a young man from the Philippines who ran away when he discovered that our last boyfriend left us because he discovered that he was gay, we made love to some guy from an African country who likes women with a tight ass. ... We had bad sex with all the ha and the ho and other cheap voices with some girl/boy (it was not really clear). We played virtual priests to somebody's confession ... we screamed "Heil Hitler" and "Kill the Jews" and "Fuck Bill Gates" ... We did all that and we continue doing it night after night.10

Leading Chicano performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña also employed ironic humour to pour scorn on the social performance of virtual multi-identities:

Today, I'm tired of ex/changing identities on the net.
In the past 8 hours, I've been a man, a woman and a s/he.
I've been black, Asian, Mixteco, German and a multi-hybrid replicant.
I've been 10 years old, 20, 42, 65.
I've spoken 7 broken languages.
As you can see, I need a break real bad,
just want to be myself for a few minutes.

ps: my body however remains intact, untouched, unsatisfied,
Unattainable, untranslatable.11

Gómez-Peña and his collaborator Roberto Sifuentes developed a number of fascinating Internet projects from the mid-1990s exploring perceptions of racial (and particularly Mexican) identity and transformation, where online visitors were invited to contribute their ideas, prejudices and fantasies through questionnaires and bulletin boards. The vast amount of material submitted became a pool for the artists to draw from to create fantastical hybrid identities for their live performance work. Like Orlan's surgical jigsaw puzzle constructions from different classical influences, Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes appropriated and mixed-and-matched elements from the diverse online inputs filled with intercultural fears and fantasies. They then donned eclectic costumes, props, makeup and cyborgic prosthetics to become:

8   Baudrillard, Jean, 1994. Simulacra and Simulation. Translated by Sheila Faria Glaser, Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

9   Giannachi, Gabriella, 2004. Virtual Theatres: An Introduction. London: Routledge, p.49-50.
10   Bilderwerfer, 2000. "be right back/ The Stolen Identity Project." Database entry, Digital Performance Archive. http://art.ntu.ac.uk/dpa
11   Gómez-Peña, Guillermo, 1996. Friendly Cannibals. San Francisco: Artspace Books, p.45.

composite personae … fetishized constructs of identity... projections of people's own psychological and cultural monsters—an army of Mexican Frankensteins ready to rebel against their Anglo creators. . . . these hyper-sexual "ethno cyborgs"... both defied and perversely incorporated every imaginable Hollywood and MTV stereotype, every fear and desire secretly harbored in the fragile psyches and hearts of contemporary America.[12]

Cybercultural Theories of Multi–identities

A brief (but by no means comprehensive) review of key books in the early 1990s on the adoption of alternate and multiple identities in cyberspace provides interesting insights into the phenomenon as it proliferated with the coming of the personal computer. An important early work, Kenneth J. Gergen's *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life* (1991) examined how new media communications affect our interpersonal lives and lead to a type of saturation and absorption in the views, lifestyles and psychologies of others. He argues that electronic media have resulted in a proliferation of relationships as we communicate with more people, more frequently and continuously than in any time in history. In doing so, we begin to internalise aspects of other people that in turn transform our own sense of identity. The intensities of "the technologies of social saturation" effectively "populate" each us with facets of many other people, leading to profound changes in culture and human personality:

In an important sense, as social saturation proceeds we become pastiches, imitative assemblages of each other. In memory we carry other people's patterns of being with us. … Each of us becomes the other, a representative, or a replacement. To put it more broadly, as the [twentieth] century has progressed selves have become increasingly populated with the character of others. … each of us comes to harbor a vast population of hidden potentials – to be a blues singer, a gypsy, an aristocrat, a criminal. All the selves lie latent, and under the right conditions may spring to life.13

In 1992, Amy Bruckman's Master's thesis at MIT conceptualised the exploration of new aspects of self (including cross-gender role-plays) in the emergent online social environments of MUDs and MOOs as 'identity workshops'14; and her work was drawn upon by Howard Rheingold in his important 1993 book *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier.* Rheingold saw "masks and self-disclosures are part of the grammar of cyberspace … a syntax of identity play: new identities, false identities, multiple identities, exploratory identities."15 He discusses how "latent selves are liberated by technology" and neatly counters the argument that online relationships lack authenticity:

I resent the shallowness of the critics who say that if you sit in front of a computer and participate in online conversations worldwide you are not leading an authentic life. I question the premise that one person can judge the authenticity of another person's life. Millions of people passively watch television all day long. Don't tell me that having an email relationship with someone on the other side of the world is less authentic than sitting alone and watching the tube. For many people, this new medium is a way of breaking out of the virtual world they already live in.16

But the most influential book of the 1990s on the new nature of online multi-identities was Sherry Turkle's *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet* (1995). Taking both sociological and psychological perspectives, Turkle celebrates the Internet as a place to construct one's identity, a site where effectively we become authors of ourselves: "we project ourselves into our own dramas, dramas in which we are producer, director and star."17 She argues that the previously conceived unitary self transforms into a multiple self, and that "identity on the computer is the sum of your distributed presence."18 Her case studies of people adopting multi-identities emphasise their profound identifications with their alter-egos, a common belief that RL (real life) is just one of their life's many parallel windows, and the fact that online interactions can be as meaningful and affecting as those in RL (a point made vividly with reference to the psychological effects suffered by victims of the infamous virtual rape in LambdaMoo in 1993).

Many others followed Turkle's positive viewpoint on the transformational potentials of adopting multi-identities. Mark Poster discussed entire "new configurations of individuality,"19 Karen Franck conceptualised the self as "an array of possibilities to be imagined and created,"20 46 and Mark Stefik dubbed the information superhighway the "I-way … a search for ourselves and the future we choose to inhabit."21 Others went even further to predict a total social transformation where online multi-identities would effectively overtake and replace the RL self, with Niranjan Rajah arguing that "what is today approached as pathology will, in the future, become the norm in the construction of the self,"22 and Sheldan Renan declaring that:

The Network creates new relationships between being fictive and being real(ized). Being fictive becomes seen as an integral part of being real. … Fiction will deepen so that one may fall in and never emerge. … We may see a retribalization of social structures through new fictive forms and spaces. … Our online identities may become more important to us than our "real life" (RL) identities. Fictive VR may become more useful than personal RL.23

But by the late 1990s a critical battle broke out when a number of writers began to take issue with what they perceived as the hyberbole and naïve utopianism of such viewpoints. They pointed out that a proliferation of fantasy selves could equally lead to self-delusion and psychological instability, as well as problems in relating to others outside virtual environments. Michael Punt warned that interactive online social spaces were negative and seductive, leading users into "incipient sickness and schizophrenia,"24; and in *Virtual Realities and Their Discontents* (DATE) Robert Markley reconfigured William Gibson's metaphor for cyberspace as a "consensual hallucination" into: "a consensual cliché, a dumping ground for repackaged philosophies about space, subjectivity, and culture."25 Jon Stratton warned

12   Gómez-Peña, Guillermo, 2000. Dangerous Border Crossings: The Artist Talks Back. London: Routledge, p.49-50.
13   Gergen, Kenneth J. 1991. The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life. New York: Basic Books, p.23.
14   Bruckman, Amy, 1992. "Identity Workshops: Emergent Social and Psychological Phenomena in Text-Based Virtual Reality." Master's thesis. MIT Media Laboratory.
15   Rheingold, Howard, 1994. The Virtual Community: Homesteading in the Age of the Internet. San Francisco: Harper Perennial, p.152.
16   Rheingold, Howard, 1999. "The Citizen." <http://www.edge.org/digerati/rheingold/>

17   Turkle, Sherry. 1997. Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet. London: Phoenix, p.20.
18   Turkle, Life on the Screen, p.12.
19   Poster, Mark, 1995. "Postmodern Virtualities." In Cyberspace, Cyberbodies, Cyberpunk: Cultures of Techno-logical Embodiment, edited by Mike Featherstone and Roger Burrows, pp. 79-95. London: Sage, p.80.
20   Franck, Karen, A. 1995. "When I enter virtual reality, what body do I leave behind?" In Architectural Design Profile No. 118: Architects in Cyberspace, pp. 20-23. London: Academy Edition, p.21.
21   Stefik, Mark (ed.), 1996. Internet Dreams: Archetypes, Myths, and Metaphors. Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press, p.xxiii.
22   Rajah, Niranjan. 1999. "Two Portraits of Chief Tupa Kupa: the image as an index of shifts in human con-sciousness." In Reframing Consciousness, edited by Roy Ascott. Exeter: Intellect Books, p.57.

23   Renan, Sheldan, 1996. "The Net and the Future of Being Fictive." In Clicking In: Hot Links To A Digital Culture, edited by Lynn Hershman Leeson, pp. 61-72. Seattle, WA: Bay Press, p.62-69.

24   Punt, Michael, 1999. "Casablanca and Men in Black: Consciousness, Remembering and Forgetting." In Reframing Consciousness, edited by Roy Ascott, pp. 38-42. Exeter: Intellect Books, p.42.
25   Markley, Robert (ed.),1996. Virtual Realities and Their Discontents. Baltimore: The John Hopkins Univer-sity Press, p.56.

that online multi-identities negatively cleaved open the Cartesian mind-body split and "the increasing acceptance that the 'self' can exist apart from the 'body',"[26] while Arthur and Marilouise Kroker launched a powerful and chilling broadside attack:

Electronic technology terminates with the radically divided self: the self, that is, which is at war with itself. Split consciousness for a culture that is split between digital and human flesh. A warring field, the electronic self is torn … [and retreats] into an irreal world of electronic MOOroom fun within the armoured windows. ... Seeking to immunize itself against the worst effects of public life, it bunkers in. ... Bunkering in is the epochal consciousness of technological society in its most mature phase … bunkering in is about something really simple: being sick of others and trying to shelter the beleaguered self in a techno-bubble.[27]

Media theorist Marshall McLuhan had underlined much of this discourse earlier in the 1960s by announcing the negative impacts of technologies on both society and notions of human identity:

As electric media proliferate, whole societies at a time become discarnate, detached from mere bodily or physical "reality" and relieved of any allegiance to or a sense of responsibility for it. … The alteration of human identity by new service environments of information has left whole populations without personal or community values.[28]

Postmodern philosophers and techno-theorists such as Baudrillard and Virilio further underlined this pessimistic message on technology during the 1970s and 80s, which Arthur Kroker has characterised as a "catastrophe theorem." In *The Possessed Individual* (1992) Kroker maintains that writers such as Baudrillard, Virilio, Lyotard, Deleuze and Guattari each view technology as a type of predatory virus that seduces, oppresses and ultimately possesses the individual. Having announced the literary 'death of the author' in the 1970s, by the 1980s postmodern philosophers were warning of new technology's role in ravaging minds and whole societies leading to "the death of politics, the death of aesthetics, the death of the self, the death of the social, the death of sex."[29]

The theoretical implication in relation to multi-identities is that the act of projecting and dispersing different personas, fantasies and aspects of self into the technological matrix results in the gradual erosion of the subject's sense of self and, finally, "the death of the self." Rather than viewing multi-identities as a celebration and liberation of the self, the late-twentieth-century French philosophers saw them as a route to technological slavery and zombiedom, just as the German philosopher Heidegger had earlier maintained in 1953: "everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it."[30]

In the 1970s and 80s, writers like Baudrillard acted as nihilist soothsayers against media's "evil spirit of simulation" that led to an erasure of human individuality and personality, and to

26   Stratton, Jon, 1997. "Not Really Desiring Bodies: The Rise and Rise of Email Affairs." Media International Australia, No. 84, May, pp. 28-38, p. 28.

27   Kroker, Arthur and Marilouise, 1996. "Code Warriors: Bunkering In and Dumbing Down." In Clicking In: Hot Links To A Digital Culture, edited by Lynn Hershman Leeson, pp. 247-257. Seattle, WA: Bay Press, p.247.

28   McLuhan, Marshall, 1964. Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, p.23.

29   Kroker, Arthur, 1992. The Possessed Individual: Technology and the French Postmodern. New York: St. Martin's Press, p.166.

30   Heidegger, Martin, 1977[1954]. The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays. Translated by William Lovitt. New York: Harper and Row, p.311.

the loss of the real: "The coming of the virtual is itself our apocalypse, and it deprives us of the real event of the apocalypse."[31] But as I have argued previously:

The simple point so many critics seem to miss or not wish to acknowledge is that the real has changed, as it has always done. The real, and our consciousness of what is real, is subject to time, and for several hundred years it has had a conjoined twin: technological "progress." In the 1950s and '60s, people were at first amazed to see little people in their homes on a thing called television, and the real changed then. But we have since got over how "spooky" television is, just as we have quickly become used to and have assimilated the capabilities of the computer and the Web—it is just part and parcel of what today is real.[32]

The real is as real as it ever was - and I would maintain that human imagination and fantasies were ever as powerful a component of the real for us as atomic physical phenomena. For those of us who explore multi-identities, today's 'real' is perhaps less concerned with or fettered by physical laws and social restraints than in the past, and harkens the cybernetic and posthuman self, where identity is an evolutionary process and an overtly conscious self-exploration. As Ollivier Dyens puts it: "Living beings do not belong to a uniquely organic domain anymore. Our bodies are now made of machines, images and information: We are becoming cultural bodies."[33] In the age of the posthuman, machine intelligence and human cognition converge to offer new constructions of subjectivity, and as Katherine Hayles notes:

People become posthuman when they think they are posthuman … information has lost its body ... to be conceptualized as an entity separate from the material forms in which it is thought to be embedded. ... In the posthuman, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals.[34]

Conclusion

The double and multi-identities people explore in cyberculture can be seen in many different ways – as mere role-play games and simple fun; as escapes into fantasy and the carnivalesque; as spiritual quests to discover a true self; and as a strategy to lose oneself and become 'other' so as to encounter the other of other people's others.

But we should also reflect that although we seem ostensibly to be building new selves, the process is equally and as importantly about erasing the old self. The cycle of rematerialisation necessitates dematerialisation and it may be that an unconscious strategy of disappearance actually lies at the core of multiple identities. Finding the liberated, ludic, new self involves the concealment or obliteration of the socially formed old self.

So the formation of multi-identities is in one way an additive process, but in another a subtractive one. In my work with *The Chameleons Group* it is an Artaudian peeling away of masks to reveal inner beings that lurk under the surface. And beneath the mask is another

31   Baudrillard, Jean, 1998. Paroxysm: Interviews with Philippe Petit. Translated by Chris Turner. London: Verso, p.23.

32   Dixon, Digital Performance, p.144.

33   Dyens, Ollivier, 2001. Metal and Flesh: The Evolution of Man: Technology Takes Over. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, p.2.

34   Hayles, N. Katherine, 1999. How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.6, 2-3.

mask.[35] So while multi-identities appear to be an outer path of externalising our multiple facets, they are just as significantly an inner self-examination, an auto-psychoanalysis.

We are called *The Chameleons Group* because like chameleons we change our skins – sometimes literally by exchanging clothes, but more often by adjusting to the environment and empathising so strongly with the other characters that we become them. The multi-identities we explore are not so much about fragmented, schizophrenic personalities, but rather fluid subjects drifting back and forth across spectrums and continuums – between strong and weak, kind and cruel, heterosexual and homosexual, hard and soft, man and woman.

It explores what we really are – not fixed, single selves, but plural, hybrid beings who seek our true selves through the projection of alternate identities and a intense and transformative empathy with others. It is a conscious performative and philosophical strategy to address the key existential problem and paradox that you can never know yourself, because there is no self. We are split, we are multiple, and we merge with others.

---

35   See "Beneath This Mask Another Mask" (Chapter 2) in Jones, Self/Image.

In Conversation II
November 1, 2008

Followed by Q&A session that delved further into the raised topics but also opened some new ones.

Moderation:
Ghislaine Boddington, Creative Director body>data>space, Research Associate Artist Middlesex University (UK)

Speakers :
Michael Takeo Magruder, Multi Media artist, Kings College London (UK) with
Susanne Berkenheger, Net artist and satirist and CYNETart prize winner (Germany)

Berkenheger launched the topic with a small story on why her avatar hated her. When she came into Second Life, she was not (as she is not to this day) very interested in dealing with them; thus her avatar in Second Life is very standard. She was tired of creating new identities over the years. When Berkenheger's avatar started writing bad things about her in a blog, Berkenheger realised she actually liked it. When one thinks of an avatar having its own identity, it can appropriate various forms but it can also contain many traps.

Magruder followed on that point by saying that the individual-company relationship (in this case between the end user and Linden Lab, the creator of Second Life) can be problematic and open to abuse. On the one hand, individuals are given the freedom of creation and operation, and are encouraged by Linden Lab to engage with the wider virtual community on this basis; on the other hand, the corporation maintains complete rights (through its general terms and conditions of Second Life usage) over everything which is created by the users of their virtual domain. The result is that important issues, such as agency, accountability, and the basis of ownership, become obscured and begin to deviate from accepted real world laws and practice. He then compared these issues surrounding Second Life to other online media services like YouTube in which individuals are allowed to share their creations for free, but through the process become producers of royalty-free content for corporations.

Berkenheger and Magruder then spoke about the dangers in such commercially-minded virtual environments, like Second Life, in which everything is or can be preconfigured. In such systems, there is often a high level of reproduction because facilities exist to easily generate endless copies of everything. One is often encouraged to just buy the ready-made elements to fit within the Linden world paradigm as opposed to taking a more individually-creative approach to ones virtual existence.

Magruder also mentioned that a general problem with all metaverses and shared virtual environments at present is the lack of interconnectivity between different systems and infrastructures. An obvious manifestation of this issue lies in the fact that one has to constantly recreate ones virtual self. That is why, for instance, Magruder explained that to model his avatar to look exactly like him (which is often his desired choice) is a time consuming process that can deter him from venturing into newly found virtual worlds. Even with his vast experience in avatar creation, he must still spend considerable time to replicate his avatar upon entering a new system, even though he knows exactly what he wants. This is why IBM and other labs are looking at providing some kind of mechanism that would enable the distribution of a once created identity to be simultaneously deployed across multiple virtual platforms. Magruder stated that such a facility would liberate people from needing to invest time in learning technical aspects of a system and allow them to concentrate more on their experiences and life within the virtual realm. Berkenheger expressed her hope for that becoming true in the future because the present situation is unbearable. She then expressed her desire for the possibility of anonymity because she finds it hard to be present by name all the time.

Magruder then related that every system must maintain a balance between necessary constraints and creative empowerment of its user base. At present, he felt that there was an imbalance towards constraining individual choice, and that this made it difficult for him to create an avatar that was truly representative of himself. Berkenheger further elaborated on the subject of choice and avatar identity by wondering what would happen if people would have a possibility to enter Second Life as themselves: how many of them would still create an avatar? Her impression is that in Second Life it is not so much about role playing (as opposed to chat rooms where role playing is dominant) than it is about doing other things like building houses and transforming the avatar into a nice figure that's as representative as a neat website.

Magruder observed that when most people venture into a metaverse for the first time they often bring their preconceptions and 'baggage' from the physical world with them. He then asked himself if that was a generational thing, watching his daughter who is at total and natural ease with emerging game interfaces like the Wiimote. Magruder speculated that because she has lived with them all her life and does not consider these devices to be special or advanced

technologies, her generation will be the first to truly work and play in these environments. Berkenheger then related that her daughter, who is only 5 years old, has a different attitude: she likes hitting avatars, not taking them as people behind the virtual figures.

In the concluding part of their conversation, Magruder and Berkenheger agreed that current virtual systems failed in providing enough elements to convey who a person is and what they wish to convey. For Magruder, the present systems lack basic facilities for personalised communication (like gestures), and it will be far more interesting when one can create such personalised elements within the home environment. Berkenheger would prefer a system where she wouldn't have to go to a company space but rather to an open source platform.

Speakers:
Fiddian Warman, Director, Soda (UK)
Pavel Smetana, Director, CIANT (Czech Republic)

In their conversation, Fiddian Warman and Pavel Smetana followed the line of the previous conversation and shed some different lights on the topic of avatars.

Warman began with an outlook to the future, considering interesting the fact that we have now robotic pet avatars on which we can impose identities or, on the other hand, project ourselves into mechanical beings in the real world. In his opinion, this might be a real revolution in the next 10 or 15 years.

Smetana chose a more reflexive stance: in his view, the question of avatar is the question of living a life. The question of identities is already based and deliberated in philosophy and religion. When he was learning in school that there was one god and later on he learned that he had 3 identities – i.e. two avatars – that posed a problem for him: Which one was "real"? The problem only expands when one takes into consideration multi-theistic religions. How is that issue projected in robotics is a question that Smetana merely wanted to pose without aspiring to an answer. He mentioned the example of Steve Dixon who was talking about 4 key types of avatar figures or digital doubles, whereas he found through his work that there were even more types to address to.

Smetana is not afraid of visions like that of Dostoyevsky's double or of clone research where the physical is the same whereas the biography is different; that could be exciting. Warman is, on the other hand, interested in computer entering the real world instead of vice versa, referring to Virilio's thesis that a car is an extension of ego, thus we are already some sort of cyborgs when we drive our cars.

Smetana considers the question of intelligence a relative one: Descartes was speaking of stopping to think in order to be able to start thinking. To see some new concept or idea is quite different from a little robot walking around playing a trumpet and offering coca-cola. The true problem of Second Life is that it is a copy of real life; therefore you can do less there than in the real life whereas it should be the opposite. With all the technology we have we can and should do more than it is possible to do; and this lies in the nature of artistic creation where we can explore the surplus of what can be done in normal life. At the beginning of the 20th century there was a big clash between those who considered painting as a basically mimetic art and those who went away from mimetism: Second Life is all about mimetics but it could become much more interesting if we would move away from it. Warman corroborated this observation noting that the notion of user interface is highly important. As it becomes more 3D, those questions become all the more complex because there are so many more variables. There is a lot of room for artistic expression; they cannot be scientifically rationalised.

But creativity is a necessary feature of scientific research as well: Warman refers to a robotics company in London called Shadow Robot that works a lot with air muscles actuators, which are compliant and springy and there fore have much more movement possibility. When one shakes hands with one of their hands it is eerily similar to a shake with a real human hand. Smetana described the collaboration of CIANT and the Centre for the Handicapped in Brno where they use a Russian system called BOSLAP. He gave an example of an 11-year old boy who remained totally immobile after a car crash and this system managed to process the electric impulses that his brain was still sending to his muscles and translated them back into the body. Today, the boy is fully movable in spite of previous prognosis that he would be paralysed for the rest of his life. In other words, his understanding of what the body could do had helped in repairing his body. Therefore, the integration of the computer is very important. We have an increasing amount of artificial body parts that need to be integrated with us. In this sense, our relation to the physical world changes as manufacturing becomes increasingly easier. The revolution in manufacturing products, much as the revolution in publishing brought by the computers, is that smart objects are reproducible and modifiable by anybody and tailor-made to suit different needs. Yet all these things are connected not only with arts and culture but also with politics and economics, scientific and psychological research.

Boddington pointed out that the term "avatar" was of Sanskrit origin and in Hinduist philosophy stands for "incarnation"; hence it is actually one of the oldest words contrary to what most people think, that it is a new word.

The following Q&A session delved further into the raised topics but also opened some new ones.

A member of the audience expressed concern about multiple identities in that they were mixed with real identities, people thus losing the notion of real and virtual. The concern particularly extended to children who are not so capable of making a distinction.

Smetana emphasised that there was nothing to be afraid when it came to clones. The only thing we might fear was that they could prove to be more intelligent than we are because we are already deformed by society and the daily routines. As to children, they acquire multiple identities already in their games without a danger of mixing them. The fear of clone goes back to the entire culture of fear of cyborgs and robots depicted in Western literature in a highly dystopian way, where they run amok or rebel against humans. Now this fear is part of a wider science.

Sharir stood in defence of Second Life, pointing out that it was as real as it could be. He uses it for teaching classes at a university in Turkey and this sister class would not be possible without Second Life. As to the issue of avatars, we cannot run away from the avatar notion. Years from now, artificial organs will be ever more present than they are now and many of them already prove to be better than the real ones.

Popat proposed thinking about avatars as representations rather than identities. One might acquire different looking and behaving avatars; yet behind them is still Me and my behaviour may vary but there is a continuum that remains Me.

Marlon Barrios from dance tech .net, USA, suggested bringing back the debate onto the notion of interfacing. The interesting idea is that applications are interfacing with each other. That is an important change in the nature and architecture of the Internet that is creating more of a flow that is in a way quite ecological. When we talk about robotics, we have a tendency to think about robots in a classical sense, i.e. A.I. But there is an interesting evolution in robotics called Subsumption Architecture that brings new paradigms of intelligence that make a representational change in what we consider intelligence. There are phenomena happening in this pervasive computation that go beyond the notion of computer: therefore it is also interesting to separate computation from computer. We actually tend to understand many phenomena with computational metaphors that allow an increased plasticity and the understanding of any kind of phenomena. Hence we can relate Google to a bacteria. The introduction of computational thinking is one of the most powerful changes in how we understand identity. There are very important phenomena occurring among Google searchers; an Amazon.com recommended list of books may create more changes in our idea of cyborg than the actual implants.

Warman noted that as technology and computing were evolving, they were beginning to disappear. As computing on that level of A.I. grows and becomes more embedded into objects, we cease to think about them as computers. He is in favour of bottom-up approach to robotics where objects are not designed for a particular task but they are being let to grow. He quoted in this context Valentino Bracenberg's book "Vehicles: Towards Synthetic Biology".

Smetana noted how people still thought we have a direct line of evolution of technical era and one day the robots will be intelligent. It is with great probability that something completely different will happen. What is being shown in experiments is that we are entering the biological era: robots with organic parts etc. We can overlap some problems that we have with physical computers and move towards biotechnology. Another issue is the cross-genetic combining: like the DNA of a medusa implanted into a dog, which becomes fluorescent. Yet, he reminded that we were still a small portion on this planet where 90% of people still have no access to Facebook.

Smetana followed Sharir's stance on Second Life and brought new arguments in its favour. One of them was that one managed to do more there than in real life. There is a new species of avatars emerging: a slave or a pet. A research was made where they were allowing avatars to have their own life after the owners were logged out and that brought a whole new dimension to the relation owner-avatar. We can easily develop simulacra identities. If Smetana were Linden, he would take sentences from avatars, their characters and use a TV system to develop simulacra identities. There is a true problem of highjacking identities by flocks of zombies on the net. People are slowly growing aware that they have to manage their identities and they have to be responsible for them. Forgetting passwords for those different identities is, in that sense, not only a fairly common occurrence but also a social exercise creating big problems.

Smetana would be interested to see Second Life becoming non-mimetic.

The discussion concluded on a somewhat melancholic note, tackling the issue of virtual remnants of people who have passed away. . . Magruder questioned the ethics of companies like Linden Lab who claim ownership over all virtual assets within their domain - including personal avatars. He stated that this situation provides a means for corporations to perpetually keep a person's virtual self 'alive', even when such actions are against the wishes of the individual. What happens to the letters written to people who have passed away and have taken with them all their passwords thus no one may reach their inboxes? Their legacy lives on through the communication that people try to establish with them. This is a new kind of spiritual traces left in the virtual universe. In this context, Ghislaine Boddington pointed to the recent resurgence of tamagotchis and the emotional relation to avatars and robots especially seen in children.

Masaki Fujihata
Transcription of the Dresden lecture
Inter Media artist & Professor, Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music (Japan)

Communication, Experience, Training and Memory

Masaki Fujihata, Photograph by Vera Ba...

I would like to start from my past projects, which were dealing with Networked technology and communication. This was a buzz word in that era and I tried to make an interesting example for raising discussions.

The first one is titled "Global Interior project." which won a Golden Nika from the Ars Electronica festival in 1996. It is an example of so called "Shared Cyber Space" or " Shared Virtual Environment." The idea extended from "Multi User Dungion," especially "MOO" developed in Xerox Palo Alto Research Center created by a computer scientist Pavel Curtis. At that time, I was a professor at the faculty Environmental Information at Keio University, Japan, one of my student had been localizing this "MOO" into Japanese and implimented onto one of our server. Once or twice I did a class inside this "MOO" with class room students as virtual avatars.

Instead of a keyboard for "MOO", the piece "Global Interior" used a track ball for navigating

virtual space, and a camera, microphone, speaker were used for talking and hearing from the other side of the terminal. The design of the avatar is different from avatars of the recent popular Netowrked application called "Second Life." It is just a spherical shape but has rectangle frame for showing the video image from the window of the terminal. In a way, this avatar is not an agent of the human user, it is an agent of the terminal box. Other good analogy is a horse or a car for riding, for moving in the cyber-space. The user is not moving, standing in front of the terminal, controlling an avatar but moving freely in the cyber-space. Of course the image of your self on the surface of the avatar is a live, shade and shadow are photo realistic. It it quite complex to describe to you, but is easy to play. Play itself is not abstract, it is just practical and concrete.

I designed 18 different cyber-rooms in this piece. Each contains different icons, or iconic object for identifying the space. Here the one is very special, one wall is covered with image from live camera targeting a statue made with 18 steel boxes with movable doors, which indicating the existence of other avatars. For example, when one avatar is in a room of hand, the door of the hand is open. So through this image on the wall, user can recognize where are the other avatars. And more function is designed to this image, by clicking an image of a box, system push the user to the room which was clicked. It is a space transfer function without any rolling of track ball. Purely virtual experience, jump without energy.

In 1996-97, I and my laboratory students spent a lot of energy to realizing those functions in the cyber-space and succeeded to implemented them, with many good chances to present it to the public, then finally got a great prize from Ars Electronica, Linz 1996. But personally, at the end I recognized the poorness of this piece, from many reflections by observing users behaviour. The system realized several interesting functions, but the content of the communication done between users are, most of the case,

"Hi" and "Hello" only. Perhaps, it is enough to give a chance to the user to explore a cyber-space, but I wish to construct a chance for communicating with each other user who comes into the gallery space.

Then I and my laboratory students discussed at length moving toward the next level.

The next video is the one piece after the first one, which had shown between Budapest, Hungary, Linz, Austria and Karlsruhe, Germany connected by megabit network connection. Basic design of the cyber-space and function of the interface is same as before, but the function of avatar is slightly different. One new feature is the line(or thin wire), which is automatically generated after the movement of the avatar. It is a metaphor of a human foot step. The real foot step of human indicating the past existence of some one, and possible trace the foot step to reach a real person. This line(or tail) actually can be grabbed by the user, and when it was grabbed, system bring the avatar and trace back the line to the place of the original avatar's position. in the other word, this line (or wire or tail) has a function similar to the telephone without telephone numbers. One another new function of this piece is "Intimate Sphere." The design of this sphere is similar to the design of the avatar but doubled shape and color of avatars. Because this is indicating two avatars are meeting within this sphere without any disturbance from others. It is blocked from outside. These two function design were came from an idea of extending functionalities of conventional communication tool, "Telephone." The design of avatar tried to afford to the user to explore these functions, instead of just walking around a cyber-space like a former "Global Interior project." in 1996. That is because the title of the piece was change to "Nuzzle Afar" means touching the other(or smelling the

other with nose) in remote location.

And the third piece extended from the second one, is tried to implement autonomous avatars. This idea came from also the observations of happenings at the gallery. Suppose, when there is no visitor with the former piece, nothing had happen, completely nothing. Only suspended avatars were there. Also there is no suggestions for the arriving user; somehow they are not trying to play (some exceptions to this were found in Dutch audiences.). With this new one, it is also interesting to see those movement and behaviour generated by an artificial intelligence programme. Once I showed this without human computer interfaces, so the user is now just a visitor and only to observe happening in the cyber-space just like seeing gold fished in a fish tank. Not only for movement, but also the conversations are done autonomously.

Several interesting discussions can be found within these series of networked project between humans behaviour, style of communication in the real space and the way of communicating each other in the cyber-space designed in these projects. One is the un-suitable situation between the gallery space and cyber-space. So the format of the gallery is the space for showing paintings, viewing images and not for doing chat with others, not for communicating the other, for communicating with the "Art piece." This is not the same problems around "Interactive Art at the art gallery," but with this case, the purpose of both spaces are different. A cyber-space for communication and a real space for reading painting images. In our common space, when we talk each other normally we face each other. At the gallery, please remember the first video, people tries to find out other avatar, people in the cyber-space and the facing each other with the video image pasted on the surface of the avatar, but in the same time there is possibility to talk each other in the real space by spinning their body to the rear.

This project started from the topics related to computer science, communication networks, then faced to the style of exhibition with a public audience instead of research laboratory products. And now the problem extended to the topic of architecture. There I'd like to show some photographs of a teahouse which has a similarity to my networked projects.

As the photograph shows, our Japanese teahouses are very small, in this case it is just two meters by two meters. And actually the door (this is the entrance door), the size of the door is just 70 centimeters by 70 centimeters, very small. People have to bend their body to go into the room. So this is a kind of experience to change the atmosphere from outside to inside. (indicates the dimensions of the teahouse). This is a plan- these are the guests, two guests are here and this is the owner, these are the equipment for boiling water and so on.

I feel it is quite similar to cyber-space. The role of these guests is not only about drinking the tea, but also talking, through some object. So this is a kind of a view... normally guests would sit here and here (indicating) and the owner will sit here. The kettle should be here and then he is going to make tea and serve them. This is the design and function of this small room. By observing this architecture not only us in these modern times, but also from a long time before, people tried to think about making a different atmosphere for making good communication with each other. Space is an environment and afford human of a role, in this case taste a tea. But Rikyu(originator of tea ceremony) add a calligraphy and flower design hung down on the wall. These objects used for triggering a conversation. The owner should have a certain sense for choosing certain paintings, calligraphy or rolls on the wall depending to the guest. It is called "Motenashi" an hospitality, making good atmosphere.

Until here topics of my talk is shifting from space, function, role, atmosphere and experience

of human user.

By using our tradition of making calligraphy, I'd like to show you how we were trained. It can be done by making copy, mimic from the original made my trainer, teacher. This is a photo about elementary school classes. First a teacher show a sample, then the students try to imitate the same drawing the teacher's on a new paper. They are concentrating to imitate... then the teacher starts to make a correction. She tries to show him about the right way to make a calligraphy. Then again he tries to train his body to make a nicer copy of the calligraphy. In this process if training there is almost nothing about the philosophical dimension, this is just about training to know the way to make a correct drawing. This is a very typical situation in a school, the teacher starts to make corrections of the drawings and to show these to the other students. It is interesting to me, this is another dimension of identity: they try to forget about their identity, they try to make the completely same drawing as the teacher shows us. But in reality, we cannot make exactly the same drawings, that is a point, I think in this time each student starts to think about a unique point, about themselves. This is kind of my starting point from an Asian point of view. Calligraphy is a very important subject in elementary school, not only Japanese, but also Korea and China have very strict classes in elementary school.

I'd like to tell you an interesting experience when I travelled in China about 15 years before. There were a lot of bicycles in that age. We were on the bus but in front of the road was covered with many bicycles and is looks impossible to pass by bus. But in reality when a bus goes into this road jammed by bicycles, all the bicycles smoothly divide into two parts, then the bus can go forward quite easily. It looks people riding bicycles never saw back, but they knew our bus is coming. It was so amazing and strange. Of course, they are humans but it reacts like insects, flying insects. They are not individual, it looks like they are communicating with each other. Through this example, I'd like to tell you the importance of sharing the same experience, and to share the same level of skill. It is an Asian tradition, we have to be trained to a certain level to share the same experience.

For the next level, for example when you want to be a professional calligrapher, then the teacher says you should be natural, as you are. This is important. At the first moment, you have to be conscious about mimicking the style. The second is different, you have to forget about the skills, you should behave as you are. Then at last you can discover your own personality. You can draw the same Kanji in a different way.

From here, I would like to shift a little bit, about "bodily experience." Actually calligraphy is a bodily experience but I believe we've been believing that this type of experience is the same as an analogy. We have to learn so many subjects in our life. Most of those topics are related strongly to analogy, that means training in the cerebrum, in the bigger part of the brain called the cerebrum, caring about logic and linguistic things.

This photography shows that they are learning how to ride a bicycle. There is a quite famous topic(problem)- <we cannot find any text about how could we ride a bicycle.>

This figure shows a drawing of human brain. This bigger part is called "cerebrum" and this small part is called "cerebellum." Human brain has longest history and evolved from a primal form of brain, for example a bird's brain, which is of course small but most of the part is a cerebellum. Cerebrum part is quite small in contrast to a human's. Because cerebellum is used for bodily actions, so birds need high speed reactions for dodging obstacles while they flying. And Cerebellum does not have any system for logical memory. But of course cerebullum can

remember bodily actions, for example how to avoid crashing trees and rocks. Riding bicycle is same as bird's flying. As you know, once you could ride a bicycle, after that, for example 20 years later, you could ride a bicycle again. This is very strong memory. This is not linguistic memory, this is body memory.

Most of the scientific research were spent into logical memory focused onto cerebrum, but few for cerebellum and the relationship between two. This is a lack for us, artist, musicians, and performers. We need to invent new languages with new medium instead of words which can reflect the happenings, thinking of what cerebellum is doing. I conclude this is the most important topic we need to develop in the twenty first century.

In Conversation III
November 2, 2008

Followed by 5 x 5 minutes of visions and overviews from the 3 days by selected participants and visions of the future from the audience plus final conclusions.

Moderation:
Ghislaine Boddington, Creative Director body>data>space, Research Associate Artist Middlesex University (UK) and
Pavel Sedlak, Curator and writer, Deputy Director, CIANT (Czech Republic / Singapore)

Speakers:
Denisa Kera, National University of Singapore (Czech Republic / Singapore) with
Mika Satomi, University of Art and Industrial Design Linz (Japan/Austria)

Kera opened the conversation by reflecting on the present-day situation of our varied presence in virtual space, which is entirely different from the one in the mid-90s when nobody knew you were online. She considers it a part of our embodiment in the new digital network environment.

The need to embody different tools is something that Satomi is exploring in many of her projects. Yet, she pointed out, it is rather an exploration of the communication towards inside than on the outside. It is a tool to extend the senses. The piece that she presented at Post Me_New ID, "Perfect Human", was developed on those lines of exploration.

Satomi elaborated on the difficulties she was encountering in the process of connecting the written language, which was not so old in terms of our brain activity, with movements/ body language as one of the oldest. The principle was there but the dancers needed time to learn it and adopt it on the natural and organic level. This is exactly what should and may happen with hers or any other experiments in terms of them becoming part of everyday interfaces and life.

Kera wondered whether this meant that a good interface was the one that became part of our old brain or those brain parts that we have never used before. She also posed the question whether those experiments with embodied interactions were about finding out more about us and our own identity or they were about giving life to objects in our surrounding. In other words, are we giving life to objects or trying to make ourselves more interesting?

Satomi offered the example, which she considered a good explanation of this question - that of the school of calligraphy, where everybody wrote/copied the same text but each with their own characteristic. In her view, it is similar to the idea of avatar: an avatar is a copy of something but one sees a definite character in it.

Kera finds the image of empty avatar less disturbing and thinks that this happens more often in the interaction with old objects. Perhaps the experiments with hybrid and real identities are not so new. In biology, one finds the images of organisms and life that are not clearly defined or having a clear identity: starting with some theories of symbiogenesis where there are examples of people who don't have the same DNA in different parts of their body, to some experiments with organisms, which are copyrighted i.e. artificially created. It seems that our whole notion of what is life and identity in terms of it being confined to the limits of our body or to our live history is changing. Many artistic experiments are working with this idea of blurred confines between those areas.

Satomi questions the use of identity. A name is one kind of identity but is also attached to many people. The DNA is different but the question is still there: what is my identity? Yet one chooses to live this question rather than ask it from the distance.

Kera wondered whether this whole issue of identity, subjectivity and our body was somewhat too anthropocentric or was it that we were trying to find a new discourse and a new way of living in this world. Aren't all those ideas about future visions a sort of hybrid in the world where so many people are hungry or fight for their lives? Is this an issue of justice versus the vision of future? How should we involve into our questioning of identity other people who don't share our experience? Should we speak more about justice when we speak about i(n)dentity?

Satomi thinks that we are getting too excited about technology and now is the time to calm down. We should deal ethically or politically or socially with a huge number of other problems. The interesting thing that emerged lately was a new kind of "We" feeling where our "I" is part of the collective. Perhaps this is one of our future identities.

Kera concluded that whatever our future identity/ies would be, the issue of limits and of social and environmental responsibility would be of high importance. Satomi thinks that it is very difficult to ask people to become so responsible. We can only gradually become aware and honest about the reality that surrounds us. We should always bear in our mind that we are not bigger or stronger than other people; that should come before the question of responsibility.

The speakers wrapped up their conversation on diverging stances, which might well illustrate the questions and dilemmas of our time: Kera expressed her admiration for all the projects bringing new sense of community and responsibility, even for people in non-Western parts of the world, like the project kiwa.org. Hence she sees a lot of hope in new technologies because, in her mind, it works towards bringing progress and justice and not the other way round. Satomi, on the other hand, is not ardently pro-progress. What technology can do, in her view, is that one may be put into someone else's shoes, like in interactive arts, through which we practice how to sympathise with one another.

What followed were the 5min x 5 visions by selected participants.

Boddington introduced them and explained the idea to invite them to do their presentations only during that weekend in order to obtain spontaneity and freshness of their approach. The chosen speakers were of mixed gender and cultural-geographical background.

The first to bring his vision on the table was **Gabriel Vanegas** from Columbia, Director General, ELNIUTON. Magazine, working on different projects dealing with art, science and technology. The situation in Columbia is such that there is not much of new technology available and he sees it as a good thing because it allows them to truly ponder on the nature, sense and role of technology in their society. He quoted Second Life as an example of using a social network as a tool to resolve real problems that the society is facing. In 5 years, we will stop being amused with what is going on in technology and start using it in a real way. Real and virtual worlds are connected but the virtual world has this great thing, which is the social network.

Sonja Lebos from Croatia tried to sum up some of her thoughts. In her view, the issue was not so much about the communication and infrastructure but about what we are communicating. The importance of historical imagination is something to hang onto. Until recently, everything was about time and longevity; now and in the future it is more about space – we want to be present everywhere. Cyberspace enables the implosion of that omnipresence. Our bodies are multi-spacious rather than mono-spacious. The fact is that experience is always different and we can share it: that is the key for identity in the sense of philosophising the concept. We should perhaps use less of the "We" expression and speak of the "I" experience.

Delphine Gaborit, dancer and choreographer from France living in London, was part of the creative team of the meeting. Her thoughts revolved around envisaging the future of contemporary dance/performance and new technology. She detects three phases in the process of merging with a new technology in dance: learning, becoming second nature through the learning and expressing one's own personality through all this. As a dancer, she makes her muscles disciplined (develops the muscle memory) and memorises the movement. But in order to express her personality, she needs to go deeper into her bones. The muscle structure means moving through history; the bone structure means moving through one's personality.

Perhaps, after all, we are not so apart from technology. One should cease being so attached and fascinated with the notion of "new technology". If we would remove the title "new technology" from new works, then we might just say "new work". Children are not surprised by technology. This also applies to aesthetics, which should be cleansed of references on technology.

Ivor Diosi from CIANT offered his vision of the future of new technologies: There are things that will happen at the forefront of technology, innovation and experimental avant-garde – which is his field of interest - and something quite different and filtered will take place in the mainstream, where market forces work on civilising the human race. Hence one tries not to project one's own wishes but to extrapolate from what one knows about history and try to predict. Nowadays children meet the technology and take it for granted. He strongly believes in the rise of A.I. – entities rising from the bits that comprise the Internet today.

Jacob Korn from Trans-Media-Akademie Hellerau in Germany, in charge of Sound Design and Programming, thought that sometimes it was better to use simple interfaces to enable people with different status to take part in them, than to do the best performance.

The debate went on with different speakers joining in.

The focus was for a while on the issue of technology as the conveyor of knowledge and the various implications of this role. **Linda Winkrantz Hogg** sees technology as merely a tool to make people's lives better and brought the example of Virtual Med school. Her belief lies with knowledge as power. **Barrios** warns that we should not forget the political impact of knowledge. One of the main powers of understanding biology as a way of unifying the discourse on kinship is very important and has political impact: What is our common denominator as humans? Thus knowledge can be used for activism and social change. **Kera** goes along this line and notes that scientific findings can create political ideas. For her personally, such was the fact that our bodies had 5x more bacteria than cells. In that sense, it is not only technology that can be inspiring but science as such. If we would spend as much time thinking about justice as we spend thinking about technology maybe this world would look differently.

In **Satomi's** view, we need to remove ourselves from the position of users of technology. We should start to think through it instead of merely using it. Smetana, on the other hand, finds that it is inherent to the evolution of humanity to develop technology. In Africa they have no problem with gene modifications as long as they have something to eat. In that sense, hunger is stronger than health concerns. Evolution of technology is merely the tool to express the need of the moment.

Magruder referred to a remark from earlier that day about technology growing mature and pointed out that this was a relative perception. Technology may be mature for us following certain stages of its development but we need to qualify it and refer to new generations that grow up with their own frustrations that we might not be able to understand. In other words, isn't the entire evolution of technology just an endless cycle of frustrations and limitations versus new generations coming up with solutions?

Masaki Fujihata, showed a website for a massage device advertised by Philips that undeniably may perform in the role of a sex toy. In his mind, this is where technology is heading today.

He also mentioned a scientist who had a lecture going against the grain of modern concepts and concerns: this scientist stated that, contrary to the claim of global warming, the Earth was actually cooling; also, the world population would become smaller – it will decrease. At the end of his lecture, he would prompt the audience that 'we have to learn how to die. Perhaps quite soon we will have to face a lot of deaths'. Masaki's question is how to share the experience of death? James Cameron's film 'Strange Days' features a device that is able to record the memories inside the brain. According to this scientist, it is possible that we are going to use this technology to share the experience of death. Our quest for the form of sharing this experience is at the same stage as literature was when the printing press has occurred (in our case, it is the Internet): it was only then that the first novel, 'Don Quixote', has appeared.

Boddington remarked a paradox: while technology was developing in the direction of maintaining human life, there are clear signs of a trend of rejection to be kept alive by technology. Also, the exponential growth of taking care of human bodies unfolds in parallel with the growth of developing the virtual experience. This might indicate new ways of learning how to die.

Delphine Gaborit expressed harsh criticism of humans in general, labelling them as super-selfish. If we would be such creatures that would willingly renounce self-massage and go to Africa instead and save people, that would certainly make a difference. Unfortunately, we are not that generous. We might pretend that we do it for others as artists or scientists but we do it for ourselves.

Warman warned of another growing trend that was unfolding insufficiently reflected and analysed – that of security cameras in public spaces. Once we will have face recognition and A.I. systems linking all acquired data together then this will become very potent information with huge potential impact on our lives. We are about to sleepwalk into a situation where technologies will become so pervasive without the general population really critically engaging on those issues.

An interesting discussion developed out of the remark of **Vesna Grandes** who admitted that she felt a need to sometimes get away from technology and go to her grandfather who keeps goats and let go of all technological devices, including the cell phone. **Berkenheger** noticed that goats might also be considered as technology, at least they were promoted into it by humans at a certain point in the evolution chain.

Barrios reflected on the question on how sophisticated our reasoning tools have to be for us to be able to understand what is going on. One of the things that have to be taken into consideration is religion. A very important concept, for instance, is that we are all within social constructions, living within those corpuses. It is required from us to have an almost anthropological perspective from which we can see all the layers of phenomena; only then we can understand that nature is constructed and that technology is a very difficult concept. Our time requires sophisticated and multi-dimensional analysis in which we take into consideration biological cross-evolution approaches and all along observe our own belief systems in a very cognitive individual process. That way we might be able to analyse and control our actions but also initiate actions for social change.

Kera reminded of the linguistic-historical fact that the word 'culture' came from 'agriculture'

and that both the cow and the dog were in fact beautiful and amazing artistic creations of humans. The relation between humans and animals is mutual: animals influence humans the same as humans influence animals. Apparently, the most successful species on Earth (apart from bacteria) is plants. Perhaps it is not so inconceivable to presume that it might be us who are helping the plants to get where they want to get? **Barrios** corroborated this line of thoughts by adding that Donna Harraway abandoned her research on cyborgs and moved on to exploring companion species – pets. She is actually looking at the process of co-evolving.

The final moments of the discussion acquired both a humorous and philosophical note, dealing with the question of which was more understandable, complex, predictable, and reproducible: computers or sheep? **Fujihata** noted that there was a conflict between two notions: that of technology and technique. As to sheep, we have to develop reverse engineering that we don't have yet. We are all the time so much affected by new technology but we don't know the purpose of it: we need to develop a technique to reveal it and this is where Fujihata sees the role of the artist.

Creation Process, London 2008. Photograph by By Post Me_New ID crew

body>data>space

body>data>space is a design collective placing the body at the centre of digital interaction. We co-create unique events, installations and experiences for public environments both in the UK and internationally. We research and develop the integration of physical / virtual interfaces, working through collaborative group creation processes, engaging artists and participants in networked creativity.

Formed in 2005 and based in East London, the team specialises in telematics - realtime performances using the internet to link two remote spaces, allowing the participants to collaboratively play, communicate and knowledge share at a distance. body>data>space initiates design collaborations with artistic and commercial innovators to create bespoke and pioneering interactive solutions.

Working internationally with collaborators in Europe, the US and Asia, body>data>space brings together mid to large scale interauthored group processes in the creation of unique events and installations for public environments and architectural builds.

body>data>space have also been involved in the co-development of several public authored projects, using physical gaming and social networking techniques and deliver top level quality content-led, community-connected, intelligent and innovative projects.

http://www.bodydataspace.net/

skintouchfeel, body>data>space

Ghislaine Boddington
Creative Director, body>data>space, Research Associate Artist, ResCen, Middlesex University

The deeper network

The integration of virtual and physical networking is a complex and layered affair. The dynamic process emergent from this is as delicate as the web it mirrors and is hugely reliant on the intentions of and actions taken by the individuals involved.

In today's world of social networking sites, enabling us to make new friends and find old friends worldwide at the touch of a computer key, we are acquainting ourselves with these novel modes of behaviour. We are still learning how to react, slowly but surely, to these evolving forms, How should we respond to the potentials and how can we reach the visions offered of future prospects?

Projects like Post Me_New ID[11] do demand a lot from their participants. To work together as a group of 30 creative practitioners and artists based in 4 countries, across a 18 month period, using both physical meeting points and virtual tools to create a series of quality public outcomes (a website, a forum, a performance, a book, a dvd), is no simple task.

For this project we used the online project management tool Basecamp[22] to bring together all aspects of the management and creation processes. Communications enter email boxes directly, giving information to as many of the group as is required for that task and allowing a direct response. The tool also allows sharing and co-authoring of key documents.

The use of networking for creation processes was one of the key topics for Post Me_New ID. The aim was to see how the mix between physical meeting points (body transfer) and virtual connectivity (data transfer) could add to or digress from the final outcomes. The creation process group[33] met physically three times, each time for 12 days. In these times of intense studio work, and with the sharing of accommodation, lunchtimes and dinner every day, the group got to know each other well. In fact one can say that from within this work environment, friendships were forged and trust was built in a very positive way. The group bonded together extremely well in the online research and in the physical making process.

This was a determinedly mixed group, truly interdisciplinary, inter-generational and inter-cultural, all representative in their own ways of the projects' target of modern Europeans[44].

This intensification of difference was re-clustered through the group creation process, which dissolved the boundaries between modalities, disciplines and cultures.

"Collaborating with artists from different disciplines and different European nations was refreshing and inspiring. Especially the inter-disciplinary nature of the project allowed scope for new thinking about creative processes as different media provide different means for artistic expression" Linda Winkrantz-Hogg, dance artist/software programmer (SWE living in UK)

These individual, independent artists were invited to the project to share, exchange and co-create. They signed up to the interauthored[55] creation process with integrity, gave of their best and received in return. In a way the group acted like a community of small hold farmers. Together they sowed the seeds, grew the content, tended and cared for its development, cultivated it, fertilised it and produced the final outcomes. The group learnt, and intuitive knew, that they could harvest more from cultivating the same piece of land.

"I would like to take part in another project like Post Me_New ID, as it brings different nationalities together into creating and developing such inspiring work. All of the artists will take away something which we can share with our own communities, in our own countries, and I feel it is important to express the way we work with technology as it is such a large part of our lives today" Sasha Spasic, dance artist (UK)

In opposition to this farming activity are the hunters of the networks, those individual rangers who move from network project to network project, amassing only for themselves, pursuing purely their own needs and moving on to the next network as soon as they have "used" the situation.

Both types of networkers - the farmers and the hunters - enter into the network to gather, yet who gathers more? This is a question still to be answered. We live in a changing world where, in the recent months of the global recession, the hunters in other sectors such as finance, banking and politics, have in fact been caught in their own traps.

In our work over the last 20 years with interauthorship (as body>data>space and previously as shinkansen [66]) we have been involved in 90 or so projects using this interauthorship methodology, which was set in place by an early performing arts network in Europe. We were part of the co-founding of the Butterfly Effect Network (1991-96)[77], which created, during a

---

11   Post Me_New ID (2007 - 09) was a co-production between body>data>space (London, UK), CIANT | International Centre for Art and New Technologies (Prague, Czech Republic), TMA | Trans-Media-Academy Hellerau (Dresden, Germany) and Kibla (Maribor, Slovenia) supported by the European Union within the Culture 2007 Programme.
22   Basecamp is a Project management, collaboration and task software see http://www.basecamphq.com/
33   Post Me_New ID had 3 x 2 weeks Creation Processes
         - Creation Process 1 (CPI) - ICA, London, 25th March - 4th April 08
         - Creation Process 2 (CPII) - Interactive Institute, Prague, 29th June - 11th July 2008
         - Creation Process 3 (CPIII) - ICA, London,16th February - 1st March 2009
44   The 10 artists involved in the Creation Processes were a mix of performance, video, sound, visual, digital and interaction artists and were also an international mix of artists from UK, Hungary, France, Croatia, Czech Republic and Sweden. The age group ran from 23 to 48.
         •Leanne Bird - production / rehearsal direction - b>d>s (UK)
         •Ghislaine Boddington – process direction / dramaturgy - b>d>s (UK)
         •Ivor Diosi - new media artist / virtual worlds - CIANT (HU/CZ)
         •Delphine Gaborit – dance artist - b>d>s (FR/UK)
         •Vesna Grandes – dance artist - b>d>s (HR/UK)
         •Laura Henry – video editing / documentation – b>d>s (UK)

         •Stephane Kyles - new media artist - video - CIANT (FR/CZ)
         •Nick Rothwell - sound artist / software architect - b>d>s (UK)
         •Sasha Spasic – dance artist – b>d>s (UK)
         •Linda Winkrantz Hogg- dance artist - b>d>s (SE/UK)
55   Interauthorship - a creation process where all individuals involved in the process makes a creative contribution as an equal member of a group and shares ownership (in terms of Intellectual property rights and copyright) of the final product with all other creators. The interauthorship methodlogy is available for download as a Group Process Brief at http://www.rescen.net/Ghislaine_Boddington/theweave/item3.htm
66   Ghislaine Boddington (body>data>space/shinkansen) has explored, examined and written about interauthorship since the late 19080s. She is a Research Associate Artist at ResCen, Centre for Research into Creation in the Performing Arts, Middlesex University which has supported this work. See http://www.rescen.net/Ghislaine_Boddington/index.html for several essays on the subject
77   The Butterfly Effect Network involved 160 artists and producers linked to shinkansen, London; Stuc/Klapstuk, Leuven; Vienna Acts and the Kunstlerhaus, Vienna; Forum Danca, Lisbon and Plesni Theater, Ljublana. It held 5 dance technology workshops across 1992-95 European Choreographic Forums 1-5, and also co-commission several resultant performances

series of performing arts/technology workshops at Dartington International Sumer School, a set interauthorship methodology.

The success of interauthorship in today's interdisciplinary world is based in the engagement of simultaneously strands of investigation, and the holding of one strand while activating the other, drawing over, across and together the multiple strands to make a weave. This weave retains the visible evidence of each strand, whilst also forming a unity stronger than any one individual strand.

The aim in any interauthored project is to constantly strive to maintain a flattened hierarchy, whilst still enabling active clusters of interaction and allowing the network to remain porous. The dynamic network model put into place at the application stage of the Post Me_New ID project was an intended model of reflection for the emergent activities, both during and post the project. (See Dynamic Network Model diagram on page ....[88])

"It was wonderful to be part of Post Me_NewID. The communication with everybody involved was great. Actually I often felt as the weakest communicator of all..... I hope only because the level of openness and supportive, positive atmosphere was overwhelming and in stark contrast with my experience from several previous projects I was involved............I especially appreciated the time and personal space I was given to further developing my tools and the way I was encourage by the team to use them to contribute to the joint creative effort." Ivor Diosi, digital media artist (HU based in Czech Republic).

Nowadays many work with digital tools enabling co-creation processes to take place through online group environments. As the web starts to truly extend itself it is beginning to fulfil one of its key potentials, that of connectivity between small to large groups of people, working/creating together through local-to-local processes.

Micro communities worldwide can be seen to be linking up and creating joint content. The uploading of media (video, sound and text) by communities at a distance to each other to co-create projects is a growth area e.g. books written in relay by sentences input by 500 writers, films using 30 sec clips uploaded by 3000 different people, groups using the web to gather for live events and mass creation projects.

Crowd sourced content is being used by artists and advertisers alike. Public authoring for community activist, educational and artistic usage needs to be acknowledged as open innovation, and these group creations need to be taken into account in their own right. Equal rights for all to upload as fast as to download are being debated intensely in the UK as the Digital Britain[99] report is rewritten through public consultation.

"- The use of skype video and telematics (full bodied video conferencing) to connect people through gestures, in debate and in performances for educational and social usage, knowledge, advice and information exchange.

- The shared mapping of human geographies - economics, social and political linked to community concerns.

- Community owned networks for exchange and broadcast - used for care in community projects, local news, rural connectivity etc "

are three key points from the Digital Britain Unconference report from ICA, May 6th 2009[100]

These extended social and creative processes evolve innovative experimentation through the sharing and exchanging of existing knowledge and skills. This enables the production of new knowledge, co-produced between the participants, public and artists. By applying this to the local-to-local context the resulting transformative effect will be to the mutual benefit and added value of all and will hopefully spark radical design of ideas. The resulting creations articulate alternative possible futures through their models and prototype ideas.

The Creation Processes and final performance outcome of the Post Me_New ID project (Dare we do it realtime?) was part of this pioneering and innovative new movement, one small insight into artists' visions of mobility of themselves (their bodies) and their work (content/data) in the future. These networked creations will contribute to and create new knowledge communities and evolve deeper mutual understandings between us all. What future generations can harvest from this is still to be seen – but with creative thinking onwards the results could be fantastic.

---

88   The Dynamic Network Model was created by shinkansen for the evolution of body>data>space in 2005 and is used by body>data>space as a model of working practice for numerous interauthored projects
99   On 29 January 2009 the Government published a plan to secure Britain's place at the forefront of the global digital economy.   See http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/broadcasting/5631.aspx

100   The Digital Britain interim report contains more than 20 recommendations which the sector felt needed further comment and deeper thought. A series of Unconferences took place around the UK in May 2009 resulting in a new report to add to the overview.
          See http://digitalbritainunconference.wordpress.com/final-report/

Tina Tarpgaard »Cognitive Debris« (Recoil Performance Group),
CYNETart-Award 2006, photo by Johannes Petzold

Trans-Media-Akademie Hellerau e.V.

As an institute for integrals perception and media research the TMA Hellerau was founded in the year 2001 and understands itself as a platform for artists and researchers with experiences within the area of interactive systems. One of the highlights and focal point of work is the international festival of computer-based art and inter-disciplinary media projects called CYNETart taking place annually. The CYNETart festival presents media performances, networked virtual environments and interactive installations. In the realisation of its media art works the festival builds on dimensions of the human body as baseline for authentic perception and communication.

http://t-m-a.de

Thomas Dumke
Project manager of CYNETart festival, founding member of TMA Hellerau, Germany

Positioning Change

»Electronics equipment is the everyday virtualisation gear for everybody, who has no role to play in the real world and who therefore has to find a new way of socialising in the virtual environments of Resident Evil, Doom and Second Life«. Frank Wulf[1]

Do you remember the film »Network« starring Faye Dunaway and William Holden? Holden plays the news presenter Howard Beale, an »angry TV prophet«. In a state of bewilderment he says: »I'm a human being, God damn it. My Life has value! ... I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take this anymore!«. No comment.

In the course of global medialisation social encounters have become more and more determined by technology. This can be observed for groups of people as well as for individuals, in virtual networked environments or in computer game networks, in which participants only ever encounter others as their avatars. And the technological impact also is present on the level of multimedia on *Social Networking Sites.* Enabled by the new mass media, so far unknown energies continuously stream into the immaterial space of the internet. Similar to the trend of the fanatic pursuit of values beyond measure (luxury), it makes us wonder how to judge this progressing virtualisation: Is it the grim reality of inevitable neo-liberal forces (Diedrich Diederichsen) or mere indication of claustrophobia (Paul Virilio)? One hype after the other is forced upon the users of media, while the initiating companies – partly on the basis of the accumulation of *Account Corpses* – pride themselves with artificially increased numbers of users, and hence with high advertising and sales revenues. What does actually happen to the large number of unused accounts and avatars? According to some estimates about 90 per cent of all *Second Life* avatars are considered to be so-called account corpses. Susanne Berkenheger's project »Accountleichenbewegung« (Movement for Account Corpses) and her scheduled »Survey of the Macroeconomic Creation of Value Based on Retained Account Corpses for the Years 2007, 2008 and 2009«[2] are attempts to tackle this question. In order to unmask the core of this kind of »Attention Economy«, artists are looking for ways to orchestrate the present, and reflect on the concept of roles in a post-ideological society, respectively in an environment posited as a digital culture. In the coordinate system of personal happiness, professional self-fulfilment and a kind of modern virtuousness the answer is to be found in the users' compensatory efforts – superficial chic and the (apparent) multi optionality that opens up an almost unlimited recombination of roles, poses and self-portrayals to the protagonists. We recommend *Social Networking* as the ultimate way of identity-doping to anybody who has not yet got an identity disorder! To everybody among us who has been affected by the »Attention Syndrome«: The project »Useless Account«[3] by Jim Whimpey takes it to extremes. Set up a new account, create a profile. Just do it! It is always good to have another account up your sleeve – just for the sake of having one. One never knows, and after all, I have changed my profile four times within the first three weeks of having it.

The *Blogs* and *Social Networking Sites* of the »digital Bohemian Scene« have reached an unbelievable dimension of performance and self-portrayal of their users. The term of *Networking* sums up a buzz of activities and the ceaseless attempt to acquire social capital. It requires you to offer yourself, to draw attention to yourself and to approach others actively. In fact, it resembles the concept of commerce. In order to stay in touch or to increase your own relevance, you keep your »friends« up to date with your own life either in a rather gentle

»Luxus« by Solitaire Factory, 2008

manner or at an almost persistent rate. Comparable to the global expansion of economic competition, the phenomenon of *Networking* based on Web 2.0 technologies has to be seen as a result of globalisation. The impact on interpersonal relationships caused by the changes in the speed and concentration of communications are unmistakable. These alterations lead to changes in our consciousness and, in particular, to an alienation of our experience as soon as the speed and complexity of our communication is lacking immediacy.

We are currently experiencing a total fetishisation of all things multimedia, a Web-2.0-based emancipation of the creative. In the course of the monad-like networking the cyberspace has become a medium of »mass bohemification«. Supported by net porn and the acceptance of the fact that human characteristics like playfulness, curiosity, sensuality, physicalness have henceforth moved out of the realm of mere recreational aspects and activities, and have now become economic resources. Attractive qualities, such as atmosphere, sexiness, etc. have been turned into hard economic facts. The users' high expectations concerning their own performance reproduces ever recurring visual patterns on a large scale, which makes it almost impossible to discover any differences.

At the same time we witness the »renaissance of listening«. After all, it is listening to the radio that has always reflected a certain human need for communication. The tentative, blind and radically inward-directed experience of listening at the present seems to serve more for the aesthetic concentration of our perception than seeing does.

Currently technology and media applications offer a great variety of possibilities for people to interact, respectively environments in which encounters can take place and collective actions can be developed. Depending on the characteristics of the media, different forms of presence emerge. Based on the encounter of physically present humans who share a physical realm of perception, telematic media transfer the simultaneity and local fixedness of this encounter into a virtual environment. Tele-presence means the experience of presence in a virtual environment. Tele-presence virtualises what in its original shape is physically tangibly existent. Unlike physical presence and tele-presence, the so-called ava-presence (Klaus Nicolai) is the *substitutional* presence of a self-representation or a performance of a bot in form of graphic avatars that are mere data packets.

The media's rivalry for attention and presence requires each actor to find his own place in the networks of space-time dynamics. Over and over again this means: stopping, dimensioning the space, and creating a kind of »self-determined movement within this space«. Instant linking has become the symbol of self-preservation with an increased dependence on information and on internal arrangements of information processing, information selection, of choices and of time schemes. The exploration of virtual scopes of action and of their effects on aesthetic and cultural notions often operates on the assumption, that performance or performing an action in the arts as well as in everyday life is the result of an intentional creation process. What is the daily and artistic practice of actions and of social encounters like in the context of digital media? Considering the aspect of an »Attention Economy« (Georg Franck), how can performance as an urge for optimisation and the constructedness of identity be described?

»In all this they haven't realised, that in the end they [the media artists] were the truffle pigs to dig out all the rubbish and junk that now defines our day-to-day experience of media.« Lutz Dammbeck[4]

The virtual alone is not to be seen as a mere option anymore, much rather it should be the

object to be queried. The virtual does no longer reflect the real. It is the real under the impact of the virtual that the focus is on. The performative rivalry for attention in our daily lives makes the structures of cultural, political and economic performance visible. The designs of environments again and again generate new references between the present actors and the coordinates of time and space that are surrounding them. This means a major challenge for approaches of a phenomenology of encounters in virtual environments, and it re-values change as the crucial form of identity and organisation of our culture.

_____

1   Original in German, taken from Wulf, Frank: »Day of the Living Dead«, in: QRT (2006): Zombologie Teqste, Berlin, pp. 143–144.

2   See http://www.accountleichenbewegung.de

3   See http://uselessaccount.com

4   Original in German, »Es gab keinen Inhalt mehr« – Von einem, der auszog, das Fürchten zu lernen. An interview with the media artist Lutz Dammbeck from Leipzig about PCs, haemodialysis via the arts and about the difference between mice and actors, by Nike Breyer (published 19.05.2007), taken from http://www.taz.de/index.php?id=archivseite&dig=2007/05/19/a0001 (13.02.2009).

CIANT, International Centre for Art and New Technologies

CIANT has supported production and promotion of new media art and culture since 1998. CIANT is an international platform for research, production and presentation of creative use of information and communication technologies within the arts and cultural heritage field. During the last 10 years CIANT has established art/science collaborations with research institutes, universities, art centres as well as individuals across the whole of Europe and beyond. CIANT is based in Prague, Czech Republic.

Research areas: multimodal and neural interfaces, networked performances, digital preservation and cultural heritage, advocacy of new media art and culture

CIANT is a non-governmental non-profit civic association that invites artists, researchers, curators, and cultural managers to get involved in various formats of short- and long-term exploratory research and production activities on both local and international level. With an assistance of public and private funding CIANT initiates and implements projects that aim to transfer knowledge among different creative and research domains while resulting in concrete outcomes such as interactive applications prototypes, new software and hardware integrations or take a form of artworks. Many activities have strong educational and presentational aspect: training sessions, festivals, exhibitions, performances and conferences.

http://www.ciant.cz

Golem 2008-2009, Media-rich performance,
Directed by Pavel Smetana

Pavel Sedlak
Curator and writer, Deputy Director of CIANT (Czech Republic)

Body Is Dead. Long Live the Body!

This is a short reflection on the POST ME_NEW ID project with an aim to provide few contextual remarks. According to our widely shared knowledge and understanding (wikipedia.org): "The posthuman, and posthumanism with it, are philosophical positions that overlap and are constantly engaged with much of postmodern philosophy, process philosophy, emerging technologies, and evolutionary biology, so the field is constantly changing." It is quite obvious that there are very diverse views of what posthuman identities and related concepts mean, how they are constructed and used, and, rather importantly, which of them shall prevail in near future.

Since the late 1990s art/science collective of CIANT (ciant.cz) has been interested in the potential of emerging technologies to provoke and shape innovative artistic productions spreading from interactive cyber-installations to symbiotic performances that make increasingly equal use of human and non-human agents, including the computerized characters. Concerning the scope of the POST ME_NEW ID project, it offered us to bring together computer scientists and visual artists with an extensive experience in deploying advanced network and game technologies. Networks are making our lives and creations more complex and open to unexpected links. Computer games have so far delivered ultimate interactive scenarios based on merging of people and computers in one interface reality beyond pure simulation. Networked gaming environments represent a significant synergy that has been expected to bring high-level of innovation into the domain of artistic and cultural expression in the field of digital performance.

Within collaborative initiatives such as POST ME_NEW ID we once again faced an alarming necessity to permanently test expectations of different parties and to push limits of the impossible where possible. At the same time it is fair and essential to admit that among cultural producers, audiences as well as artists there still is a surprisingly striking number of individuals with a critically low capacity to comfortably welcome "unfitting" innovation(s). With some hyperbolic regrets we can say it felt like we were "still human".

However, the project served as an arena for multiple laboratory situations exercising a great deal of intimacy and risk when facing questions like: Why should one be bothered to go for "real-time" when a "play-back" is at hand? Why would one introduce robots and automated virtual characters when something as natural as dancing human body alone "does" the trick? Sometimes risk prevailed, sometimes not. This is up to the book reader and DVD viewer to tell.

To provide a bit of a context, I recently interviewed a few people who are renowned for a pioneering work in the field of digital performance. As CIANT is still very interested and active in this area I felt like sharing the following relevant excerpts to see topics of POST ME_NEW ID project in a wider perspective.

What follows are quite detailed selected answers to two generic questions: How does technology shape our understanding of human body in general, and dance in particular? What is the greatest challenge new technology has been bringing into (your) stage practice?

Mark Coniglio (troikaranch.org) dealt with the second question and replied: "Keeping the art on stage! When using new technologies, there is always a required period of research to find out what properties and qualities the technology can provide you when put to aesthetic use. But of course, one must also continue to pure artistic research required to create the performance itself. And all of this research exists within certain limitations of time, even if that limitation is simply the date of the premiere. In the world of media-intensive performances we have all seen works where the new technology was in fact the featured player, and have occasionally been guilty of this ourselves in the past. To counter this, we have a mantra now: "No technology before need." We don't just start throwing in a technological approach because it's "cool", but instead seek a technological and/or mediated approached when our gut tells us the artwork might be served by such an addition. And we're always considering the dramaturgy of the technological systems in tandem with that of all other aspects of the performance."

Pablo Ventura (ventura-dance.com) faced both questions in this manner: (1) "The human body is being subjected to a continuous experiment (e.g. artificial insemination, humane genome project, doping, etc.), and this has been slowly translating into dance by means, in my case, of new compositional methods as a result of new technological instruments at our disposal. Our relation to our body has been changing with man's technological progress, and his increasing capability to manipulate himself. By turning to software for choreography we are allowed to virtually manipulate body parts to generate dance sequences. This technological breakthrough brought with it new definitions, working mechanisms and new ways of thinking and functioning, which needed to be implemented in dance as well. (e.g. "Cutting and Pasting", "Hyperlinks", "Windows", "Screensavers", "Mappings", "Protocols", etc,.)."

(2) "The real challenge was in the first place to use technology to break with old habits with respect to composition and styles in dance: to find an alternative to choreographing by using your own body with its ingrained patterns and habits, and to break also with the use of the improvisation of dancers as a compositional means with their also ingrained habits and stylistic preferences. Choreographing using the aid of computer software became in this way a more neutral tool, and a system whose output was new and unpredictable movements which are both challenging to me as choreographer and to dancers, interested in movement per se and beyond aesthetical preferences. The use of software for dance and 3D animations brought with it a radical change in my way of thinking choreography, enabling me a very different approach in the creation of body mechanics. This entailed the fragmenting of dance sequences (e.g. "pasting" torso movements of one sequence with leg movements of another). This procedure brought about a change in the body's relation to space since such "fragmented" dance, breaks the linearity of a dance sequence in its space projection, as one tends to "colonise" space instead of traversing it. It also affected the phrasing and musicality of the sequences interpreted from the computer screen; using the software for choreography also enabled me to create scores with unusual rhythms, which the dancers then translated unto the real space. The use of new technologies brought with it in the second place an abstraction of my dance practice, and our relation to spreading technology became itself the theme of my pieces. New technologies has led me to research into the possibilities of conceiving choreographies beyond the human body and considering a performance as a rhythmic space comprising of an interconnectedness of body mechanics, electronic sounds, moving images and machines."

As in this book there has only been a limited space provided for a little selection from the larger conversation, feel free to visit ciant.cz for more answers from more artists and researchers.

Digital Comune VII, 2009, authors: Aleksandra Kostič (conceptualisation), Mojca Kasjak (coreography/dance),
Cameron Bobro (music), Luka Dekleva (interactive video), David Orešič (light)...
produced by ACE KIBLA, photo: KIBLA archive

MMC KIBLA – Multimedia Centre KIBLA

Multimedia Centre CyberSRCeLab – MMC KIBLA was founded in 1996. Since the beginning Kibla is in the process of intermedialization and digitalization of culture and art. We intensively encourage experimental and specific projects in the intermedia field, introduce creative and practical use of sophisticated technologies in the cultural field whose final (an at the same time utopian) goal is a functional support of working nets that digitalize, present and decentralize cultural Slovenia and Europe.

KIBLA is the first presentation and production institution in Slovenia dealing with multimedia and intermedia art and a yearlong cultural programme. We still incorporate pure classical media but in a different context-we use them to support historical continuity of visual art and a bigger aesthetization and integration of electronic media. We support principles that lead to complex systems of multimedia presentation. We also produce respectively coproduce cultural artistic projects and publish presentation materials.

http://www.kibla.org/

Peter Tomaž Dobrila

Electronic and IT engineer and a musician, co-founder of Multimedia Centre KIBLA and Association for

Culture and Education KIBLA, Slovenia

Explanatory

Joining the Post Me New_ID project for KIBLA was a kind of stepping onto terrain which offered only the executive phases of the whole process. Being without the accustomed privilege of building up a project with other partners, imagining its potential directions and possible outcomes, establishing the content with self involvement and by inviting other professionals and intertwining mutual collaboration seemed a bit as a drift, but squeezing into the consortium started as a pleasure. A feeling of becoming a part of artistic, cultural and scientific society with defined plans to fulfil was bringing higher perturbations and enthusiasm arose immediately, after starting to layer actual happening with future events. It was a treat, even though it was short or literally as we usually say – short but sweet.

Performer, user and differentiator: a place for new paradigms

Body in cyber space or body in public space or body in space, in auditorium, in theatre, in gallery. Is there any difference? People are researching their bodies as instruments and are using them as primary media regardless of expressiveness of the secondary media, which might be of any kind; technically speaking, we may consider these as analogue and digital. Today it is still popular to debate digital culture, digital media, digital creativity etc., a debate which already started in the late 60's with more common notions about the upcoming computer age. There are several views present since then: one is strictly analogue, another is totally digital and others are somewhere in between the two.

Trying to explain human performative action in connection with media and within responsive environments, it is quite obvious terms terms such interactivity, responsiveness, multimedia, intermedia did not arise in the 90's with the popularisation of personal computers and with the World-Wide-Web explosion. It can be said that the computer and information-communication technologies simply brought a wider awareness, and offered much easier access to what was called computer arts or new media arts, and somehow emancipated historical media arts as equally important field compared to fine arts.

From the invention of the television to its subsequent wide use, there are some notable milestones, starting in the late 50's with Nam June Paik's video installations. Or did the first media art happen in the 19th Century with motion picture invented by Lumiere brothers, or with photography (and its ancestors such as the daguerreotype)? These inventions reanimated the art world completely by opening new horizons to picture and sculpture that could finally step away from faithfully depicting reality into researching new perspectives, soon proposing impressionism for example.

Basically, the new media of the 19th Century, i.e. photography opened new art territories making possible the development of art into several 20th Century genres, continuing to abstraction. Therefore (new) media crucially influenced traditional media by offering them another space to evolve. On the other hand media artists became mediators for media inventions, functioning as a hub between producers-manufacturers and users-audience. For purposes of defining these new relations, the syntagmas 'mass media' or 'mass culture' or

'popular culture' greeted the 20th Century, dividing something profane produced in series from something elite made for chosen ones.

The funniest consequence of these developments was that mass culture was stamped as something inferior and of lesser quality to elite culture, even though this actually did not have much to do with people's choice, but with new production relations and mass production of any kind, which were inserting all sorts of attempts to sell a product, be it cultural or otherwise. We call these marketing tools, and in the late 20th Century they started to trickle through the elite culture, too, by calling the audience customers in the so called market-oriented economy. We can quickly see popular culture was a revolutionary cultural principle in shaping contemporary culture and art in its all width and variety.

We can point out several comparisons in the realm of popular and elite art, but really, criteria are very vague. As mass culture is reproduced and sold in many copies, elite art is original and sold in only one copy (something which doesn't work in music by the way). Does this mean media art as (potentially) mass produced culture is profane? I'm sure nobody agrees artists making prints are only half-artists (and we all accept the invention of print as Guttenberg's manufacture of the first printing press in Europe around 1440, although printing has existed at least since Egypt in the 4th Century and before 220 in China.

Such an introduction was needed to shed some light on some popular (new) media art showings, in the connection with so-called electronic or even computer-based media or digital media. We may state printing was the first digital media, but it was not electronic, or that digital doesn't really exist and it's only a better of worse approximation of analogue. Photography is now digital. With a deeper notion of art history pioneering issues regarding media art since the invention of radio, or even going back to the telegraph era, we can find perfect examples of computer art in Turing machines and other pre 2nd World War computers, or von Neumann computer architecture or even Blaise Pascal's counting machines. But what influence had they compared to the essential role of the photography or print? Which spaces did they stretch and push, artistically and culturally?

I wouldn't dive in so far, not because I don't find it intriguing, but in this writing I'd like to unveil some contemporary art projects involving performance and different media produced or co-produced by the Association for Culture and Education KIBLA (ACE KIBLA) / Multimedia Centre KIBLA (MMC KIBLA) in the 21st Century. Staying within electronics in an attempt to cover the topics I discussed from the beginning, I would to explain my aim by presenting my interpretation of multimedia. My comprehension of multimedia is multimedia in its widest possible form, from traditional to modern and to contemporary, from analogue to digital, from static to dynamic, from paleolithic and tribal to computer based; from sacral to profane, from elite to mass and popular.

But in a way, a definition of a multimedia performance arose in the 60's, when the first widely used computers came to the public, which at the same time brought up a discussion about digital and analogue. Does digital exist? A computer is based on chips and a chip is compounded of transistors and a transistor is an analogue electronic element. Therefore by layering billions of transistors we still have only an approximation of that, what we call digital signal, while in a raw fact it's still analogue. It seems to us like a step, but by observing it an oscillation can be seen. And getting into the meaning of electrical signals, I'd confess the digital is a simulacrum of simulacra in itself, as analogue is already a simulacrum of nature and profoundly nature is a purely analogue 'device'.

On the other hand I wouldn't claim that multimedia performance is strictly caused by digital technology; we find the syntagma 'intermedia performance' in Joseph Beuys. This is why I like to embrace the understanding of media in a definition of art as a tool and not even an aim or – scarcely – a cause, which might work for some artists, too. Lately I'm even trying to evade syntagma media art, since it seems to me redundant and even an oxymoron, although I can accept that it depicts some principle of generating art; but truly, it causes confusion in me. What media, which media, how media etc.

Definitions are more structured by media than art is or ever was and I don't think there's a common denominator in media. To propose it for art usage, I have difficulties even saying this is art made with electricity, i.e. audio or/and video, as I don't see electricity art more artistic than Nikola Tesla, who is for me the ultimate electric artist. Or continuing with such nonsense as defining it unstable media/art or coming back to reality and claiming directly "computer art". Maybe the last is at least correct in the way "oil on canvas" or "marble" are.

I'd use definitions only when we want to narrow our territory of debate and not when we'd like to speak about artistic statements and audience experiences in a wider sense of meaning. I don't think the audience ruminates on media in a show- they are plainly taking the effects it has on them and consequently it generates impressions of some kind. Usually art is worst when it gives us nothing, when it leaves us without any statement, not even any critical hint, thought or allusion for later disputes and reconciliations.

New-media (internet, computer) can be processed in a performance or an exhibition as a generator of new realities. The new media offer infinite distribution channels that equal roles of creators and users: a user becomes a producer and a producer a user. On a performance level performers become creators grasping directors' and scenographers' roles; in an exhibition installation an audience become a participant in a work, becoming a feeling of the author. Instead of the imitation of reality we get the realisation of creativity- we come to the point of artistic and/or public intervention. By producing and distributing arts through the information-communication technology channels, suddenly immense creative fields appear with and within the new media.

In the end what remains is evaluating contents and defining their achievements. When definitions blow away the fog the simple question would be: was or is it done systematically, or by pure coincidence. Still, this uncertainty shouldn't keep us from doing. We are in the period of re-contextualisation of art creation, new comprehension of the real, when traditional art and culture forms confront modified creative perspectives, and changing communication principles of cybernetics and structures are looking for new ways of expression in the interdisciplinary process of horizontal and vertical search for nodes between different fields of activities, probably mostly notable nowadays by finding paths among art and science. And this was already planted in the renaissance….
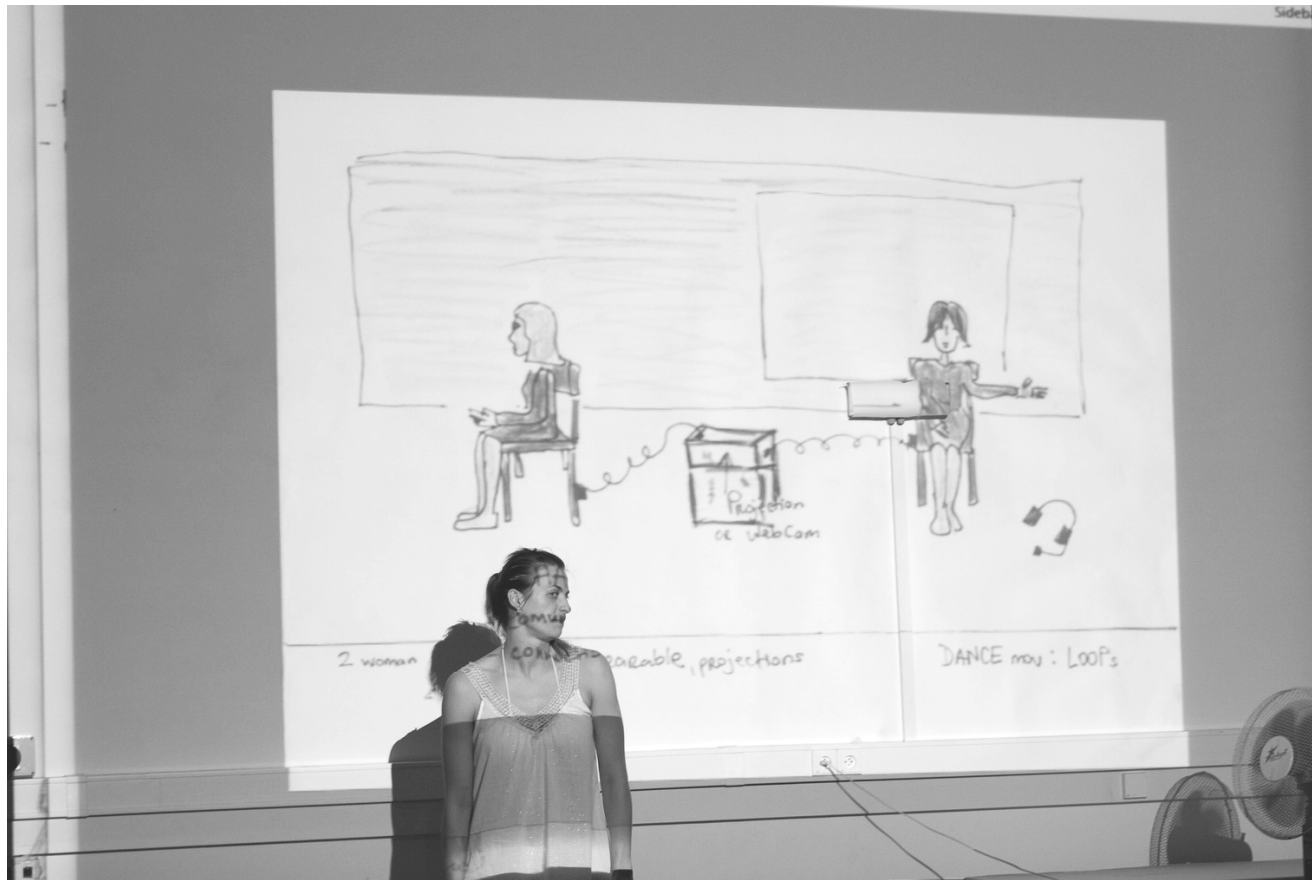
Creation Process, Prague 2008. Photograph by Vera Batozska

Susanne Berkenheger (Berlin) is a netartist and a satirist, who writes for 'SPAM', the satirical online-section of the German magazine 'Der Spiegel'. She is one of the partners of the 'glossendienst' agency. For her hyperfictions 'Zeit für die Bombe' (1997), 'Hilfe!' (1999), 'Die Schwimmmeisterin' (2002) and the english relaunch 'The Bubble Bath' (2005) she was awarded international prizes. She has been involved in projects in 'Second Life' and 'Chat Theatre'. Her works have been exhibited in New York, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Rio, São Paolo, Amsterdam, Munich, Stuttgart and other places. 'Hilfe!' was published on CD-Rom (update verlag). Since 2007 you can get 'Zeit für die Bombe' also as an artist book (Designer Agnes Wartner). Recently she founded the 'movement-for-account-corpses.de' (2007) which was awarded the CYNETart prize 2008. Her latest work was the 'Berlin Ambush Votings' which she did during a virtual residency at the New York gallery Location One. More on www.berkenheger.de.

Leanne Bird (Creative Producer body>data>space, London) Leanne's background is in dance and technology. She produced 15 commissioned art technology pieces for Future Physical in 2002-4 and was project manager for several shinkansen dance and technology projects including Virtual Incarnations (ICA/Dance Umbrella) as well as performing herself in many of the live telematic connected performances. She has been working with body>data>space since its formation in 2005. She works as general manager and key project producer for the collective and in particular led on the project management of the Post Me_New ID EU Culture 2007 project. She also works on rehearsal direction and content development for skintouchfeel and the body>data>space performance and telematic projects.

Johannes Birringer is a choreographer and media artist. As artistic director of the Houston-based AlienNation Co.(www.aliennationcompany.com), he has created numerous dance-theatre works, video installations and digital projects in collaboration with artists in Europe, the Americas, and China. His most recent production, the digital oratorio Corpo, Carne e Espírito, premiered in Brasil in 2008. He is founder of Interaktionslabor Göttelborn in Germany (http://interaktionslabor.de) and director of DAP-Lab at Brunel University, West London, where he is a Professor of Performance Technologies in the School of Arts. He is also co-founder of a collaborative research group in telematics and online performance (ADaPT). He has authored numerous books, including Media and Performance: along the border (1998), Performance on the Edge: transformations of culture (2000), Performance,Technology and Science (2008), amongst many articles on contemporary art, performance, and media.

Ghislaine Boddington (Creative Director body>data>space, London) is an artist, director and curator specialising in performing arts and the integration of body responsive technologies, virtual physical networks and interactive interfaces. Ghislaine develops solutions based on twenty years work with shinkansen and Future Physical (1989-2004 now archived at British Library and at www.connectivity.org.uk) and with, amongst others, the ICA and Dance Umbrella. She has directed and curated events, workshops and symposia on body technology throughout east and west Europe, the US and Asia. She is well known for her work on cultural identity and interauthorship processes of creation. She is a Research Associate Artist at ResCen, Middlesex University (www.rescen.net) exploring tele-kinetics, tele-presence and tele-intuition, and she regularly writes and collates collections of topical thoughts from artists worldwide. Ghislaine co-founded body>data>space in 2005 as a design collective focused on placing the body at the centre of digital interaction. Ghislaine directs the interauthored group process in the creation of unique events and installations for public environments and architectural builds. body>data>space merges content and interactivity into new generation display interfaces and

media facades. The interdisciplinary group use connectivity and locative technologies such as gps sensors, virtual worlds and telematics to network public engagement and creativity. Recent work includes the exhibition and publication Virtual Physical Bodies (CDA Paris 2008) and Post Me_New ID, an EU funded project including the direction of a new performance installation called "DARE WE DO IT REAL-TIME?" which premiered at the Kinetica Art Fair in February 2009. Additionally body>data>space have been involved in the co-development of several public authored projects, using physical gaming and social networking techniques, for London (Hide and Seek Festival) and Paris (Bains Numeriques Festival).

Steve Dixon is Professor of Performance and Technology at Brunel University in London, where he is also Pro-Vice Chancellor (Development). His creative practice includes international multimedia theatre tours as director of The Chameleons Group (since 1994), two award winning CD-ROMs, interactive Internet performances, and telematic arts events. He has published extensively on subjects including digital arts, performance studies, film theory, robotics, Artificial Intelligence, and pedagogy. He is co-director of The Digital Performance Archive and Associate Editor of The International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media. His 800 page book Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art and Installation (2007, MIT Press) has won two international awards including the Award for Excellence in Music and Performing Arts 2007 (Association of American Publishers, Professional and Scholarly Publishing Division).

Peter Tomaž Dobrila is an electronic and IT engineer and a musician who focuses on the creative use of the new technologies. In 1996 he co-founded the Multimedia Centre KiberSRCeLab – KIBLA (MMC KIBLA), Maribor. Two years later he co-founded the Association for Culture and Education KIBLA (ACE KIBLA) and became its president. He managed MMC KIBLA and ACE KIBLA until 2004. Since then he has participated in numerous congresses and conventions on internet and multimedia and information culture. His main activity were programs and projects produced by KIBLA. One of the biggest works was the proposal for the European Capital of Culture 2012 candidature for the Municipality of Maribor, which was voted the best and was chosen among other as the winning one. The other was an initiative and starting framework for the World Book Capital, raised by UNESCO, which was also successful and Ljubljana was nominated to be it in 2010. He acts as consultant and adviser in cultural matters and is a fellow of the European Academy for Digital Media (EADIM). He works in several European international projects and global collaborations with aim to build platforms for art, education and research. Since 2009 he's employed on the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia as general director of the Directorate for Art. He's finishing master degree in informatics and information society at the University of Maribor.

Thomas Dumke, born in 1977. Studied history, sociology & communication sciences at TU Dresden, postgraduate in culture & management. Since 1999 Thomas Dumke is part of the CYNETart festival in Dresden, in 2000 he initiated together with DS-X.org the »microscope session«, founding member of TMA Hellerau, from 2006 he has been the director of the CYNETart festival. Father of one daughter.

Masaki Fujihata started his career as a digital artist for Computer Graphics and Animation in the early 80s, and he produced Computer Generated Sculpture throughout the 80s. By the early 90s he began to work with interactive systems, and one of his successful early digital art works Beyond Pages (1995-1997) is considered a classic in this genre. 1996, Fujihata's Global Interior Project #2, a network multi-user virtual environment, was awarded the prestigious

Golden Nica at the Prix Ars Electronica competition, Linz, Austria. From the early 90s Fujihata also explored GPS technology (Global Positioning System -for measuring position by satellite) for applying this military technology into a medium of perceiving ourselves as an artistic apparatus.Field-Works, a series of project which began in 1992, is still in development, and has been included in the exhibition Future Cinema at ZKM, Karlsruhe, Germany (which travelled to KIASMA Finland, ICC Tokyo, the Microwave Festival, Hong Kong, between 2002 – 2004). The GPS project "Mersea Circles" was realised in Essex, England under frame work of "Coast Digital" in 2003 and part of Future Physical, and it was presented at Firstsite Gallery, Colchester,UK, in 2003. An internationally recognised media artist, Masaki Fujihata is Professor at the Graduate School of Film and New Media, at Tokyo University of the Arts, Japan.

Denisa Kera is Assistant Professor of New Media Studies and member of the Science Technology & Society cluster at National University of Singapore. She received Ph.D. in Information Science from Charles University in Prague and MA in Philosophy. Her research interests include New Media Theory, Science and Technology Studies and topics in Digital Culture and Art. Her Ph.D. thesis (New media theory as ontology of the computer code) examines issues of performativity in computer codes as the bases of new media theory. Before joining NUS, she worked as a research associate at the Center for Global studies, Academy of Sciences in Prague, where she was studying the posthuman aspects of society and globalisation in relation to evolution theories. She has extensive experience as a curator of exhibitions related to art, technology and science, such as "WEB 2.0 generation" at the festival ENTER3 http://www.enter3.org, "Artists in Labs" and "TransGenesis: festival of biotechnology and art" http://www.transgenesis.cz in 2006 and 2007, the game art section at the Entermutimediale festival in 2005.

Martin Kusch is a visual media artist who lives and works in Montreal, Berlin and Vienna. He studied art history, philosophy and painting in Berlin, and media arts with Peter Weibel at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, where he has also been a teacher and lecturer since 1997. He is founder and artistic co-director of kondition pluriel. His artistic practice is based on the creation of media installations and interactive environments. He is particularly interested in investigating how digital technologies influence our way of thinking about and our perception of the body and space. The hybridization of media and the transformation processes of the electronic image and sound inside performative context has been his main artistic research and activity for the last ten years. His installations and performances have been presented in festivals, galleries and institutions, including, Ars Electronica, Transmediale, ISEA, Transcodex and ZKM.

Michael Takeo Magruder is an artist and researcher in the Visualisation Lab, King's College London. His work uses emerging technologies; including high-performance computing, mobile devices and virtual environments, within contemporary creative and academic practice. His artworks have been showcased in over 200 exhibitions and 30 countries, including venues such as the Courtauld Institute of Art, London, Georges Pompidou Center, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography and Trans-Media-Akademie Hellerau. His work has been funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Arts Council England and the National Endowment for the Arts, USA. He is also recognised for his online arts practice and has been commissioned by leading portals for Internet Art such as Turbulence.org and Soundtoys.net. His work blends Information Age technologies with modernist-like aesthetics to explore the formal structures and conceptual paradigms of the networked, digital world.

Sita Popat is Senior Lecturer in Dance at the University of Leeds, UK. Her research interests centre on dance choreography and new technologies. She recently completed the Projecting Performance project, in collaboration with Scott Palmer and KMA Creative Technology Ltd. This project was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council to investigate relationships between performer, operator and digital 'sprite'. It also provided research and development workshops for Lloyd Newson and DV8 Physical Theatre's production of To Be Straight With You (2008). Her work on the UK Research Council funded Emergent Objects project applied dance knowledge to the design of a giant robotic limb, which is now being displayed in the London Science Museum. Her book on online choreography is published by Routledge, titled Invisible Connections: Dance, Choreography and Internet Communities (2006). She is Associate Editor of the International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media.

Mika Satomi is originally from Japan and currently a Research Fellow at Distance Lab, Scotland and PhD candidate at University of Art and Industrial Design Linz, Austria. She has studied Graphic Design at Tokyo Zokei University, Media Art at Institute of Advanced Media Arts and Science (IAMAS), Japan. In her practice, her interest is to experiment with technology as a medium of expression and to understand its language capability. The main focus of her research is Play Theory by Johan Huizinga, and how we integrate technology in mechanisms of play in our time. Since 2007, she has been collaborating with Hannah Perner-Wilson under the name Kobakant. Their projects often involve Wearable Technology, turning one's body into an interface, creating unusual interaction between humans and machines, but also between humans (users) and humans (audience). KOBAKANT pursue their practice with the spirit of Open Source and sharing knowledge. More on www.KOBAKANT.at, www.nerding.at

Pavel Sedlak, arts manager, curator, editor, freelance journalist. Born 1977 in the Czech Republic (CZ). Studied philosophy and philosophy of art. 2002-2003: joined the Czech Academy of Sciences, a Group of Science, Technology, Society Studies. 2003: an intern at the Czech National Gallery, Department of New Media. Since 2001 with CIANT: project development manager, fund-raiser, editor, curator. Co-initiated a number of local as well as international co-operation projects in arts and culture. Curator of exhibitions Adapt!, Unsafe Distance, Cosmopolitics, I, Resident, Therapy. Writes for Flash Art CS, Golden Cut, Dance Zone, A2, reviewer for CLA - Consciousness, Literature and the Arts. 2007: co-chair of MutaMorphosis: Challenging Arts and Sciences conference. 2008: artistic advisor of the Ludic Times workshop by Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF). 2009: chief curator of ENTER|4 festival, member of ISEA 2010 advisory committee. http://blastula.multiplace.org

Yacov Sharir graduated from Bezalel Academy of Art in sculpture and ceramics and continued his studies in dance at the Rubin Academy of Music and Dance, Sharir danced and performed professionally over thirty years including thirteen with the Bat-Shave dance Company of Israel. Sharir was the founder of the American Deaf Dance Company, which pioneered the inclusion of deaf artists in professional dance. He subsequently founded Sharir Dance Company, the resident professional Dance Company of the University of Texas at Austin. Sharir is an award winning choreographer and a multiple NEA choreography fellowship recipient. He has choreographed for companies around the world. He was awarded a two-year fellowship from the Banff Centre for the Arts, At the University of Texas at Austin, Sharir teaches dance, choreography, computer aided art courses, virtual reality/cyberspace in the arts, and multi-disciplinary graduate courses. He is a frequent keynote speaker at arts and technology conferences and symposia in the USA and around the world.

Hellen Sky is a digital choreographer/performer/director/writer/teacher - Her work poetically bridges the human and the technological. Working collaboratively Her research interests centre on dance choreography and new technologies. with peers from arts, science and computer design, her work often using data generated by the body to affect the relationship between multiple media She : Co-founded Company In Space [1](with John Mc Cormick - internationally recognized new media performance company)1993 - 2003; Fellow of the Australia Council Dance Fund; 04 – 06 Nominee of the Leonardo MIT, Rockefeller, Ford Foundation Global Crossing Award; Co founder and Artistic Director of Dancehouse: Centre for Moving Arts Melbourne.1991 – 2001. Founding Member Performer Circus Oz & Pram Factory collective. Hellen has been the recipient of major artistic funding from state, federal and international arts organisations and philanthropic trusts. Hellen Sky & Collaborators received Australia Council Inter Arts ArtsLab & Culture Lab 07 - 08 for Darker Edge of Night Stage One.Her work has been presented in International context for new media performance, dance, multi media, interactive installation. She is often invited to speak in Symposia and Forum around digital performance and embodiment and new forms of choreography that emerge through the use of interactive and real time technologies. More on www.hellensky.com.

Pavel Smetana. Since the beginning of the 1990s Pavel Smetana has been artistically experimenting with digital interactive media, creating installations such as "The Room of Desires", "The Mirror", " The Cyber-Portrait of Dorian Gray" and "Lilith". Since 2003 he has directed several multimedia performances interconnecting contemporary dance and game technologies. During the past ten years he headed 3D, VR and Art Dept. at the National Arts Academy in Aix-en-Provence, France. He is the founder and director of CIANT, and of the international art/science/technology festival ENTER (2000, 2005, 2007, 2009) held in Prague. Coordinator of several research, arts, culture as well as mobility projects on international level. http://www.smetana.cz

Fiddian Warman. With a grounding and fine and digital arts Fiddian embodies a synthesis of creativity and technology and is passionate about the application of this hybrid in a range of social contexts. He is skilled and experienced in identifying underlying opportunities or challenges and innovating elegant strategies and solutions to meet these needs. His fifteen year experience of leading creative teams enables efficient and effective delivery of these innovations. As founder and MD of Soda Fiddian leads teams of artists, developers and entrepreneurs in the development of creative tools that help communities work, play and learn together. The best known of Soda's suite of innovative applications is the BAFTA-winning online construction environment, Sodaplay Fiddian's artworks reflect on the effect of technology on societies by use of mechatronic and robotic systems. See: soda.co.uk, sodaplay.com & fiddian.com

Participants of the POST ME_ NEW ID project

Lead organiser - body>data>space (London, UK)

body>data>space

Co-organisers - CIANT (Prague, Czech Republic), TMA Hellerau (Dresden, Germany) and KIBLA (Maribor, Slovenia)

CIANT　　TMA Trans-Media-Akademie Hellerau　　KIBLA MULTIMEDIA CENTER

Project overall

•Leanne Bird – lead organiser project producer / co-ordinator – b>d>s (UK)
•Ghislaine Boddington – process direction / dramaturgy – b>d>s (UK)
•Anja Dietel – financial manager – TMA Hellerau (DE)
•Peter Tomaž Dobrila – mentor / adviser / co-organiser project manager – KIBLA (SI)
•Thomas Dumke – co-organiser project manager – CYNETart-Festival (DE)
•Pavel Sedlak – co-organiser project manager – CIANT (CZ)
•Pavel Smetana – advisor – CIANT (CZ)
•Meta Štular – conference assistant / book editor – KIBLA (SI)

Creation Process 1,2 and 3

CP1 - ICA, London, 25th March – 4th April 2008
CP2 - Interactive Institute, Prague, 30th June – 11th July 2008
CP3 - ICA, London, 16th Feb – 2nd March 2008

•Leanne Bird – production / rehearsal direction – b>d>s (UK)
•Ghislaine Boddington – process direction / dramaturgy – b>d>s (UK)
•Ivor Diosi – new media artist / virtual worlds – CIANT (HU/CZ)
•Arta Gashi – production support – b>d>s (AL/UK)
•Delphine Gaborit – dance artist – b>d>s (FR/UK)
•Vesna Grandes – dance artist – b>d>s (HR/UK)
•Laura Henry – video editing / documentation – b>d>s (UK)
•Stephane Kyles – new media artist – video – CIANT (FR/CZ)
•Kat Magnus – documentation/co-ordination – CIANT (UK/CZ)
•Nick Rothwell – sound artist / software architect – b>d>s (UK)
•Charlie Poulet – lighting / technical direction – ICA (FR/UK)
•Sasha Spasic – dance artist – b>d>s (UK)
•Jan Sebek – video artist / technical support- CIANT (CZ)
•Linda Winkrantz Hogg- dance artist – b>d>s (SE/UK)

Book and DVD

•Peter Tomaž Dobrila – mentor / adviser / co-organizer project manager – Kibla (SI)
•Meta Štular – book editor – KIBLA (SI)
•Katarina Pejović – transcriptor – KIBLA (SI)
•Cameron Bobro – transcriptor / proof-reader – KIBLA (SI)
•Fenshu – graphic designer / book designer – KIBLA (FR/SI)
•Laura Henry – video editing / documentation – b>d>s (UK)
•Vera Batozska – photographer - CIANT (CZ)
•Maja Vuksanovič – conference photo documetarist / web editor – KIBLA (SI)
•Ana Pečar – conference video documetarist – KIBLA (SI)
•Jan Sebek – video artist / technical support- CIANT (CZ)
•Aleksandra Kostič – president – KIBLA (SI)
•Lidija Pačnik – administrator – KIBLA (SI)
•Huiqin Wang – art adviser – KIBLA (SI)

Post Me_New ID Forum

•Anja Dietel – financial manager – TMA Hellerau (DE)
•Thomas Dumke – co-organiser project manager – CYNETart-Festival (DE)
•Matthias Härtig, Steffen Hönig, Jadwiga Müller, Katja Schumann – CYNETart assistents (DE)
•Anett Herrmann – PR - (DE)
•Yvonne Bahr – graphic, layout (DE)
•Technic crew of the Hellerau — European Centre of the Arts Dresden (DE)

Post Me_New ID is a co-production between body>data>space (London, UK), CIANT (Prague, Czech Republic), TMA Hellerau (Dresden, Germany) and Kibla (Maribor, Slovenia) supported by the European Union within the Culture 2007 Programme.

"DARE WE DO IT REAL–TIME?"

a performance for the Kinetica Art Fair on 27th and 28th February 2009

"DARE WE DO IT REAL-TIME?" challenged the ideas of the self and our multi-identities, both off and online. How do our avatars in the virtual realm reflect on ourselves? What do they teach us about ourselves and how can we use that knowledge to extend our understanding of others?

In a topical world, the performers travelled through personal and public space, working with the individual and the community. In close and distant environments, they simultaneously operate locally and globally. Their habitat is an intricate virtual/physical place of body/mind orientation. Their live bodies could mimic and perform chosen identities – morphing between avatar, cyborg, humanoid, robot, using the electronic, the bionic, the digitronic.

Hyper-existence all around them. In the interconnected, multi-nodal space of real and virtual, they need to be sharply connected and speedily responsive to "the others" – tele-intuition lessons are learnt on the move.

"DARE WE DO IT REAL-TIME" emerged from a year long research project exploring the evolution of post human culture through technologies of the body.

Within the panoramic intelligent environment, digitally networked and responsive graphics combine real-time with the performers on stage to create a multiplex of outcomes. Interactive sound, video and motion components seek out and catch the live bodies, urging them to respond, retaliate and re-act.

The relativity of the body, of your own and to others, is key to the multi-identity mode of modern living, of existing in the real and the virtual in many forms. In "DARE WE DO IT REAL-TIME?" these boundaries were speedily dissolved so we could see, with humour and irony, the potential errors, glitches, thrills and magic moments that transpired.

"DARE WE DO IT REAL-TIME?" was created as part of Post Me_New ID, a co-production between body>data>space (London, UK), CIANT (Prague, Czech Republic), TMA Hellerau (Dresden, Germany) and Kibla (Maribor, Slovenia) supported by the European Union within the Culture 2007 Programme. The piece emerges from an interauthored group process involving 11 European artists specialising in performance, video, sound, virtual world and interaction.

body>data>space

Photograph by Jean-Paul Berthoin

"Projects like Post Me_New ID allow dissemination and sharing of ideas in between artists from different part of Europe. This contributes to integrating Europe as well as enriching its cultural life. More cross-border projects like this Post Me_New ID are vital in establishing an integrated European cultural identity."

Linda Winkrantz-Hogg, artist (SWE)

"I was already working around Europe before Post Me_New ID started but in that instance, it was vital to the project that we relocated, and explored new cultures first hand. The relocation wasn't just a means to create but a necessity. It brought a lot to the conversation throughout the creation process"

Delphine Gaborit, artist (FR)

"For me it was really positive to be part of Post Me_New ID. I learned new tools and skills and had many excellent professional experiences. Especially the chance to work with professional dancers and cooperate with them opened for me lots new ideas and ways where to focus in my artistic projects. Now in my work I am more focussed in development of live effects, cameras and work with live feedbacks.This project also pushed me to think more about relations between different European identities in artistic practice"

Jan Sebek - video artist (CZ)

"At the beginning of the project I already had a few work team experiences before, but Post Me_New ID was a long term project to be involved in. I guess I developed more human and social skills than professional, I still do remember the trainings we had on mornings during the Creation Prcoesses to familiarise with each other. During the project we have worked a lot on the body integration, the scene was surrounded with visual tech and props that would or wouldn't work during the creative processes, we had to choose valuables moves, visuals, sounds. This evolution of working with the technologies in the piece was really interesting, working and evolving the digital media itself."

Stephane Kyles- new media artist – video (FR/CZ)

"Being involved in Post Me_New ID helped me to grow and develop as an artist, it improved my choreographic individual skills and creative thinking and gave me a real opportunity to network with other artists and professionals from other European countries. Attending the Post Me_New ID Forum I was fascinated to hear the interesting seminars and key note speeches, learning new information all the time. As a Croatian artist living and working in the UK it was very good for me to see how other artists are working across borders in the same way as me"

Vesna Grandes-Howard, artist (HR/UK)

"The performance in London was a hit, big production, huge team and demanding audience. No seats in the auditorium left. Questions like 'how to get inside' was common as all wanted to perceive a slice of the technologically augmented performance. It was an amazing feeling to be there as a part of the production team with the notion that everybody had contributed their share with an intrinsic depth of involvement in the outlined concepts"

Peter Tomaz Dobrila, KIBLA Co-organiser (SI)

«This project helped me to broaden my understanding of true collaboration, open my eyes to the possibility of integrating different art forms into a performance space»

Delphine Gaborit, artist (FR)

"It was a fascinating and rewarding experience to collaborate with body>data>space colleagues on a long-term process, and also to collaborate with artists in Czech Republic in an unfamiliar artistic practice and also to connect with other European partners. It was great to be given the opportunity to present in front of practitioners from other disciplines, and share views and perspectives".

Nick Rothwell, programmer and artist (UK)

"I felt that the immediacy of research, creation and exchange between the different collaborators was wonderful. I was given the chance to learn about different cultures and observe first hand the making of the music, the treatment of images and the camera work".
Delphine Gaborit, artist (FR)

"Collaborating with artists from different disciplines and different European nations was refreshing and inspiring. Especially the inter-disciplinary nature of the project allowed scope for new thinking about creative processes as different media provide different means for artistic expression."
Linda Winkrantz-Hogg, artist (SWE)

"I especially appreciated the time and personal space I was given to further developing my tools and the way I was encourage by the team to use them to contribute to the creative effort. What I found particularly useful was being able to absorb the reactions of people in audiences to the content with which I contributed. To clarify this, I think I had complete creative freedom, and any and all impact I could register was the result of what I had intended and could do best, without being filtered, limited or distorted. I find that very meaningful."
Ivor Diosi, digital media artist (HU, Czech Republic)