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**Holy Fire and the rise of New Media Gallery Art.**

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"The joy of the Postmodern, and as we go into the next period at the moment (name TBA), is that immaterial culture's association with the material (expand at will) is that the antagonism between the art market and the avant is diffused by allowing for localized discourse. Since the "ism" was destroyed, art atomized into very local threads of genre, into small groups, and even imploded to the individual.



New Media was a genre based on a community in the 90's.

In the 2000's, it became a series of practices understood as a group of media arts

It is currently being historicized as a movement.

(However, it is also a meme used within the communications industry, which is a problem. Don't confuse them, or as little as possible.)

As moderator for the panel in the Holy Fire exhibition at IMAL, I want to chime in for a moment with a partially invested opinion. However, Domenico asked me to be there because I am a true hybrid on the subject; I am a gallery artist, curator, and critic, who, given the body of work, also critically questions material culture and the nature of art as fetish/commodity. In fact, my graduate thesis dealt with a form of Platonic tension between the (im)material in art [but almost no one has seen this body of work]. In a way, I am both for and against this practice of collecting New Media, depending on context.

I understand the tradition of patronage as well as the struggle against bourgeois culture by the 20th Century Avant-Garde. After the collapse of Modernism, it really depends on what context and tradition you wish to address, and how you wish to frame yourself (as Nauman and Beuys created the artist as "oeuvre" [body-of-work]). The joy of the Postmodern, and as we go into the next period at the moment (name TBA), is that immaterial culture's association with the material (expand at will) is that the antagonism between the art market and the avant is diffused by allowing for localized discourse. Since the "ism" was destroyed, art atomized into very local threads of genre, into small groups, and even imploded to the individual.

There is no need to rebel against Modernism once it is turned into a field on the Venn diagram, and its role as master narrative is displaced. This is not to say that it has \_gone away\_, and the same for the art market after conceptualism. In fact, before the 2007 financial crises, a lot of artists working in the genre formerly called "New Media" (to paraphrase Dietz) have gone to the galleries. Is this so shocking?

Part of this comes from the emergence of New Media as a Contemporary Art Form after the shows Art Entertainment Network, net.condition, Whitney Biennial 2000, 010101: Art in Technological Times, Data Dynamics, The Art Formerly Known As New Media, and so on. This is the blessing and the bane of acceptance - the greater world tradition of Contemporary Art is at your disposal, but you also have to deal with that broader community and its terms and traditions, as well as your former community in the New Media world. Many of us who are older New Media artists are now Contemporary Artists, which is something that was nearly impossible a decade ago.

However, like Video Art, which is the cultural forebear of New Media, the coming of the festival and dedicated "media" community based on common

interest, cultural specificity, formal/technical exploration is still needed. Therefore the New Media community certainly still exists, even if it is pulled at by commercial agendas (art programs catering to industrial/entertainment application), the art world (as New Media now has to compete with the global art community or stay within localized discourse). We have a New Media genre/community because there is a number of us who want to share, get together, and discuss what our work is doing in the world and what we're learning from it.

With artists like Murakami/Superflat, the 8-Bit crowd (Slocum, Beige, Paperrad Arcangel, et al) there is a NeoPop resurgence, which has elements of its predecessor; that is, surface, mass production, consumption. The arrival of niche fabrication has stepped up the ante on production by allowing micro-production of limited edition items. Contrary to merely re-inscribing the old agendas of material culture, the new age of fabrication threatens to reconfigure it, by creating tons of editioned items that are (more or less) easily created. Therefore, I would challenge the cursory onlooker to say that we could be entering an era approximating Stephenson's "Diamond Age" or a "Fluxus Materialism" of easily made material art. But I think that in the age of Neo-Pop that the reemergence of the object and the integration of production of media artists into material culture seems oddly logical, if not appropriate.

On the other hand, as in a recent talk in Amsterdam, the distinctions between cultures may be more centered in class. While the "ism" has been de-centered, and conceptualism still abounds, and that Media Art is in increasing acceptance, the Art World, the markets, and its community of patronage is still firmly in place, even though additional protocological levels have been created to address new niches. The problem as I see it is that many Media artists either wish the art market would go away, lose its relevance/power, allow the artist to become hegemon, stop assigning cultural value to "poor" works, ascribe value by intellectual/cultural means rather than those of power and wealth, etc. etc. What I see is a discursive mismatching, in that much New Media does not account for/negotiate Contemporary social, cultural and institutional traditions, and vice versa. What I find fascinating from a purely phenomenological POV is that these effects are happening, whatever your stance.

And it isn't boring - what is happening is a fracturing/reconfiguration of the discourse of dematerialization of the object itself, begun with Duchamp himself, and chronicled by Lippard in her seminal book. Immaterial artists are returning to atoms, which is relatively avant- at the moment. I see this analogous to discussions by a number of scholars of my acquaintance regarding a "New Humanism" that acknowledges the real, throws out the Foucaultian 'body' in terms of the human being, while still accounting for individual plurality, thus not being a "Neo-Modernist" backlash.

Lastly, I want to mention something regarding the valuation of art in context of media - especially New Media. At a recent symposium on computer art at Northwestern University's Block Museum, I challenged the endless worrying about New Media's persistence in relation to its valuation. For example, there are many well-known artists whose work is certainly highly prized, but ephemeral - Oursler, Flavin, HIRST, and even many of the mid-20th century masters like Pollack have been falling apart. I wonder how well Ofili's elephant dung is rated for archival? This taken in context with the fact that most digital/New Media artists are held to wholly different standards (Will your print last for at least 200 years?), or the persistence of a work when compared to lesser standards by more "traditional" contemporary artists merely makes certain power and cultural relations visible.

I also realize that others may not share my views, but in many ways, I feel like saying that one thing this show asks is whether New Media has been accepted as Contemporary Art (i.e. become part of the gallery/museum

world), whose practices have been accepted, how that fits into the current contemporary dialog, and how does that relate to larger "mainstream" art historical traditions.

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expand at will

submitted by joseph nechvatal on fri, 2008-04-04 15:24.

Bravo. Your statement seems to complete a computer assisted break with modernism without the sense of mocking a corrupted ideal, without the sense of faded affectation. An alternative to "expand at will" will come then from a disillusionment with expand at will itself (i.e. GLUT). However a sense of completed modernism, a sense of complete awareness of the conventions that give art it's existence, a sense of complete artistic self-consciousness should lead to a postmodernist expand at will meta-consciousness too caught up in its own spontaneous internal necessity to bother with staging cynical comments. By reflecting critically on the fact that expand at will is an act (a facile performance) commenting on high art's failures and broken promises, expand at will artists might expand their freedom and regain a sense of purpose. It is when we begin to realize that we have been conditioned into cynical self-restriction, into a narrower and narrower perception of ourselves, our importance, and our magnitude that we will begin to seek out something grand via expand at will.

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viractual Richard Dupont show

submitted by joseph nechvatal on wed, 2008-04-09 19:10.

From the expand at will viractual perspective, I highly recommend seeing Richard Dupont's show called Terminal Stage in the Lever House Lobby Gallery (390 Park Ave @ 53rd Street - until May 3rd). It consists of nine nude human figures cast in polyurethane based on 3D digital scans of Dupont's body. Each of the 80" figures has been digitally manipulated laterally and/or horizontally so that an observer can only see each complete body from a single vantage point; from certain angles they look weirdly nebulous.



**Richard Dupont  
installation**

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the viractual perspective

submitted by joseph nechvatal on wed, 2008-04-09 19:11.

On the viractual perspective - I should have posted this link which gets into it:

<http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=330>

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**Richard Dupont**  
**installation**

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