Spontaneous Theories

No one thinks academically. People just pretend they do. They force themselves to think like that. Academic style is a result of effort (or, if you prefer, of mental discipline), so it is therefore a result of a first thought. The academic is a second thought, because it is a translation of a first thought. It is not spontaneous, but deliberate. The choice between the academic style and my own is therefore a half-choice: I will speak spontaneously, or I will choose ''academicism.''

—Vilém Flusser, ''Essay''

Cyberpsychogeography (An Aimless Drift in Twenty Digressions)

1

Writing takes on the shape of somnambulistic codework as soon as I connect myself to the digital apparatus I compose with. Once it is turned on and I am plugged into this live, creative act of composition, there is nothing to stop my naked words from running across an empty screenal interface that my body willingly loses itself in. From the perspective of narrative, I see my body becoming this free-flowing sensation of *otherworldly drift* as it moves out toward an imaginary horizon, a nonplace place where the first-person (second-person, omniscient) narrator is always unreliable, a cyberpsychogeographical jockey teleporting his unconscious maneuverings throughout the wide-open spaces of the wild wild west (WWW) forever in search of clicking connectivity.

And yet this naked body of words just now starting to play out its creative potential is not really my own. It's part of something much larger than me—some kind of dynamic, shape-shifting intersubjectivity where I am always losing sight of myself as I improvisationally interact with The Network and, without thinking about it, intuitively manipulate the pulse of Time (*as if such a thing as Time could actually exist*).

Time can seem totally irrelevant when writing out words from inside the body. Yesterday I was in Colorado preparing for a long trip, and by the time my plane took off it was evening, Mountain Standard Time. But what makes it

standard, especially given my own natural tendency to refute time itself by losing myself in timeless acts of creative composition? When I land in Australia less than twenty-four hours later, somehow *two* days will have passed, and I'll be having a soy latte and organic blueberry muffin for breakfast at a café in North Bondi Beach. Sleeping on the plane, my body will write itself out in some elaborate dreamtime script that continuously improvises other lives for me to role-play in, and after the morning coffee and muffin at the beautiful beach Down Under, I will intuitively come to realize that there is, in fact, a sensible regularity to my self-imposed lifestyle discipline, even though I occasionally feign a kind of *occupational difference*.

For example, in Boulder, where I supposedly live and work, I go to sleep around midnight. If everything is the way it should be, I will wake up the next morning around eight or nine, spend the day and night making art (*living life*), and then, by the time midnight falls again, aimlessly drift back into the kind of alternative states of mind that, as a romantic poet-dreamer (artist-researcher), help me pay the bills. Having said that, there can be no question that these dreamlike, aimless drifts happen periodically throughout my waking life as well, and I can't help but wonder if this is not what I, as an artist-researcher, am particularly talented at—that is, finding ways to teleport my turned on and plugged-in body into states of altered consciousness *no matter what time it is*, locating my creative potential and its complementary poetic thrust wherever necessary, just so long as everything is defamiliarized and relatively timeless, which then makes it easy for me to invent on-the-fly imagistic events never before imagined.

Perhaps this is what it means *to become an artist-medium nurturing the field conditions for my creative potential to unconsciously play in*. These trance narratives that float through my body as I sleep or write or navigate my various digital art personas through the cyberpsychogeographical regions of The Network are an essential part of this everyday life I am constantly launching my asymmetrical phrasings and rephrasings in. This is the experiential space, full of rapidly reconfigured sense data, that I feel most at home in and will do anything in my power to have access to at all costs. I know I'm in the process of activating its full readiness potential when my internal superclock makes me feel pregnant with the synchronicity of everything happening right now, in realtime, although my intuition tells me this is not realtime at all but something that resembles realtime even though I know it's totally fake. It's what I would call *unrealtime*.

The feeling of living in unrealtime is one that takes the artist-medium beyond improvisation or living on the edge of forever. It's something more akin to hyperimprovisational Life Style Practice, an intuitively driven creative class struggle that cannot be captured in any media-specific analysis. What it needs is *social network synthesis* that breaks away from the prying need to always understand itself and, instead, refocuses all component energies on exploring its own creative/readiness potential. Think of it as writing out the anticipatory moment of surging creativity as it projects itself from inside my body in a perpetual state of hyperintuition or what the Situationists might have called *avant-garde presence*—one that TAKES PLACE in the revolution of everyday life.

This avant-garde presence that circulates throughout my day-to-day life feels both OF its time AND ahead of its time. Just like the phenomenon in the 1980s that we called *cyberpunk* explored imaginary worlds simultaneously happening in the present as well as the immediate future, this avant-garde presence enables me to operate in the machinations of the working world and its preset itinerary of bureaucratic functions, even as I imagine myself proactively engaged in a yet-to-be-invented future-tense practice that resists the contemporary situation I am always positioning myself to move beyond. But there are still other worlds or states of mind where I work or, once I'm there, play, and they tend to lose all of their presets. In these alternative spaces, I no longer have to worry about what it would be like to become that other thing that wants to bureaucratize me. Instead of designing my more intuitive, internalized, readiness potential so that it consciously plays to the regimen of always being ON time while answering TO corporate, university, or otherwise bureaucratic callings, I customize its settings and preferences so that my state of avant presence is playing IN time and feels *more engaged than ever before.*

Think of what we used to call a mad scientist who is now envisioned as a fully tilted artist-researcher swimming in the intersubjective waters of the fluid intelligentsia—or the artist-researcher as a *pseudo-autobiographical work in progress.* This is extreme role-playing, a gig that was MADE for me, where after years of nonstop dress rehearsal, I am now situated as the perfect person to play myself *as is*, although the pseudo-autobiographical work in progress cannot help himself and is always turning the role of the *as is* into the always premiering *as if*. Role-playing the *as if* allows the transmitting nerve centers of my processual image filters to initialize a performative thrust of narrative

momentum that resists the machinations of Time itself so that I may continue distributing my many digital flux personas. These digital flux personas are a multiverse of possibility and are experienced as something else entirely different from what I thought I was when I started the day, when I woke up in the familiar environment that I, for lack of better, call home. Home for me is not really the place I live in (Colorado) or the temporary autonomous zone I create for myself while living in Sydney. Rather, *it's the day that never was* and that I am constantly losing myself in as I construct new digital art personas to disperse throughout the compositional field I operate in.

Many times these digital flux personas—which I role-play via e-mail, Web chat, spontaneous Net art creations, VJ performances, mobile blogging, and the like—often overlap and even converge into the one digital flux persona that my audience has tagged with the easy-to-remember name Mark Amerika. To me, this digital flux persona that goes by the name Mark Amerika intuitively becomes an indeterminate loci of readiness potential that *precedes* consciousness while transponding the fluid metamorphosis of a radical *inter*-subjectivity to the point where there is no longer an *I* or a place to call home. There is only a networked SPACE of flows for my creative self to wander nomadically through as I invent my life as an artist at this particular moment in time—as if there could even *be* a particular moment in time. Think about it: it just passed us by. Was it ever really there in the first place? We have already disproved that. What I mean to say (as I begin to remix all of my lines of transcontinental flight into a running trajectory of naked words leaving their digital traces on the forever expanding magic writing pad) is that this process of metamediumistic self-invention taking place in an always emergent, interconnected space of flows can mean only one thing. I am under the influence of self-induced jet lag—or what I have come to call *jet-lag consciousness*. This is a consciousness that no longer depends on flying to different countries around the world to be experienced and can be achieved anywhere at anytime.

2

Jet-lag consciousness expands the playing field for my imagination to fictionalize its avant-garde presence in. It happens not as a result of sci-fi time tripping but as timeless tripping or technomadic wandering. It's all about getting into the ZONE. As an altered state of *being becoming something else*, it could be

packaged as the navigational mantra of a Net artist drifting into various cyberpsychogeographical ZONES that, in this artist poetics, come as a set of pseudo-autobiographical fragments or cleverly manipulated memory digressions that sometimes double as metafictional musings on the life of a digital flux persona who goes by various names including Mark Amerika, Abe Golam, VJ Persona, Maker/Faker, or Digital Thoughtographer.

The improvised dream-writing sequences that populate this always in-process digital poetics are in many ways problematized states of being where a functional data processor—the proprioceptive body conducting its customized energy routines—creatively filters and indexes whatever information (sense data) it finds relevant at any given moment. Think of it as experiential tagging or Experiential Mock-Up Language (XML). In this regard, everything I am writing here is both an improvisatory narrative performance exported through my artist-theory filters as well as my attempt to dig into the Real of circumstantial happenstance. And it just so happens that digging into the Real is itself circumstantial or, in the networked space of flows, requires an unpremeditated trek through a vast landscape of imaginary otherness we are apt to call Unreal. For, as a good friend who has since passed away recently wrote me in an e-mail message: "Without the unreal, there is no Real."

3

I take this notion of "Without the unreal, there is no Real" to heart. As a digital artist committed to expanding the concept of writing while tapping into the fictional unconscious that precedes my every conscious act, this digging into the Real and its inevitable relationship with radical states of shape-shifting intersubjectivity are impossible to ignore. One thing I am sure of as I continue this ongoing process of experimental identity construction is that there is an all-too-human tendency to lose sight of who it is I am while teleporting my writerly texts through this networked space of flows that the cyberpunk novelist William Gibson, in his novel *Neuromancer*, referred to as the "consensual hallucination of cyberspace." And yet is not losing sight of who it is I am while simultaneously charging my potential language eruptions to the utmost possible degree enough to challenge the intimidation tactics of the ever-leering philosophical void?

Writing these naked words during a transcontinental flight that crosses the international date line and loses an entire day I will never experience in my

lifetime helps accentuate the fact that the philosophical void is my friend, my spiritual guide, my one and only intellectual adviser. Without the vanishing point looming large somewhere over *there*, shiny bright with its concomitant reminder that all of my imaginary lines of flight are bound to converge in a catastrophic disappearance of the real, there would be no anticipated endgame triggering my immediate need to make art. Meanwhile, the increase in the total number of years my body aspires to survive through is always on the rise, and without that knowledge nudging me into further acts of creative composition, there can be no movement toward constant renewal and strategic resistance.

But why is that so? You would think that these eventual disappearances would make the artist rebel in the most noncomformist way possible and that I would stop making art. Is it because this consensual hallucination I operate in has already cashed in on my innate human tendency to live in perpetual denial? Perhaps my body is being washed away by the endless flows of data that permeate the very air I breathe and, a willing victim, I simply have fallen in love with it all. In fact, I must be totally swimming it, like never before. Who do I thank for such mammoth historical opportunity?

We consent to this shared hallucination in other contexts besides computer-mediated cyberspace. This flight I am on started yesterday in Colorado (but was it really yesterday?) and will eventually end up in Sydney, Australia. Somehow, somewhere, I will lose an entire day of my life. Somewhere, somehow, that day will simply not exist—and yet it does exist. People will be born that day, and many people will die—and yet for me that day will disappear like no other day. I want to know *where* it went. *Where* is that space of time? *What* is it?

How does this time shifting relate to my thinking about cyberspace—about writing cyberspace, navigating cyberspace, imagining or even imaging cyberspace? How does it affect the way I might think about writing, navigating, or imaging a new kind of language—cyberpsychogeographical, *in nature*, architectonic in its technoetic emergence? How does this potentially fertile field of poetic composition (which simultaneously exists but does not exist within any standard time) relate to that *non*place place that the French poet Stéphane Mallarmé speaks of when he says "Nothing will have taken place but the place"? (Appropriately enough for a spontaneous approach to living out one's life as a theory-to-be, this quote comes from his work "A Throw of the Dice," where he philosophically speculates that "a throw of the dice will never abol-

ish chance.") I want to know how this nonplace place links to these dreamy, interactive states of *being becoming something else* that I find myself continually investigating while conducting virtual art performances in both cyberspace and sleep. Or given my background as a creative writer, I want to know how it relates to scripting cyberspace as a potential dreamworld of coded composition. This is how we might think about scripting languages that inform behavioral performance or an expanded concept of writing that includes all manner of resonance between programming codes, semiotic codes, genetic codes, behavioral codes, and what The Spy in the House of Love might call secret codes.

   Is tapping into our readiness potential in the nonplace place an attempt to crack open the secret codes of creative composition, or is it more about stylizing our creative practices so that they can poetically encrypt even *more* secret code? Both/and? Perhaps the Good Doctor (any Ph.D. will do) can answer. Is there a Virtual Chora in the House?

4

According to 1960s' Situationist philosophy (which grew out of the writings and actions of a group of European artists and thinkers, mostly Parisians, including the movement leader, Guy Debord), collaboratively generated situations intervene in mainstream media discourse and cut into the cult of attention-grabbing spectacle. In developing a resistance movement and an art-research practice that would successfully work against this society of the spectacle, these theorists used the term *psychogeography*—that is, "the study of the precise effects of geographical setting, consciously managed or not, acting directly on the mood and behavior of the individual." As part of their philosophical program, the Situationists suggested that one way to experiment with a psychogeographical *premise* would be to investigate *drifting* as an experimental mode of behavior—that is, to hastily mobilize the body through varied environments, to be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters found there, and to see how these experiences alter ways of behaving and consequently seeing the world. By activating the body and its natural tendency toward movement, affect, and sensation within the urban environment, the Situationists seemed to suggest that the city is a kind of code—an architectonic language of structure whose concrete jungles try to dam up our movement even though we ourselves are leaking. So why not spill our many digital flux personas into the gutters and existential haunts of the meandering streets?

The Situationists referred to this aimless drifting as *dérive*. Debord has theorized about the *dérive*:

If chance plays an important role in *dérives*, this is because the methodology of psychogeographical observation is still in its infancy. But the action of chance is naturally conservative and in a new setting tends to reduce everything to habit or to an alternation between a limited number of variants. Progress means breaking through fields where chance holds sway by creating new conditions more favorable to our purposes. We can say, then, that the randomness of a *dérive* is fundamentally different from that of the stroll but also that the first psychogeographical attractions discovered by *dérivers* may tend to fixate them around new habitual axes, to which they will constantly be drawn back.

In other words, customizing your aimless drifts within certain loose parameters can be addictive, and creating new lifestyle algorithms that challenge your set ways of thinking gets more difficult with every successive wander. Think of the *dérive* as metatourism or an intentional homelessness that is performed out of philosophical necessity but that is part of a research practice that may not always give itself over to chance occurrence. And yet, as we have already stated, a throw of the dice never abolishes chance, and once you turn a corner and, as if by accident, encounter one of those illuminating eureka moments, you will probably program yourself to create similar parameters the next time you set out to power your drift within any given compositional field. For artists, this is especially dangerous because it means that you may find yourself going down what appears to be the right alley but ends up being the all-too-easy shortcut where you continually rob yourself of the chance to reach your full potential. The question is: how do you continually challenge your intuition to spur on the unconscious player living inside your body—the one whose creative actions open up the compositional field for you to improvise and lose yourself in, like never before?

The idea is to avoid getting tackled or brought down by the defensive posturing of the mundane consumer culture. As Steven Best and Douglas Kellner write in their essay "Debord and the Postmodern Turn,"

In contrast to the stupor of consumption, Debord and the Situationists champion active, creative, and imaginative practice, in which individuals create their own "situations," their own passionate existential events, fully participating in the production of everyday life, their own individuality, and, ultimately, a new society. Thus, to the passivity of the spectator they counterpoise the activity of the radical subject which constructs its own everyday life against the demands of the spectacle (to buy, consume, conform, etc.). The concept of the spectacle therefore involves a distinction between

passivity and activity and consumption and production, condemning passive consumption of spectacle as an alienation from human potentiality for creativity and imagination.

And yet for contemporary digital artists whose experimentally constructed flux personas link to a pseudo-autobiographical work in progress forever on the cusp of composing new iterations of poetic *being becoming something else*, what does it really mean to participate fully in the production of their own individuality? The radical subjectivity that the Situationists bet the farm on somehow left out the essential *otherness* of the utopian playing field they desperately wanted to play on. If, as Gibson suggests in his cyberpunk novel, the hallucination is consensual, then we have to assume that it takes at least two to tango. The Situationists suggested that three was the perfect number of participants for a valuable *dérive*. And yet as we know, the Society of the Spectacle gave way to the Me Decade only to be followed by even more supercharged spectacle. Perhaps we have yet to finally experience our Last Tango in Paris. Perhaps the situationists were just buttering us up for the ultimate letdown. Perhaps the only way OUT is by triggering the creative potential of the spectacular Not-Me.

5

Lately, as both a nomadically wandering Net artist and touring VJ (or visual jockey), I have been experimenting with the concept of drifting (*dérive*), both as a fluid situation in which I traverse various urban environments where I capture my digital video source material and as a cyberspatial activity where I partake of a Gibsonian "consensual hallucination" by surfing the associational web of trails available on the World Wide Web. For the digital flux persona who is nomadically digging into the Real, the Net itself becomes a situational terrain in which to study the precise effects of navigating the networked space of flows and participating in a meaningful artificial intelligentsia. The Net also creates an experiential research environment that enables artists (1) to see how these navigations and engagements can be consciously managed by acting directly on the mood and behavior of the artist and the work they produce *while* drifting and (2) to investigate if what Kellner and Best call the "alienation from human potentiality for creativity and imagination" can be counterposed via a hyperimprovisationally constructed Life Style Practice (LSP) that emerges from the creative potential of the unconscious

and drifts into the many compositional playing fields that await our unique performances-to-be. Here, the term *hyperimprovisational* (which I borrow from the sound artist and theorist Roger Dean and then manipulate for my own uses) refers to an intuitive, ongoing jam session between nomadic Net artists and the new media technologies they are forever connected to as part of their collaborative prosthetic aesthetic.

This Life Style Practice of the nomadic Net artist cum touring VJ, high on the mobilization of a cyberpsychogeographical drift that always plays with my mind, allows me to use my digital video camera as both as an image-capturing device as well as a writing instrument that creates imagistic captions to my thoughts, many of which I spontaneously write down in the form of diagnostic notes or what I like to call *action scripting*—an evolving digital poetics that script into being certain actions and behaviors that characterize the formal possibilities of the creative spaces I happen to be passing through. I adhere to these action scripts as poetic ephemera, digital sketching, and projective choreography, where every move is part of some holistic body-brain-apparatus dance with the intersubjective playing field I am continuously jamming with. Often, they come across as visible attempts at innovating an artist theory in the form of writerly texts.

You are reading some of these textual traces right now, and wouldn't it be great if they too would take on the flavor of aimlessly wandering through the networked space of flows as part of an experimental mode of writing/drifting? What if they were constructed as an alternative artist theory that is meant to trace the movement of an artist medium that unconsciously mobilizes its avant presence through a variety of subject-oriented environments while *at once* being drawn by the attractions of the intellectual terrain it is navigating through? How do I do *that*, I wonder, while still maintaining an engaged hypertextual consciousness that puts out its worldly tentacles feeling around for whatever potential links or associations they may find there? Ezra Pound once suggested that artists were the antennae of society. My sense is that nomadic Net artists, who are wholly immersed in the digital flux persona of a drifting Life Style Practice, must always have their antennae out and activated, picking up signals from the emergent artificial intelligentsia they depend on for their cultural survival. In this regard, LSP is the new LSD, and considering that, as Gibson suggested, the hallucination is a consensual experience, Net artists really have no choice but to activate themselves IN it if they hope to build on their lucid, digital dreamwork always *in process*.

6

Recently, one of my Net art, VJ personas was touring through parts of Asia and using a camcorder to capture the neon nighttime scenery of the streets I was traversing. As I hastily passed through the varied urban and ambient environments in Tokyo, Hong Kong, and Singapore, my camcorder voraciously capturing the image *écriture* that surrounded me, I occasionally turned to my PDA and improvised spontaneous action scripts. One of these action scripts was entitled "R.E.M.ix" and began as follows:

The Body Is an Image-Making Machine.
It Filters Information.
It Creates Dreams, Memories, and Spontaneous Situations Made out of Images.
The Images Are Created in the Body as They Respond to Images outside the Body.
The Images Change as the Body Moves.
These Movement-Images Resonate with Dreams, Memories, and Spontaneous Situations Made out of Images.
This Means That Spontaneous Situations Made out of Images Can Be Dreams or Active Memories and Vice-Versa.
For the VJ-Hacktivist Who Inmixes the Real with the Unreal, a Live Performance Can Be Experienced as the Memory of a Dream Composed of Spontaneous Situations Made out of Images.
Writing Out the Intuitive Phrasing of an Image Écriture that Always Drifts in Its Revolutionary Aimlessness, the Philosophical Scribe Becomes a VJ Artist.
The VJ Artist Is a Metafictionally Charged Philosophical Scribe that Uses Subjective Plug-Ins to Manipulate Image-Information and in so Doing Begins the Process of Myth-Making Oftentimes in a Narrative Context Even when the So-Called Narrative Itself Is an Antinarrative that Works against Conventional Storytelling and Standard Rhetorical Spin-Control.

After writing these initial notes, I asked myself a series of follow-up questions that I imagine are at the nexus of my VJ practice as it encounters a gnawing theoretical fiction that keeps scratching at the inside of my skull, namely:

What is the relationship between image, memory, dream, event, process, and body?
And why are my VJ performances always *telling the story* of a digital flux persona who is constantly processing image-information?
Does this mean what you are reading now is also a kind of VJ performance of processed and manipulated imagery but dressed in fictionally constructed poetics clothing?
Where is this VJ artist (digital art persona) located, and will we, in fact, ever SEE the body of the artist processing these images? (Note to the field of experimental neuroscience: You can't scan my radical subjectivity. Only I can release it as a kind of

spontaneous formal projection from deep inside my creative unconscious, and I am a fiction writer who translates his experience *as* he experiences it, improvisationally manipulating my sense data via a wide array of imaginary filters always at my disposal.) Given the above, what does it take to create a moving image of what it means to dream or have an active memory so that it doesn't look like the obvious—a video situation made out of live-action footage?

How do these VJ mixes create an active fictional memory for this digital flux persona who is always processing images?

Is it true that this fictional memory always takes place in the present and not as a record or reflection—that is, can a hyperimprovisationally constructed fictional memory take place in realtime?

For that matter, can *anything* take place in realtime?

Just the idea of a hyperimprovisationally constructed fictional memory would seem to challenge any notion of realtime. But then again, what are our options when trying to circumscribe the Now in a hyperintuitive state of unconscious playing like the one we associate with the white-hot act of creative composition? And if it does not take place in realtime, then when? Unrealtime?

And finally, what does this say about intersubjectivity and the fact that this writerly text, also the result of a hyperimprovisational jam between an artist and a laptop computer, is another way of enabling you to read my mind?

It is at times like these that I once again think of the term *hallucination*—not as in a drug-induced hallucination where someone sees something that is not there but as in recent research in the psychology of perception where we imagine hallucination as something that proprioceptive poets, releasing their unconscious aesthetic forms, actually CREATE as part of a holistic, body-brain achievement. And as a VJ who constructs nomadic narratives in this timeless time of the nonplace place where aimless drifting is the philosophical equivalent of casting the die to never abolish chance, what kind of connections can I begin to make between live image mixing, fictional memories, (un)realtime dreams, and situational hallucinations that the embodied mind (with its technological attachments—its prosthetic devices) actually CREATES when it sees? And finally, given the fact that my prosthetic devices are now attached to my body as it navigates the cyberpsychogeographical environment in aesthetic wanderlust, what does it mean to have a hyperimprovised *body-brain-apparatus* achievement?

For some reason, this reminds me of meeting somebody for the first time who out of the blue asks me, "What do you do for a living?" I want to say, "I am a time-tripper."

But usually I'll just say I'm a writer. Or an artist. Or a professor. Or even a VJ.

7

I have referred to this strange, cyberpsychogeographical space that my digital flux persona drifts through as being fueled by an artificial intelligentsia—by an Internetworked intelligence that consists of all of the linked data being distributed in cyberspace at any given time and that is powered by artistic and intellectual agents remixing the flow of contemporary thought. The computer scientist Douglas Engelbart refers to this artificial intelligentsia as *collective IQ* (consensual hallucination?), where *intelligence quotient* or *IQ* is used as a generic synonym for intelligence and not as in its original meaning as a MEASURE of one's intelligence. For me, too, it's less about measuring intelligence and more about tracing the self-organizing movement of the cyberpsychogeographical environment itself and nurturing the cultivation of new forms of art and speculative knowledge. For my own research, these new forms of art and speculative knowledge manifest themselves as digital flux personas playing out technoetic performances in intersubjective space. These emergent forms of knowledge are often cleverly camouflaged as process-oriented experiences that model themselves (that word again) as creative research collaborations. Artists (digital flux personas) hyperimprovise a jam session between new media technologies and proactively engaged states of mind that enable us to explore consciousness more thoroughly and imagine new forms of creative mindshare where the artificial intelligentsia participates in a peer-to-peer network culture that serves as the operating force in an idealized gift economy.

This peer-to-peer network culture—in which digital flux personas create on-the-fly remixes out of all kinds of distributed media fictions being invented by the Net artists themselves—influences the ever-morphing artificial intelligentsia that is continuously shape-shifting its avant presence in this consensual hallucination we call *cyberspace*. The potential Net effects of this participatory performance are felt through all manner of feedback loops. For the nomadic Net artist and VJ, the effects often come in the form of invitations to perform, to exhibit, to party, to culture jam, to publish artist theories, to party some more. The artificial intelligentsia that the nomadic Net artist actively participates in serves a useful function by forming a new mode of collaboratively generated knowledge as action that requires a strategy that (like the narrative momentum it inevitably feeds off of) unfolds over time. But in this case, a simultaneous and multilinear time is invented as an itinerant context for multiple and hybridized flux personas to circulate within.

8

When I was creating *FILMTEXT*, the third part of my Net art trilogy, I filtered my digital poetics through a concept character I call the Digital Thoughtographer. This alien other (what in the days of novel publishing I might have called my *alter ego*), practiced a new form of art called, appropriately, *digital thoughtography*. In an e-mail exchange with the contemporary art curator Jane Marsching, who was arranging to include my Net artwork *FILMTEXT 2.0* in an exhibition called Blur of the Otherworldly: Contemporary Art, Technology, and the Paranormal, she asked me, "What is digital thoughtography?" to which I responded as follows:

The term *thoughtography*, it ends up, comes from a paranormal story about a bellhop named Ted Serios who could imagine images onto film. He would think hard about the image, and then it would somehow create an imprint on film. The Digital Thoughtographer in *FILMTEXT* also plays with this possibility but is narrativized in a different way, as a kind of alien creature/visitor from another realm who is now "capturing" digital images through his "thoughtographical apparatus." These images are then filtered into his imagination, where he sees this near-future world that he exists in for what it really is: a postapocalyptic media wasteland to which he must respond. His responses are abstract—image loops, codework texts, creepy sounds, voice messengers, etc. Think of William Burroughs and his "language is a virus" concept and his attempt to change the brutal effects of media language by cutting into and altering consciousness. If the DT sounds like he's something of an artist, it's because he is— something of an artist. A paranormal other evolving spontaneous new ways of seeing and processing media information. As an artist, he tends to take on human form. Or at least his shadow does.

Jane was already on to this and was including some of Ted Serios's work in the exhibition.

My nomadic Net art and VJ research into digital thoughtography, the artificial intelligentsia, and the drift through various cyberpsychogeographical border zones are, of course, *intentional* and point to another question I have been asking myself lately: *what happens to intention when artists or authors become part of an intersubjective online collaboration that is being processed in an idealized gift economy and they allow their work to become freely available through the networked space of flows*? For me, the answer has to be more than a sci-fi representation of human agency that plays out its fantasies of a pseudo-utopian cyberculture that has created the ultimate peer-to-peer network of artist-engineer-researchers operating in a dreamworld of fluid intersubjec-

tivity. It has to attach itself to a real-life body (of work) that continually speculates on new forms of knowledge as part of a poetic process that is continuously digging into the Real.

Not that we can't dream or that using our new media technologies and evolving codes to create alternative worlds is a necessarily futile task. Hardly. Consider how far we have already come over the last sixty years since Vannevar Bush first wrote his important essay "As We May Think" in 1945. Bush, the straight and narrow MIT scientist who developed a somewhat utopian vision of peer-to-peer networking culture powered by artificial memory devices that would creatively link a distributed intelligentsia, was succinct in his appraisal of the situation:

The human mind...operates by association. With one item in its grasp, it snaps instantly to the next that is suggested by the association of thoughts, in accordance with some intricate web of trails carried by the cells of the brain. It has other characteristics, of course; trails that are not frequently followed are prone to fade, items are not fully permanent, memory is transitory. Yet the speed of action, the intricacy of trails, the detail of mental pictures, is awe-inspiring beyond all else in nature.

Back in the late 1980s and early 1990s, without knowing who Vannevar Bush was, I began exploring some of these issues in both of my experimental, avant-pop novels entitled *The Kafka Chronicles* (1993) and *Sexual Blood* (1995), and soon after beginning graduate school at Brown University in 1995 (during which time I attended the MIT Media Lab's fiftieth anniversary celebration of Bush's famous essay), I began further developing my then in-process, first-generation Web-based hypertext entitled *GRAMMATRON* (which I started writing in 1993, began to build into a multimedia narrative space for network distribution in late 1995, and officially released on the WWW in May 1997). A lot has happened in the growing field of experimental digital narrative since I first released *GRAMMATRON* in the spring of 1997, and I now look back at these experimental novels and hypertexts as the perfect media for initially exporting my various flux personas. By exporting my various *digital* flux personas through networked narrative environments, I am able to conduct hyperimprovisational, technoetic writing performances and further investigate the kind of fluid, creative thought processes (spontaneous theories) that can be developed while tapping into their just-in-time readiness potential as it asynchronously jams with the ongoing writerly text their body of thought keeps distributing. Expanding the concept of writing so that it becomes an emergent form of social science-fiction playing in a spontaneous

and multilinear time means first of all learning how to excite the unconscious neural mechanisms that trigger your do-it-yourself "ideogrammic-experiential" hallucinations into screenal space. As Allen Ginsberg once said, this all takes place "physiologically in the body" as a kind of spasm, one that does not, at least initially, depend on technology for its delivery.

For me, the technology has become almost invisible even as I cannot help but acknowledge its presence in my spontaneous acts of creation. If, as Ludwig Wittgenstein suggests, the self is grammatical, then the semantic software that the self is being filtered through is more a stylistic choice than a deterministic behavior. To me, using various transmedial software applications as a preferred structural device is akin to the way that, say, writing an argumentative, academic paper on Deleuzian brain disorders and how they lend themselves to schizophrenic walks in the park is also a kind of structural device that one chooses to use as they begin to situate their designer content. Having exported my own creative, writerly self (my digital flux personas) through a vast array of technological filters informs my *every next move* in such a way that I always see my new projects as an exciting, if not difficult, challenge to reinvent my grammatical self within the context of whatever new narrative conditions I may be operating in at any given moment (as if there could be a given moment: did we already acknowledge that?). *The key thing is to be aware that I will be training myself to activate my unconscious readiness potential, even though, during the actual performance, I myself will be unaware of what is being created in unrealtime.* Perhaps this is what it means to lose one's self in (writerly) flow. At a certain point, I can expand the concept of writing so that all of my (writerly) flow is being exported through all manner of technological filters—dynamic links, Photoshop, Java, Flash animation, VJ performance, podcasts, streaming audio, high-definition digital film, or the combined languages of multimedia messaging and mobile blogging, to name a few of the trendy options at my disposal today.

This reminds me of something another artist-researcher named Vito Acconci once said in his essay "Steps into Performance (and Out)":

If I specialize in a medium, then I would be fixing a ground for myself, a ground I would have to be digging myself out of, constantly, as one medium was substituted for another—so then instead of turning toward "ground" I would shift my attention and turn to "instrument," I would focus on myself as the instrument that acted on whatever ground was available.

What he is saying is quite simple, and yet it is something that tends to be overlooked in the rush to keep up with the latest developments in technology—namely, *the artist* is the medium or instrument, and the networked space of flows *play* this instrument to facilitate the development of creative compositions.

9

When I reread Vannevar Bush's words in "As We May Think"—when he says "trails that are not frequently followed are prone to fade, items are not fully permanent, memory is transitory. Yet the speed of action, the intricacy of trails, the detail of mental pictures, is awe-inspiring beyond all else in nature"—I try to imagine what Bush must have been thinking in those pre-Internet times. Why did he feel compelled to put a utopian spin on practical scientific applications that essentially anticipated the coming of the graphical-user-interface (GUI)-inflected World Wide Web?

These kinds of thoughts roll through my mind in parallel to many other threads of thought, especially as I try to imagine (1) how the emergence of the social, political, and artistic upheavals of the early 1960s must have effected the open-to-experimentation mind of the young computer scientist Ted Nelson, who, under the influence of Bush, Douglas Engelbart, and the literary precursors who inhabit his Xanadu dream, eventuated the concepts of hypertext and hypermedia and (2) how these developments historically parallel the Situationist tendency to psychogeographically drift through the urban landscape of Paris as if it were an associational web of trails that would alter behavior *and* thinking and (3) given my background as both a writer and publisher of postmodern literature, how these parallel developments of hypertext and Situationist *dérive* link to the digressionary and visually experimental novels of all of those wild metafictionists who also ran similar multilinear experiments in novel form during the same era (the 1960s and early 1970s)—writers like Julio Cortázar, Robert Coover, Ronald Sukenick, Italo Calvino, Maurice Roche, Madeline Gins, Raymond Federman, and Marc Saporta, whose subversive lingo shamanism and open-mindedness to the visual composition of an evolving architectonic narrative space *in novel form* is meant to both provoke a self-aware intervention into our conventional reading practices as well as critically apprehend the political act of creating

formally innovative artwork that is at once narrative *and* rhetoric, a kind of ongoing persuasive discourse that, remixing conversations I have had with Sukenick and Federman, can at times come across as illogical, stylistic, impulsive, rhizomatic, enervating, poetic, fluxlike, and even playgiaristic, hyperimprovisational, and makeshift as a way to locate the prophetic qualities of spontaneous writing.

This is just one web of associations informing one version of the story. There are endless versions of this hypermediated story, and the utopian dream has always been to let them all live at once—a simultaneous and continuous fusion, ready for immediate remix, reinterpretation, and virtual republishing in the big Literary Machine, a space where planetary Net artists spin their own web in this Borgesian labyrinth of the networked psyche. I personally call this space of engaging co-conspiracy the *World Wide Web as Collectively Self-Generated Collage Remix Machine* and imagine it to reflect the autopoietic narrative of our time. Stories being played out in hyperimprovisational performance with this Collectively Self-Generated Collage Remix Machine are deeply embedded in the new media experience itself. To me, the apparently seamless integration of composing our fictional thought processes with the mundane acts of punching keys, pushing buttons, and searching Google while operating in a windows-icons-menus-pointing (WIMP) device interface creates an *obliterature-of-potential* that enables us to cancel our historical presence so that we can finally become the *just-in-time* creative flux personas we need to become when improvising an art-life practice. Besides, it doesn't take an artistic genius to suggest that our continual interaction with the evolving languages these new media present us with marks our time even as we (intelligent agents who are equipped to turn the machines off) intuitively know that, by leaving the machines on, are moving beyond the literary itself and entering a more fluid dreamworld of cyberpsychogeographical drifting populated by the self-organizing artificial intelligentsia.

Some colleagues of mine in the literary art discipline tend to have a shit-conniption over this kind of thinking, and I understand their concern. Moving beyond the literary is not easy for those of us who have written and published novels read by real readers both in English and translation around the world. Let's face it: literature can be great source material for artists no matter what media they are working in. In fact, the best literary writers I am aware of and who I publish on my popular *Alt-X* Web site at ⟨www.altx.com⟩

are constantly sourcing prior writers whose texts and styles they eagerly rip off to renegotiate their relationship with the void. But now there are more options available to writers of all kinds when it comes to designing their narrative interface, and it's no longer a matter of just staring at the blank white page.

Here's a thought (or maybe it's more of a rant, like the ones I used to write for various underground 'zines back in the 1980s): what about writing IN our moment? My version of "our moment" intentionally explores the artist's potential to use the new media environment as a research and development platform to expand the concept of writing, enabling us to innovate our practice yet again, although perhaps this time with more immediate results. This means that the art of writing is now seeping into online hypertext and blogging, VJ culture, digitally expanded cinema, hactivism, Flash art, Java applet art, data visualization, and the like. The methodology for relocating the narrative and poetry is up to each artist to develop.

But there are others issues as well. For example, what is the relationship between generative art, hypertext narrative, and hyperimprovisational VJ performance? Again, I do not want to approach this question as an academic with a theory-heavy ax to grind or as technologist whose social science fiction is populated by characters written into the story just because they were able to receive funding from the National Science Foundation. I would prefer to ask the question in the context of a passing thought that is of interest to me as an artist who composes on-the-fly digital remixes of his ideogrammic-experiential metadata. When I perform my live VJ sets in front of audiences around the world, I realize that the library of images I am creatively interacting with and pulling from is very much influenced by my own selections of digital source material that I have captured in expansive cyberpsychogeographical drifts and that I have manipulated into a movie-clip format for my improvisational remixes. Without my images, without the ceremonial video love dances I engage in while capturing my digital source material, without my hyperimprovisationally choreographed writerly processing of all of these image manipulations in *unrealtime*, there is no experiential database of potential to pull from, and without an experiential database of potential to pull from, there is no story.

Jamming with my laptop and its customized VJ software, I can generate spontaneous narratives that operate on the associative linking model of hypertext, without feeling as though I am constantly arriving and departing. While I

am performing, the flow of experience becomes smudged, as does the story I tell when I improvise my new mix. Although I may randomly generate various filters and effects as a way to throw my story out to chance, *it's the ideogrammic-experiential content of the images themselves* that informs the very nervous feedback system I am composing with my audience. It's as if my audience and I are composing a spur-of-the-moment digital scrapbook made out of the data of my life as a nomadic Net artist.

My ever-growing collection of captured (edited, filtered) images contains fragments of my experience as an internationally touring VJ. Everywhere I travel, I shoot more digital video. For me, this is where the work's emotional energy and story resonance lives—not in the machine and its potential to generate multiple versions of whatever story I happen to be telling. Yet in the program I use to perform my VJ mixes, I have the option of hitting a VAGABOND-mode button that randomly selects, filters, and remixes images from this ideogrammic-experiential reservoir of artist-generated imagery that I have stored on my computer. The trickery of the software program and the algorithmic nuance of the magically transformed data are exciting to watch unfold. But the challenge this kind of machine-generated remix brings to my narrative comes not from the technology I am putting to use but from the images themselves, the performative gestures I am hyperimprovisationally choreographing while capturing the data at its original source-location, and my recombining of images in front of a live audience.

This hyperimprovisational choreographing of the sense data is what I call *experiential tagging*. It happens at the level of fingertips and scintillating nerve scales. Think of it as touch-therapy image *écriture* or unconscious action scripting. But VJs, myself included, have to watch out, especially when it comes to the relevance of the imagery they are projecting in the various spaces they gig in. Are the hypnotic visuals that are being generated from their data-bank of images all that we need to lull us into a SOMA state of mind? An endless stream of visual wallpaper or other assorted eye-candy may help pass the time. But what if there is no story and the viewer's attention wanders into the abyss of their otherwise boring predicament? At this point, the images are bound to become nothing more than visual accompaniment to an otherwise predictable *doof-doof* beat being provided by the true star of the evening, the deafening DJ. I like live-format eye-candy and heavy-handed *doof-doof* manipulations as much as anybody else looking for immediate stimulation in

a club space and have projected some wicked eye candy in excellent venues all around the world, but is this all we are capable of?

VJ artists must work hard to avoid the label of being nothing but deliverers of visual wallpaper just as the technotheorists of new media studies must avoid creating art that tries to compensate for an ever elusive *theory-to-be*. Instead, we need to locate an alternative creative strategy that taps into our readiness potential, the thing that precedes our conscious thought, and that incites us to *become* this awakening performance. I won't pretend that it's easy to become an unconscious player in the field of aesthetic composition. It's not easy to keep the conscious, theoretical I at bay while the creative artist is at play. It requires *practice* (like playing a sport or a musical instrument). But that's what must be done if the artist is to emerge.

Unfortunately, for those of us who can see the benefits of creating an alchemical remix of narrative strategies that enable fictional discourses to thrive in the emerging forms of art and thought supported by an engaged, artificial intelligentsia, many contemporary media theorists, technologists, and artists always risk hiding their narratological shortcomings behind their theoretical premises and the trendy technologies those premises are intimately attached to. That's one sure way to kill narrative art, which would then prove all of the conservative cultural critics right. In this regard, we must not let technology kill creativity *or* narrativity. The idea is to let the software trickery of the still undiscovered neural mechanism that triggers all of our unconscious performative gestures jam with whatever new media technologies are available, placing the emphasis back on the *artist* as instrument. Besides, as any experienced avant-pop storyteller will tell you: *the best way to do away with narration is via narration itself*.

Or so the story goes.

10

And yet in the expanding field of new media art research, theories rule. The artificial intelligentsia that has evolved around new media practice is all about reconfiguring the way we think about art and, in this way, closely resembles the Conceptual Art movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Look around the contemporary cultural landscape, and see what's happening in the digital arts and what makes it especially different from all of the other disciplinary areas. More than any other art discipline (painting, sculpture, video, performance), digital

artists are writing out their poetics as part of their practice. They also go to more conferences and festivals, participate on more panels, and give more public demonstrations of their work than artists of any other discipline. Why is this so?

Perhaps it has something to do with the demo-or-die mentality that we associate with technology corporations, but my own answer to why digital artists take on the often unpalatable role of what feels like snake-oil salesperson is that they are engaged participants in this previously described Internetworked intelligence that consists of all of the linked data being distributed in cyberspace at any given time and that is powered by artistic and intellectual agents remixing the flow of contemporary thought. That is, they feel compelled to keep the network alive and will not easily drift into conventional roles—like the ones we associate with the studio artist as individual genius who cranks out the same masterpieces over and over again. Some Net artists may be artistic geniuses. But the difference between them and, say, Pablo Picasso, Bruce Nauman, or Kiki Smith is that they are signatories to an active, collaboratively generated network of linked data that is intimately integrated into their simultaneous and continuous online art performance—the one that happens in what I call *asynchronous realtime*. Much of this linked data is text-based and happens via e-mail, either one-to-one e-mail distribution or one-to-many. Seeing that e-mail is generally thought to be experienced asynchronously but that the artists involved often feel that they are experiencing the networked space of flows in realtime, it almost goes without saying that this Internetworked intelligentsia operates (hyperimprovisationally performs) in asynchronous realtime. (If it feels like I just said this or that you are sure you have read these passages before, remember what the great Yogi Berra once said: "It feels like déjà vu all over again." Apply that thought to a fully functional, totally remixable, Life Style Practice that happens in unrealtime but that still feels real due to a manipulation of subjective time perception.)

Artists who are immersed in digital processes are contemporary versions of what in the twentieth century we used to call the *avant-garde*. Thankfully, they no longer have to pretend to be ahead of their time since, as experiments in neuroscience have already suggested, they have no choice in the matter. By continuously experimenting with their readiness potential as it precedes consciousness—that is, by activating their creative selves in the unconscious playing fields that their best work manifests itself in—they are *by nature* ahead of their time.

In fact, even though we are witnessing a major changing of the garde where easily accessible new media gadgets make the idea of being ahead of your time the equivalent of making a trendy consumer purchase, artists who work with digital processes must do more than merely identify themselves as part of an avant-garde tradition. In many ways, their burden is greater because they are really avant-pop (A-P) artists: they naturally play with whatever new media technologies are developing in the pop culture while at the same time aesthetically engaging themselves with the forms of the mass media they are surrounded by. They do this as part of a larger hactivist strategy that intends to subvert the mass media from within so that it bends to their own art and political agendas and can be integrated into their evolving Life Style Practice in asynchronous realtime. The LSP of the A-P artist nurtures an urge to demassify the content industry so that A-P artists can produce, exhibit, and distribute their just-in-time remixes into the niche communities they are actively building. In a different context, we would call this a *peer-to-peer network* but is really a community of shared interest (and where there's interest, there's investment, and where there's investment, a market is sure to follow).

Digitally inclined A-P artists are not deconstructionists who, in the old French style, playfully sample from the history of philosophy so that they can then innovatively remix the nagging metaphysical TEXT that never goes away. This kind of poststructuralist critique of culture may be one elemental by-product of their ongoing online art performance. Fine. But A-P artists are constructing (writing into existence) coded viruses (social software) that attack the traditional media environment from within to subvert its one-size-fits-all mold of reality. Corrupting the traditional media, art, and political cultures—everything from the business news channels, to presidential campaigns, to corporate-sponsored museum exhibitions—is standard practice in the nomadic Net art world, and A-P artists make a point of using their spontaneous creations to create a nonconformist alternative to all status quo political agendas. In this case, the interventionist strategies of many a hactivist Net artist are aimed at deconstructing both the conservative and liberal sides of corporate culture's moneyed mentality so that the online art performance exudes a politically charged aesthetic aura that operates in its own networked context.

But didn't Walter Benjamin tell us that aura was dead and that the authentic was all but history? Perhaps it's time to authenticate the silence.

11

Where to begin. Once upon a time won't do, not in this networked space of flows where the mission creep of an illuminating unrealtime takes hold and empowers us to question *time itself*, to rethink its premises. Of course, these are age-old issues, and an anthropological fictioneer like Jorge Luis Borges was keen to investigate these questions himself in "A New Refutation of Time":

And yet, and yet... Denying temporal succession, denying the self, denying the astronomical universe, are apparent desperations and secret consolations. Our destiny is not frightful by being unreal; it is frightful because it is irreversible and iron-clad. Time is the substance I am made of. Time is a river which sweeps me along, but I am the river; it is a tiger which destroys me, but I am the tiger; it is a fire which consumes me, but I am the fire.

And yet, and yet... we all know what it's like to lose ourselves in the moment. When that moment is somehow artificially constructed as a kind of hyperimprovisationally designed experience colored by the unexpected and, yes, the unintended effects of *being* online, what happens to our notion of what an artist *is* and *where* that artist lives?

To rephrase the question: where does the virtual artist, whose navigational dreamworld of fluid intersubjectivity circulates deep inside a peer-to-peer network culture, actually conduct art/life research practice?

Or to rephrase the question yet again: where is that missing link of a day-night-space-time when my flight leaves from Colorado on a Saturday and—less than twenty-four hours later—arrives Down Under on Monday?

Talk about cyberpsychogeographical drifting. Perhaps for the nomadic Net artist, this ongoing Life Style Practice of associational thinking that hastily passes through the labyrinthine, networked space of flows takes place in *asynchronous realtime*.

By *asynchronous realtime* I am referring to what *at times* feels like a perpetual jet-lag consciousness or timeless time, a blur motion of experiential metadata that indicates a formal investigation of complex *event processing* where the VJ artist, always gyrating at a pivotal location in the narrative, becomes a multitude of flux identities nomadically circulating within the networked space of flows (both geophysical networks and cyberspace networks). Living in asynchronous realtime often produces a feeling of being both avant-garde (ahead of one's time) and time-delayed or even preempted.

Imagine the stutter of media consciousness that inflects poetic uncertainty in the VJ's mind as he loses awareness of himself in the process of *becoming* a mesoperceptive artist-medium hyperimprovising his multimodal trace narrative experiences in a tense still not measurable in human terms. By *mesoperceptive*, I am referring to a state of active perception where the artist-medium is intermediating between the body, brain, and whatever digital apparatus is being used to transcribe the hyperimprovisational performance. *By its very nature*, the mesoperceptive artist-medium is a proprioceptive instrument operating under the spell of what comes *before* consciousness and is acting on this rich, inexpressible *moment before*, as a part of a spontaneous lifestyle or signature gesture. The raw, a priori, experiential metadata that prods the artist-medium into action is so full of itself (actual and immersive), as well as so intense in its ability to stimulate creative compositional responses, that the artist-medium never truly knows where it's going next. It only knows that what feels like a haptic reality, taking place in the present, is actually a distorted smudge of complex event processes that speedily *passes us by*.

It reminds me of what the writer Henri Michaux experienced while under the influence of mescaline, when he described his experiential thought apparatus running "at full speed, in all directions, into the memory, into the future, into the data of the present, to grasp the unexpected, the luminous, stupefying, connections." If that doesn't outline what it feels like to be performing a live VJ act, nothing does. Meanwhile, the raw data that has initially suggested all of this proprioceptive movement in the first place, that was there before you could even *begin* to intend to do what you eventually realized you *wanted* to do, is still somehow being aestheticized into emergent forms of metadata regardless of what *you* end up doing. Meaning: the aestheticization process is waiting to happen and will occur anyway, *on its own terms*. The VJ experiences this *will-to-aestheticize* as if it were happening in a present tense so luminous and stupefying that trying to break these compositional actions down into fine fragments that be analyzed as an enmeshed admixture of form and content is impossible. The only option is for the artist-medium to *keep playing*.

Two examples of experiencing life in asynchronous realtime where one's sense data becomes stretched or shortened into durational shapes and smears that are at once dislocated and spatialized are (1) playing in a live computer-mediated performance art event and (2) teleporting one's mind to a faraway place in a totally different time zone. In the first instance, the VJ improvises a

new set of image experiences by collaborating (or jamming) with a laptop as the other player in the jam. It's a space of live composition where the computer processor meets the artist processor. Both of these players process at different speeds and with a different set of goals and, dare I say, intentions. One is machinic; the other is all-too-humanly intuitive. I'll let you decide which is which.

The point is that the speed with which the computer changes its digital imaging output as a response to the artist's transaesthetic input is relative. Sometimes the VJ may push the laptop apparatus to a point in its programmed intelligence where it has no idea what to do with all of the mixed-signal, transaesthetic inputs it is getting and so performs some random function as a way of arbitrarily keeping up with the VJ's constant demands. These random functions become immediately visualized as an ongoing sequence of unexpected imagistic events that the VJ then responds to in what feels like realtime but (because of immeasurable instances of readiness potential verging on unconscious thought processes) is really more like make-or-fake time. This make-or-fake time is *totally unreal* and emerges in live performance as part of the artist's ongoing, creative intuition—an indeterminate sense data space that actually occurs in the imperceptible margins of whatever action takes place during the event, creating an hallucinatory Doppler effect that makes performers feel as though they are asynchronously communicating with both their jamming laptop partner and the audience too. This is when digital art personas are operating in the ZONE of unrealtime, and the groove where they are metaphorically becoming a wave of rhythmic asynchronicity, defamiliarizing all of their poetic phrasing as a way to extend the possibilities of breath and parting lines, can feel like the ultimate high an artist is capable of experiencing.

The cybernetic artist and former Severed Heads member Stephen Jones tells me that it's "the feeling of being there before you even know you're there." This also applies to the second instance of living in asynchronous realtime that I'm referring to—teleporting—which is more common and happens when we anticipate the future-present of the physical location we imagine ourselves en route to. Without even thinking about it, we experience the teleportation of our projective consciousness to the other locational space where our creative thinking will take place ("nothing will have taken place but the place"), even though our physical presence still appears to be fixed in the location of imminent departure. In my second novel, *Sexual Blood*, the protago-

nist, Maldoror (taken from the fictional character developed by the Comte de Lautréamont [Isidore Lucien Ducasse] in his dark nineteenth-century collection *The Songs of Maldoror*), experiences what he refers to as Melting Plastic Fantastic Time. He is fully aware that he is standing on a beach in the Algarve in Portugal, killing time as he waits for the necessary hours to pass so that he can begin his journey back to the United States. But he is also aware that he is already becoming part of a complex event that is processing his near-future experiences in the United States before he even gets there. What's even stranger, he is certain that in some ways he is already *in* the USA—that his superclock has already reset its parameters and that all that needs to happen now is to transport his meat package to the airport so he can finally catch up with himself.

These kinds of art-research investigations are consistent with what Stan Brakhage called *moving visual thinking* and that I interpret as a kind of experientially anticipated special effects brought on by engaging with one's own poetic intensity. All of these investigations are conducted via the "fine nerve-scales" that Antonin Artaud spoke of "when studying myself microscopically." Henri Bergson tried to materialize them in his own thought process—that is, using the metadata of everyday life experience to discover how the body transforms into a kind of turbo-charged packet-switching station that continually filters (parallel processes) the various distributed media fictions that "I" am always in the process of becoming, like a chameleon reconfigures itself to both embed itself and contribute to whatever shifts are taking place in the autopoietic world it happens to be living in.

In the world of cyberpsychogeographical drifting and nomadic Net art practice, we are immersed in the collective-self organizing domain of the artificial intelligentsia. We feel the sensation of seeing through eyes that Brakhage, in his "Metaphors on Vision," asked us to imagine as "unruled by man-made laws of perspective" and that are "unprejudiced by compositional logic" so that the artist can "know each object encountered in life through an adventure of perception." In a later essay, Brakhage tells us the adventure of perception takes in "the full presence of consciousness . . . present tense (Or as US poet Charles Olson's 'there is no history except as it is invoked in The Present')." Once the images are captured as an inevitable representation of the light that is available when the images are simultaneously recorded, they (as Brakhage reminds us) "exist referentially AND in an implied past tense . . . always therefore tied to a remembrance, or resemblance of 'Things Past,' an ideology of

Memory, the ideas of Memorial." In this way, we might say that VJs, in performing their function as artist-medium, attempt to use their live sets to build a living, visual monument to the spontaneous eruption of their past-present-future tenses in the most *intense* way possible.

Needless to say, the quality of the light in a Stan Brakhage film is totally different than the light in a VJ performance using laptops, QuickTime movie files, and VJ software. The former is made by mixing light and sometimes paint in its constituent colors, while the latter is remixed data emitted through red, green, and blue (RGB) pixels stimulated by an electron beam or electrical impulse. In VJ performance, light is expressed via binary code and hexadecimals transfused with electricity and not via the more sensitive process of manipulating photons and transparency values. With direct film, as in the work of Len Lye (where he scratched his visions onto the emulsion while experimenting with dyes, stencils, air brushes, and other instruments), the hypnotic effect of seeing the work projected on a screen reveals the alternative shapes and forms a cinematic phenomenon could take, and viewers are immediately invited to expand their concepts of what a film could be. Lye's experiments, along with those run by Brakhage and other artists like Maya Deren and Bruce Conner, reflect the poetic, trancelike qualities of the filmic medium.

Members of the London Film Makers' Cooperative were also interested in expanding the possibilities of the cinematic apparatus and investigated its phenomenal and sculptural aspects as a relational object in an otherwise experimental screening venue. One of the early moving image artists to emerge out of the London Film Makers' Cooperative scene was Mike Leggett. In a recent unpublished paper, he theorizes that his film works provide "an encounter with the 'film as phenomena', as film 'abstracted'" and that there existed "an opening up of the spaces between its component parts, in contradistinction to the conventions of Cinema, intent on concealing the many joins that hold the illusion in place."

By engaging the viewer in an immediate social network (like the one provided in club spaces, where VJs perform most of their work), contemporary performances that focus on hyperimprovised image manipulation might be assumed to point back to these early "film as phenomena" events that demanded a new set of expectations from their audiences. But the techniques employed by VJs are in many cases referring to contemporary video tropes

that are used in everything from mainstream music videos to big Hollywood movies like *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004). And with the lack of historical perspective that pervades VJ culture, more and more young artists find it easy to perform in alternative spaces as they jam with the available VJ software using their virtual banks of found footage, taken either directly off the Web or from filmic source material on DVDs. It's so easy, in fact, that if you talk to some young VJs, you might think that VJ culture came to us totally out of the blue. As usual, it's not black and white. For example, one young VJ I know has been using the content from recent DVD releases by Brakhage as his VJ source material. When I asked him why, he simply said, "Because it's great. It was *made* for VJing."

12

There do seem to be some similarities between those approaching VJ culture as a platform for their artistic research and the early work of underground filmmakers like Lye, Brakhage, Deren, Conner, and those artists affiliated with the London Film Makers' Cooperative. One similarity is the aim of the artist to create works that translate into a lyrical trance narrative made out of manipulated image information. Another is the desire to create an expanded cinematic experience where, for example, the audience can interact with the artist, the work, and each other. The emergent Life Style Practice of the gigging VJ—always on the road and mixing the light of memory with the opaque values of their hyperimprovisationally generated imagery—also could be said to attempt to bring the lyrical trance narrative *into* the body as well as the social environment where the artist-medium filters these image events in what always ends up feeling like a dislocated space of time.

In my own experiences, this dislocated space of time is processed as an intensified version of Brakhage's "moving visual thinking," one that is continuously accruing while I jet around the world and my VJ-touring accelerates. Perhaps initializing a technoetic exploration of what it means to wander through this blur-motion of experiential data is what evolving a planetary Net art practice is all about. The aesthetic methodologies I employ while moving feel so radical in their (inter)subjective time perception that I assume no scientific discovery will accurately portray my experience. That should and will be left to the life of the artists and the (digital) traces (form) they leave behind.

In fact, the readiness potential of creative artists operating on the edge of their radical (inter)subjective experiences need not be duplicated or replicated or emulated artificially at all (as in artificial intelligence), since I am now coming to the world as part of the more immersive artificial intelligentsia. *This space within which I am expanding the concept of writing* is my new home, my formally experimental playground to investigate my many, digitally infused, flux personas—the ones "I" continuously hyperimprovise with the processual image events I proactively generate as part of my ongoing Life Style Practice. Call me VJ Persona—the body-brain-apparatus achievement that plays the environment as if it were a shape-shifting medium, a perfectly reasonable, embodied, nonsequitur caught in the passion of its ur-transitory momentum, constructing a just-in-time *art+life+making+history* fusion that, along the way, blurs intermedia boundaries. Any attempt to try to scientifically articulate what this Life Style Practice represents will never succeed since it's always already embedded in the (inter)subjective experience itself.

And the greatest discoveries—the eureka moments of mind-expanding aesthetic alchemy that emerge from some magic place conjured up by the artist-instruments as they tool around with their spiritual unconscious jamming with the celestial psychosphere—always happen *OFF THE CLOCK*. These ultimate moments of creative self-discovery, when *everything is totally clicking*, take place as if the artist-instrument were an alien other intervening in nature's overdetermined, divine provenance, a Monkey Grammarian filtering the transmissions coming into their headquarters located at Hack Central. This artist-trickster is part of nature, is self-aware of its viral effects on *any given nature*, and allows itself to become-cyberpsychogeographical. It becomes a distributed media fiction that speeds through varied environments to study their precise effects on overall behavior and that parallel processes all kinds of fluid image thoughts that have been generated while traversing the planet in search of *excessive forms of visionary intelligence*. These forms will engage with the nomadic body of the VJs and spill over into their nervous systems in a way that *they cannot stop themselves from once again becoming* this hyperimprovisational instrument capable of generating on-the-fly narrative remixes of their digital persona in constant flux.

The *total-sum-in-formation* is what Mallarmé might have called this interrelationship between the hair-trigger neural mechanism that launches my unconscious acts of creativity and the expansive compositional field of action that opens itself up to my metafictional digressions. Think of it as locating

the breakout potential of your neuroaesthetic self. If you don't change direction, then you just may end up where you are heading. Whatever the risks, just keep moving. The self-reflexive artist-trickster often succeeds by proceeding without caution. If you fail, maybe you're doing something right, something that challenges the status quo and demands a revaluation of all values.

You might get hooked on this kind of philosophically engaged Life Style Practice, especially if you have figured out a way to maintain it over the duration of a lifetime while still paying the bills. It is a gamble, and when you're on a winning streak, you have to work hard to keep things in balance. After a while, projecting your digital art personas into various modes of cyberpsychogeographical drifting can become addictive—the way that staying connected or continually evolving strategies to survive in the network culture can be addictive. Steven Shaviro's recent book *Connected: Or What It Means to Live in the Networked Society* tells us that we are now *beyond* the Society of the Spectacle and that Debord himself was deluded about the notion of "a false consciousness of time."

"There was never a time when life was directly lived," says Shaviro. He goes on to say "there was never a unity of life as opposed to the separation imposed by the detaching of images from their original contexts." According to Shaviro, this "unity of a life 'directly lived'" is something Hollywood invented and that never occurred to anyone before they started seeing Hollywood movies. Given this context, what's a planetary Net artist or internationally touring VJ to do? Intervene in the assault of distributed media fictions by becoming one?

By the term *distributed media fiction*, I am referring to what the nomadic digital artist becomes by navigating through the networked space of flows in asynchronous realtime. In my case, I can be tagged at any given moment as an experimental novelist, a hypertext composer, a Net artist, a VJ performer, a DVD-with-surround-sound installation artist, a film director, or a writerly conduit whose digital poetics occasionally loses itself in the imaginative netherworld of abstract expression. *The important thing* (as my co-conspirator, Ronald Sukenick, liked to say, often as a nonsequitur) *is to annihilate the important thing.*

To which I might add:

The important thing is a feeling.
The important thing is losing sight of yourself in asynchronous realtime.

The important thing is finding yourself in an open-source Life Style Practice. The important thing is to tantalize your nerve centers so that the images you are generating are dripping out of your ears as the burning afterthought of a body-brain-apparatus achievement.

The important thing is to reembody sensual free zones while actively partici-pating in the idealized gift economy.

The important thing is to use experience as base for knowledge-invention.

The important thing is to generate spontaneous bioimages out of each other in an endless cycle of dreamworld manipulation while using your body as the ultimate enframer loaded with an ever-increasing array of creative filters.

The important thing is to remix digital flux personas.

The important thing is to outthink premeditation.

The important thing is to unconsciously play with your readiness potential.

The important thing is to decharacterize eros.

The important thing is to strip I.D. entities of the Fad of Being and to bare witness to a distributed media fiction that overwrites your hastily constructed psychogeographical drift as it passes through the associational web of trails blazed by the collective IQ playing in VAGABOND mode.

The important thing is to proactively situate the artificial intelligentsia in the networked space of artistic flows to prompt wild mutations that are just within reach of the spiritual unconscious.

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"The world runs on Internet time," says Andy Grove, the CEO of Intel. Yes, Andy, you're probably right, although what Internet time actually *is* is still an open question. It's like the chip inside your head is programmed for destinar-rativity complete with built-in obsolescence, a fact you are semiconsciously aware of 24/7—except when your system has completely crashed, the super-clock between your eyes and inside your head needs a foreign-substance adjustment, and meanwhile you're still surfing the Web looking for more meaning or for meaning potential. That is to say, *you Google yourself to death.*

This is when the state of problematized Being is erupting. It's the beautiful thing about evolving a digital culture out of lived unreality (mutating code-work). You program yourself to write yourself into Being, to engage in an on-going ungoing networked social experience with the Other, one that always borders on becoming. But becoming what? Becoming a cyborg-narrator in

whose sight we see the world anew? Becoming a planetary Net artist whose responsibility to world citizenship is to capture consciousness with whatever digital apparatuses are available during your given time?

Arthur Rimbaud (that nineteenth-century poet entrepreneur who would have made a killing in the dot.com glory days if only he had been alive to experience it) once wrote, "To each being, several other lives were due." Imagine if he had access to e-mail, iChat, SMS, or networked games. He might have *never* written his poetry about the seasons of hell he was so desperate to convey to the wide open other. The excellent poems he wrote would probably have been lost to a series of virtual killings in first-person shooter game space or any number of role-playing environments that suited his then-emerging poetic sensibility. He may have suffered from attention-deficit disorder, and his parents, not sure how to rein in his hyperactive emotions and overpowering energy, may have forced him to take Ritalin or Prozac to somehow simulate a pseudo-jet-lag consciousness that is nowhere near as pleasantly nasty and stimulating as the real thing and may cripple creative potential.

Every-*body* has its preferred drugs of choice. For me, all I need is a long trip on an airplane, an attempt to stay up as long as possible, and then a journey through a neonated city at midnight or a hot and thirsty walk through a desert landscape. All of a sudden, I find myself entering another world, another planet—Planet Oblivion, where the aliens are alienated from alienation itself.

Living along the contours of a borderless Planet Oblivion is where my practice flourishes. Sometimes I can watch myself as if from above and see my human body perambulating the surface of this renegade planet. There I am, that naked body of words mobilizing their hypertextual consciousness through a maze of experience that steers me through various multilinear routes, humming an old song that Frank Sinatra once sang: "To dream the impossible dream." Yes, the impossible dream—the one I am always in the process of composing as a nomadic Net artist drifting in cyberpsychogeographical spaces.

And what you are reading here now, almost as a delayed effect created with some digital manipulation, is that my impossible dream is the one I am always in the process of composing as a nomadic Net artist drifting in cyberpsychogeographical spaces. This line can keep repeating itself in a low murmur somewhere in the background of the soundtrack to this essay (the one I am always in the process of composing as a nomadic Net artist drifting in cyberpsychogeographical spaces). Some might call this *theory looping* or layering the

rhetoric, the way a DJ spins discs or adds various tracks to a digital composi-
tion. But there is always the risk of slipping a disc while falling off the edge of
this oblivious curvature of thought that still feels like an extraplanetary trans-
mission. Slip and fall, and watch your world go completely out from under
you. Then what do you do Ms. DJ/VJ nomadic Net artist? I mean, how do
you play if you can't pivot? The gravity of the situation is enormous. As a pro-
gramming image-body that experiences body-brain-apparatus achievements
in asynchronous realtime, you always have to be able to pivot, to drift along
with your make-or-fake history until it takes its sudden hallucinatory turn. At
which point, you have to be able to plant your poetic foot six feet under and
immediately spin yourself in another direction, or you might end up going
exactly where you are heading.

14

By enacting a Life Style Practice that is fueled by a simultaneous and con-
tinuous fusion of practical and theoretical investigations into digital thought-
ography and its discontents (as well as its material contents, as with William
Carlos Williams's phrase "not in ideas, but things"), I am attempting to
expand the concept of writing so that it becomes nothing more or less
than an ultimate mode of survival that my many digital flux personas can
nurture themselves in. If I am going to pull this off as smoothly as pos-
sible (and there's no guarantee I will), then I must begin to explore what
it feels like to INSTANTANEOUSLY BECOME the embodied, fictional ver-
sion of Brakhage's "moving visual thinking," to watch myself TRANS-
FORM INTO REAL FICTITIOUS MEDIA, an artist-medium starring in the
new media theatrical premiere of *Portrait of the Artist as a Role-Playing,
Pseudo-Autobiographical Work-in-Progress*, for, as Louis-Ferdinand Céline
has said, "Life, also, is a fiction . . . and biography is something one invents
afterwards."

   So that soon after landing in Tokyo, a couple of nights before one of my VJ
Persona gigs, I find myself roaming one of the low-lit streets in the Harajuku
district. My DV cam is permanently attached to my face as I blur my jet-lag
consciousness into a deep and profound state of radical alterity, hoping that I
will simultaneously hallucinate and record a series of images and a short while
later manipulate them in my hotel room at the luxurious New Otani hotel.
What would my hero, Henry Miller, think of all of this?

Walking down one of the narrowest streets in Harajuku, with fashion shops calling for my attention, I remember to press the red record button on my digital video camera, at which point the people who walk in front of my lens are said to be captured by my apparatus as it views the scene. But I wonder: Are these people that I am capturing part of the unreality of my ongoing philosophical fictions? Or are they real actors performing as themselves in realtime, and do I just happen to be capturing them in action?

Is their realtime biography synchronizing with my unrealtime autobiography, or is it all a kind of pseudo-collective autobiography, a random interactive performance transmitted only for the apparatus that captures our consciousness for us? At a certain point, even a narratively minded VJ artist has to ask, ''Who needs cameras?'' when you have the readiness potential of the unconscious player streaming mashed-up media fictions in ultrarapid fervor? Who needs cameras, indeed. But I use them anyway.

Maybe I shouldn't use words like *biography* and *autobiography* to contextualize the experience of supplementing (writing out) my own life story, since I'm already beyond the graph of knowing my own subjectivity. Is this what it means to be a *super* avant-garde artist—to be *so* ahead of time that even the artist's many different selves can't keep up? But no matter how far I may get ahead of myself (and this ongoing spontaneous artist theory is only about staying ahead of myself, of not looking back and wondering what happened), there is still this nagging issue of the body and its more generic functions. Going with the flow sometimes means letting the flow take over, at which point you just have to go. Let's face it: it's my bodily functions that totally ground out this impossible dream that has somehow come *true to life* as I use these emerging technologies to distribute my cast of digital flux personas.

Besides, at times, autobiography feels more like *autobiopsy*. Think of it as a kind of self-inflicted, open-source surgery that attempts to excise whatever nuggets of meaning may still be residing in my public-domain body as it processes the metadata of my experiential Life Style Practice. Sometimes I get caught in the flow of *writing out* my life, and it feels like I am metaphorically taking all available diagnostic instruments to my rich, multilayered databank of experience and turning it into a Burroughsian cut-up or the virtual version of a slapdash *Merz* collage. This aesthetic procedure is often an invasive, preemptive, proactive strike that enables me to engage spontaneously with the dreams, memories, and hallucinations I willingly create, collaboratively, with my colleagues all across the planet—the collective IQ that constantly

morphs within this self-organizing space of cyberpsychogeographical flows that in toto makes up the artificial intelligentsia.

And yet I don't think about these things when I, for example, watch reality TV. My escape from the improvised unreality of my fictional universe involves dumbing myself down, deep down into the abyss of scripted reality. But that's rare. Most of the time, I am actively processing the experiential metadata of my continuous jam sessions with the artificial intelligentsia and its environs. Often I hastily mobilize my body through these environs while drifting through the neon nightscape of a foreign city with my DV camera in hand. And once the camera is on, it's all sex, lies, and digital videotape.

But what about when the camera is off?

What if I were to see *myself* as the apparatus "turning on"?

Push my red button, and activate my artificial intelligence and—well, I just might do anything. And that's no lie.

The camera, it ends up, is a welcome crutch. Flick the switch, and all of a sudden I'm more than just supertourist. Now I become the kino-eye apparatus capturing alien light forms in distributed unrealtime. Angling down the narrow street in Harajuku, not watching my step: everything the DV cam is presently capturing is *all* I live for. It's my make or break source material. *I just hope I don't break a leg and have my world fall out from under me.* This movement capturing would be a proprioceptive version of the ideogrammic-experiential flux-identity that occasionally goes by the name of *me.* But there is no me—not in the conventional sense of a self that will be what it will be. No, now there is something else that drives my production cycles into process heaven—and this something else is The Network.

When I awkwardly move myself down the street saying "everything the DV cam is presently capturing is *all* I live for" (and yes, I later hear my voice saying this on the DV tape in the hotel while I am downloading it into my laptop), what I mean is that everything I do, I do for The Network, even if it means not looking where I'm going and accepting all of the built-in risks involved in potentially crashing my body into the pavement.

I guess it all depends on what condition your condition is in.

My condition is in a permanent state of radical intersubjectivity. WYSI-WYG intersubjectivity. A black market in VR cache-flow.

Here we are now, entertain us.

Who said that? A voice from the grave?

Who is the *we* that wants to be entertained and that is being mocked all the while? *Not me*, I can hear everyone say. Then who? You?

Think of artificial intelligentsia as gorgeous (beautiful, lovely, perfect) inter-subjectivity. Virtual intersubjectivity.

Now connect the dots (follow the money): is that the Collective Unconscious I smell coming around the corner? Is that you?

"Not me," I can hear someone say. That someone is Everyone. Here Comes Everyone! Here Comes the Collective Not-Me!

Hey, what if we built in some artificial stupidity?

I feel stupid and contagious / Here we are now, entertain us.

Locating artificial stupidity would be like striking gold. Once it's firewired into my hard drive, the rhetorical flood of narrative information would fill to the brim, and then it would all be more virtual dream juice ready for spin doctoring. Or what I call *surf-sample-manipulate*. A strategy where the Net artist, formerly a writer, surfs the digital culture, samples data, and then changes or manipulates that data to meet the specific needs of the narrative —of the pseudo-autobiographical work-in-progress their network story is unbound to become.

You can use any data for this creative process—from the Internet, CDs, DVDs, books, magazines, overheard conversations, or found material of all kinds.

For the Internet, it would work on two fronts. One, the so-called creative content (that is, the text, images, sounds, and links that are available to us) would be sampled from other online sources and digitally manipulated so that it becomes original constructions that are immediately imported into the storyworld you are creating. Two, the so-called source code itself could be appropriated from other designs floating around the Net and eventually integrated into the screen's behind-the-scenes compositional structure. The great thing about the Net is that if you see something you like, whether content or source code, you often can download the entire document and manipulate it to your needs.

Forget inspiration. That was for the Me Generation—("*I* was inspired to write this poem"). They were worst than the Lost Generation—the literary others who were bound by their prolific, creative genius.

Net artists seem to be saying that content and source code are one and the same thing—that it's all open source ready for remixing so that we can

participate in collaborative acts of creative mindshare. Call us the *Not-Me Generation.*

To take part in this open source remix methodology would first of all be an antiaesthetic gesture, similar in practice to the one Marcel Duchamp showed us with his readymades. He took found objects, gave them conceptually provocative titles, and reconfigured them in elitist art exhibition space. He began employing what Jacques Derrida might have called a signature effect that brands the chameleonlike creator with a kind of stylized notoriety. (This again resonates with Rimbaud—the poet-cum-dot.comer who said that "to each being, several other lives were due" and created a great personal mythology out of putting his poetry into practice.) However, (1) the elitist art world has no way to absorb this kind of Net artwork into its market-driven canon and so has decided to ignore it (thank God), and (2) the signature means nothing because the name it represents no longer has an object attached to it, only the radical intersubjectivity of the artificial intelligentsia.

15

In my first work of online conceptual art, called *Hypertextual Consciousness* and created in 1995 when I was a graduate student at Brown University, I refer to this process of manipulating the data of the collective unconscious to suit your own fictional needs as a kind of *pseudo-autobiographical becoming.* It is a process by which the artist transforms into a cyborg-narrator that teleports itself into the realm of the artificial intelligentsia. Once teleported, artists can begin accessing various fragments of everyday digital life—selecting whatever data they wish to download into their operating systems, filtering it through a personalized and often intuitive collagelike methodology that essentially has its way with the data, and integrating its binary code into their ongoing narrative momentum. Masquerading as a perpetual work-in-progress, artists continually experiment with the work's potential to manipulate symbolic space in ways that will purge the interactive artist of any need to portray their subjectivity as a conventional product of the Me Generation. Instead, they render into vision a performative interplay of network technology and antiaesthetic practice.

But describing this practice *at root* is always an issue. Theoretical research papers can take us only so far, and if we wait for scientific observation to tell us what's going in our minds as we engage with our creative (readiness) po-

tential in unconscious acts of playfully engaged, intuitive performance, we might as well wait until we're dead and then some.

The electronic word as digital rhetoric becoming coded image/sound/text

This might be one way of looking at it, at least in relation to all of my major work since 1995.

Think of it as digital screenwriting or image *écriture*, where a healthy dose of experiential metadata composed primarily of programmed imagetexts gets summoned up for possible manipulation in various imaginings of the screenal interface. The experiments that are conducted with this experiential metadata in the digital art studio are then subject to all manner of procedural hacking. A chance throw of the dice opens up the work to a wealth of potential outcomes where much of what is conceived as art, from the artist-medium's perspective, can be captured in *the process* of making the work itself. This process leads to *finally unfinished works of art* that are inevitably released in a variety of public outputs that, no doubt, participate in the mysterious underworld of the art-collector economy, even though the work itself is virtually uncollectible.

That's the beauty of it all—and whoever said contemporary art lacks beauty isn't looking in the right places. The networked space of flows that most of my art circulates in defies the traditional gallery context and sees the WWW as an inventive remix machine, a multimedia network publishing platform, an exhibition space, a performance venue, a conceptual art canvas, a computer-supported collaborative research lab, an experiential design playground—all open to the peer-to-peer accessibility of the gift economy.

You can even use this model of an inventive remix machine to evolve a personal philosophy made out of heavily manipulated metacommentary. Let me show you a basic example of what I mean.

I go to the Web to a site called *Kino-Eye.com* and pull a quote from Dziga Vertov, the Russian avant-garde filmmaker. The quote in full reads as follows:

Kino-Eye means the conquest of space, the visual linkage of people throughout the entire world based on the continuous exchange of visible fact. . . . Kino-Eye is the possibility of seeing life processes in any temporal order or at any speed. . . . Kino-Eye uses every possible means in montage, comparing and linking all points of the universe in any temporal order, breaking, when necessary, all the laws and conventions of film construction.

So then I remix that hot off the Web and get this:

Kino-Eye means the conquest of space, the visual linkage of people throughout the entire world based on the continuous exchange of visible fact. . . . Kino-Eye is the possibility of seeing life processes as hypertextual consciousness moving at all speeds. . . . Kino-Eye uses every possible means in reconfiguring the artist as a socially provocative apparatus operating in a telepresent environment, comparing and linking all points of the universe in an open source generated peer-to-peer network, breaking, when necessary, all the laws and conventions of reality construction.

Then I open a book by Vilém Flusser, called *Toward a Philosophy of Photography*, and rip this from him:

Apparatuses were invented to simulate specific thought processes. Only now (following the invention of the computer), and as it were with hindsight, is it becoming clear what kind of thought processes we are dealing with in the case of all apparatuses. . . . All apparatuses (not just computers) are calculating machines and in this sense are ''artificial intelligences,'' the camera included, even if their inventors were not able to account for this.

So now I do a remix of a manipulated Vertov/Flusser sent through the aforementioned digital thoughtography filter I have invented, and this what I come up with:

Apparatuses capture space, make links to the other via hypertextual consciousness, simulate specific thought processes as ways of seeing, and process the social spaces of the artificial intelligentsia as it operates in a peer-to-peer (P2P) open source environment breaking all the laws and conventions of identity construction.

This all happens in asynchronous realtime, inside the networked space of flows where my body comfortably processes all it has read and seen while drifting into various cyberpsychogeographical border zones. The improvisational push-pull of the act of composition makes it feel as though I am generating an intuitive writing practice that designs my story *for* me *as* I create it— as I live it. Think of it as Experiential Meta/Data. Narratological Resonance. VJ Style. Whatever you call it (and don't worry, I've heard worse), I'm not looking back. This is an historical documentation of a process that never took place in realtime anyway, so there's no originary chronology I have to be true to.

It feels like writing writing itself. I am letting the language speak itself, but with various filters turned on and tweaked in a way that we can, if we want, experience its unconscious Net effect.

Streaming fictions screaming across the network

I like doing this because it reminds me of how influenced I am by writing and art practices I have yet to fully expose myself to. Borges speaks of "Kafka and His Precursors"—that is, a work of art that writes into being those that came before him or her. It's as if you were there for the first time and only later see how others blew out similar ghost notes that led to *their* eurekalike discoveries. But at least you got there your way, didn't you?

Keeping this in mind, the Net artist will ask:

Who is really writing *you* as you write yourself out into the big space of in?

A digital screenwriter must always take that question into account. No longer being the me who operates as a kind of digital thoughtographer in the networked space of flows means that I now have to give way to something else that's out there. I need to use it when necessary but, more important, let *it* use me and whatever I am supposedly creating—which at present feels more like a Net art poetics than a work of literature.

16

This isn't to say that literature has no role in any of this. Just as we know via Wittgenstein that the self may be grammatical (as well as machinic—that is, it may be a *grammatron*), the self may also be *a grammatical fiction* that is remixed from the blood lineage of all of the other grammatical fictions that came before it and that are mixing up their virtual juices in the heavy IV drip of *now*.

There's an entire heritage or rival tradition of literature (including Lautréamont, Burroughs, Raymond Federman, and Kathy Acker, to name a few) whose authors readily write cyberspace as a kind of playgiaristic practice, and that tradition feeds into my own Net art practice. *Playgiaristic* is a term I steal from Federman, who uses the supplemental *y* to signify *play* and performance in the self-organizing world of the artificial intelligentsia—what I imagine to be the *open source network*. I interviewed Federman in hopes he would reveal to me what he meant by the term *playgiarism*, and this is what he wrote back:

To answer the question once and for all. I cannot explain how Playgiarism works. You do it, or you don't. You're born a Playgiarizer, or you're not. It's as simple as that. The laws of Playgiarism are unwritten. Like incest, it's a taboo. It cannot be authenticated. The great Playgiarizers of all time—Homer, Shakespeare, Rabelais, Diderot, Rimbaud, Lautréamont, Proust, Beckett, Federman—have never pretended to do anything else.

Inferior writers deny that they playgiarize because they confuse Plagiarism with Play-giarism. It's not the same. The difference is enormous, but no one has yet been able to explain it. Playgiarism cannot be measured in weight or size. It is as elusive as what it playgiarizes.

Plagiarism is sad. It whines. It cries. It feels sorry for itself. It apologizes. It feels guilty. It hides behind itself.

Playgiarism, on the contrary, laughs all the time. It exposes itself. It is proud. It makes fun of what it does while doing it. It denounces itself.

That does not mean that Playgiarism is self-reflexive. How could it be? How can something reflect itself when that itself has, so to speak, no itself but only a borrowed self. A displaced self.

If this is getting too complicated, too intellectual, too abstract, then let me put it in simpler terms—on the Walt Disney mental level: Playgiarism is above all a game whose only rule is the game itself. The French would call that Plajeu.

17

Playgiarism is necessary because it enables artists to compose their work from angles and positions that might otherwise go against their own, self-invented grain. For example, in a counterintuitive drift into the danger zone, your whole creative enterprise slips out from under you. This can happen when you forget where you come from when. Take, for example, this figure we call *the writer*. Who needs authors when all we really need are writers who code, comment, shape-shift, and collaborate on the open source network narrative of our social lives?

But the emergent languages of new media—of writing out our fictional codeworks into interactive states of *being becoming something else* so that we may, cyborgs all, creatively engage ourselves in a society of networked metadata—have been with us for a while. Networked virtual reality is really soft and GUI. It's brain candy or artificially intelligent writing by any other name. The fantasy script that generates my VR is not about multiuser, inter-active open narratives where everyone with an Internet connection has read-write privileges and contributes to the banal story of the potential network author. That's pathetic, and only a pseudo-utopian dreamer camouflaged as a new media theorist would even engage with such speculative reportage.

My fantasy script is generated by an endless series of technoetic explorations and field research investigations where my creative unconscious impulses hyperimprovisationally jam with various digital technologies and create on-the-fly narrative remixes of my nomadic Life Style Practice in asynchronous

realtime. Think of the writer cum Net artist as a body-brain-apparatus achievement that uses its ever growing palette of customized plug-ins (developed via experiential risk-taking and a consequential flood of spontaneous poetics) to hallucinate itself into being. In this regard, the idealized network author that many new media or electronic literature theorists attempt to apprehend in their scholarly fixations will never be found in the World Wide Wiki consciousness of fly-by-night Web surfers suffering from lack of attention and who have no idea what it takes to compose the work of art in the age of virtual republishing. If you want to engage with the network author, you need not proselytize an uninhabitable Net domain for the creative commoners. You just need to read Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* and imagine the monkish mojo of his encyclopedic mind remixing its collective source material through a collaboratively generated memory extender years before Vannevar Bush dreamed up his own memex.

Let's give credit where credit is due, however. Bush's memex and the eventual parlaying of that diagrammatic insight into what became a hypertext transfer protocol took writing to the next level of *apparatus consciousness*. At first, it was conceived as a recordable memory device, but soon it evolved into an inventive remix machine that simulates specific thought processes as ways of seeing and processing the social spaces inhabited by the artificial intelligentsia as it operates in a peer-to-peer (P2P) open source environment, breaking all the laws and conventions of identity construction. (This last line is now the second theory loop playing on the essay soundtrack, along with the line that ends "a nomadic Net artist drifting in cyberpsychogeographical spaces.")

Reconfiguring this creative mindshare or Engelbartian collective IQ via digital screenwriting then becomes the ultimate self-reflexive research agenda. In my lab at the University of Colorado in Boulder, we're starting to form a cluster of multimedia research bands that play digital art ("play the work") like underground garage bands, jamming in all manner of antiaesthetic D-I-Y gestures connecting an otherwise random association of hybridized online/offline performances into an on-the-fly group narrative experience that resonates with the promise of *making our own* art history or, more important, of *making art history up*. Participating in the group narrative experience doesn't mean that we are purporting an idealized network author where people don't have an opportunity to distinguish themselves by way of their own evolving Life Style Practice. Signature style is what gives the otherwise

processed and processing body its unique claim to becoming an image, even though we readily admit that there is an inherent contradiction here because, as stated above, "The signature means nothing because the name it represents no longer has an object attached to it, only the radical intersubjectivity of the artificial intelligentsia." Although it may mean nothing, this does not mean that we will never attain some form of accidental value in the networked space of flows. Anything is possible in the autopoietic space of experiential tagging.

The image of the artist as an indication of a signature style suggests that more is at stake when one emerges into the scene as an artist-medium than what the Nike commercial's refrain of "Image is everything" was referring to—although it's partly that, too. It's also about what you *do* with the image, how you generate it, how you influence the way it gets processed by the larger-than-thou artificial intelligentsia it circulates in, and how your body, as image, interacts with other images and, when fully engaged, creates collaborative, intersubjective compositions in trance narrative space. This body is a writing body, and as the body writes out its emerging story as a way to substantiate its presence in the scene, it relies on a social feedback system to help tune the performer to the ongoing creative process as it runs through various scales. Artists must be able to manipulate the emerging languages of new media in asynchronous realtime if they want to *embody the image* of the artist-medium whose readiness potential is continuously triggering these always emergent acts of now.

Embodying the image information is part of a sensory illogic the contemporary VJ lives and dies by. The blur of style and substance in live image-making is impossible to apprehend in theoretical discourse, but an occasional shot of spontaneous artist poetics can at least *play with the idea* of further contextualizing the discourse network in which such thinking circulates. Another way of imagining how to construct this image of the artist-medium is to filter thoughts through a mesoperceptive body that is being washed by the electrical impulses of a deeply personal moment of structural enervation. Rimbaud was after this with his customized form of poetry in motion—what he called the *derangement of the senses*. To an always-on-tour VJ remixologist, it feels more like a new model of synaesthetic swimming, freestyling across the pools of surface-level sense data, a space of mind where the unconscious generation of a hyperintuitive, body double releases itself to all readiness potential and lets itself go.

From the perspective of the digital screenwriter whose work is targeted at developing an attitude and style outside the mainstream academic discipline, *playing with the idea* of integrating theoretical discourse into their ongoing digital poetics is one element in an otherwise profuse spillage of creative writing. Ronald Sukenick is more eloquent on this subject, especially in his "Narralogue on Everything":

In this sense "creative" writing is always improvisation—that's what makes it creative. The difference between this kind of writing and so-called noncreative writing is that in the former thinking is simultaneous with the moment of composition while the latter is largely a report of thinking that's already been done. Thinking in the moment of composition calls up faculties distinct from those that dominate more logical thought.

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The illogic of sense data is another way of looking at it. With hyperimprovisational acts of freeform composition, the sensorium in which writers immerse themselves leads to a bleeding of one sense order into another, a blurred blending of the way things look, sound, and feel *while writing*. Think of it as what Brian Massumi, in his book *Parables of the Virtual*, calls a "fringe-flow sensation."

Smell the red, taste the noise, see the stink, touch the moan. Feel the body enter its altered state of utter proprioceptive whiteness and watch the writer compose as he fully immerses himself in a post-VR hallucination, that total creative work environment called *The Defamiliarization Lab*.

ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN in The Defamiliarization Lab. Inside The Defamiliarization Lab, we can manipulate our live-action memories as future perfect dreams that take place in a tense that doesn't quite exist, or if it does, only in *theory*.

Let's call this tense *utopense*. It's that tense you give way to while expending utopian thought.

Think you can handle it? *Mano y mano*, Utopia and You, forming a more perfect union. You-topia. ("Nothing will have taken place but the place.")

DON'T LOOK BACK. Or if you do, recognize that what you're looking at are the formal traces of an improvised style that you had NO IDEA you were creating while you were composing THIS THING (your life).

Blurring Life Style Practice and nomadic Net art wandering as the same thing can lead to disorientation, which may be the best way to orient yourself to what the status quo tries to pass off as the real.

Besides, if you're interested in cultural survival, composing your digital poetics as a way to hack into the real is no longer a matter of choice. This is how a hactivist artist-medium creates new work within the shape-shifting zones of the artificial intelligentsia. Avant-pop Net artists have become experts at metafictionally challenging status quo perceptions that have become numbed by the flicker of commercial culture and its scripted realities. Their primary shamanic trick is to use the formal traces of their own nomadic Life Style Practice as digital source material to reinvent themselves yet again, modeling alternative ways of processing the story data of the artificial intelligentsia so that they can release still more pseudo-autobiographical content for others to *hack into.*

As Ken Wark says in his book *The Hacker Manifesto*: "To hack is to release the virtual into the actual, to express the difference of the real." For me, the difference of the real is best accessed via the unreal. As Sukenick, in *Narra-logues*, reminds us, this kind of creative, improvisational Life Style Practice is, by its nature, "less linear, more embedded in the situational flow, more experiential in that it involves enactment of situations, more open to the wisdom of feelings and emotions, more dependent on the power of example, more open to preconceptual information registered by the senses, more responsive to the moment of what is said to be a form of very short term memory that defines the purview of the present, more governed by quick reflex and instinct." Make no mistake: "these faculties add up to the word *intuition* or maybe *imagination* and constitute a powerful alternative to abstract thought. It's not much of a stretch to see that they also form a base for narrative thinking."

Narrative thinking (what I used to call *creative writing* but had to run away from because the work produced under that name has become so predictable, so wooden, so *workshopped* as to be unreadable in the worst sense of that term) has successfully invaded the new media arts. It has pleasantly corrupted the digital arts in a way that those of us who have made it part of our agenda could have never imagined.

Having said that, as experimental scribes who were always open to writing our vibes as a reverberating constant, we were always aware that writing's long history—it's alphabetical versioning of language into useable data that could be translated across cultural codes and technological platforms—made its dominant presence in New Media Virtual Reality Land inevitable. Since we knew that the machine aesthetic begins with writing, we never doubted that

creative writing would morph into creative, computer-based code and that this emerging codework would then further morph into a freeform network of hyperimprovisationally generated performance artworks that would continually manifest themselves in a variety of cultural environments (everything from techno clubs to media art festivals to Net art mailing lists to experimental seminars doubling as multimedia blog jams)—assuming one could bypass all multimodal logjams.

The one constant that remains no matter what environment this digital artwork ports itself through is that both the artists and the electrotraces they are leaving behind are situated to facilitate research investigations into the future of writing and its eventual inmixing with other influential forms of new media art. A future that we assume, given our cyberpunk heritage, is happening *now*, *in eternal utopense.*

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The future now of collaborative narrative performance taking place in hybridized online/offline environments can happen in a variety of settings. Surprisingly, our TECHNE lab in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of Colorado often transforms into an art-club happening space where people (student-players) hang out and socialize while viewing experimental DVDs, Net art projections, live DJ/VJ performances, and pedagogical jam sessions. This loosely termed *networked narrative environment* in which student-players improvise their life stories has challenged them to rethink the role of new media technologies in relation to their own social behaviors. If you don't have your storytelling chops down, then you will be hard pressed to contribute something useful to the collective learning experience, whether it is acting, dancing, food, images, sounds, texts, jokes, lights, Pilates training, programming codes, or wildly flirtatious body language.

Sometimes I wonder if this deep need to port narrative thinking through whatever new media technologies happen to be available at any given time is connected to some primordial craving—the kind of craving we have for a physical connection with someone we love or even a certain meal at our favorite restaurant. The body—all water, blood, bones, organs, nerves, muscle, tissue, and, eventually, utterance—seeks to improvise some performative or generative social science fiction to attach to its digital flux persona so that this potentially transformative feeling of connectedness can ally itself with

the work of art that desperately wants to emerge. Once this kind of in-body and out-of-mind experience clicks into a fluid transmission of manifest un-reality, it often finds the all-too-sexy and flirtatious specter of writing standing there. It is ready, willing, and able—incubating, on the verge of letting loose the code of pleasurable corruption. (Like Burroughs says, "Language is a virus.")

It's this urge for connectedness, of letting loose the code of pleasurable cor-ruption, that matters most, and teleporting your new media language through any medium or apparatus will do. The key is to open up yourself to the instru-mentality of interdisciplinary action in whatever random environment you happen to perform in. Now comes the risky part. Do you or don't you hook up? Is it time, once again, to become the artist-medium, the enervating plug-in filter of all of society's dirty white noise? What experiential dividends will this personal investment in the creative process potentially pay you, and what are its opportunity costs? If you are sure this is what you really crave, how bad do you really want it?

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And so there transmits another transitional ellipsis, perhaps the preferred mode of punctuation for all nomadic Net artists who visually jockey them-selves around Planet Oblivion. On Planet O, once you create a rhythmic drift you can playfully survive in, then it's no longer about being stuck in a rat race or spinning endlessly on a hamster wheel. Success is now measured by how well you have designed your own Life Style Practice so that you have effec-tively avoided the curse of the professional-managerial class (PMC), where it's all too easy to watch your desires ramp up way beyond your previously modest survival needs. The curse of the PMC is that you always want *more*, more of everything, fast and hard, soft and gentle, quick and easy, rough and ready, creamy and delicious. And you want it *now*, although now sometimes feels like *not-quite-now* and *beyond-now* too. The blurred boundaries take over wherever you go. Even against your will, the need for synaesthetic swim-ming through pools of sense data will eventually take over. Then you have no choice: see 43 a.m., smell a VRML chat space, listen to the blue flicker project-ing from your database of potentiality. Taste the future collapse of your SEX-UALLY SWAYING ARCHITECTURE.

For me, it's simple. I just start playing around with the freely available social software wherever I happen to be located on Planet Oblivion and watch the work materialize before my very eyes. What materializes out of this practice (this embodied discourse network of which I am but one metacommentator) is a kind of *joie de vivre*, and as a joyful participant, I emerge as more than just VJ Persona traversing the cyberpsychogeographical playing fields of Planet Oblivion. I find that I also become an active amateur (passionate lover) of the network culture and generate new *material* no *matter* what I *do*.

The word *material* is useful here, especially when I think of it in terms of digital source material and the ways that the source becomes matter. For the artificial intelligentsia, matter matters little unless one can materialize a context for its existence. In the case of the Net artist—whose nomadic wanderings are part of a larger image movement taking place in eternal utopense— the context for its existence is still that nonplace place where the heightened states of body-brain-apparatus achievements are always a possibility in the networked space of flows. In this networked space of flows, VJ Persona hallucinates a metafictional drift of personal narrative momentum while parallel processing the flow of images aggregating into his live performance. It's the purposeless play of things present, inmixing with the remembrance of things past. (And all of this happens while *still eyeing the immediate future—so* immediate, in fact, that it perpetually blurs the tense field the VJ is performing in.)

Things past are also things *passed on*, generationally. I am a VJ who captures his own source material in front of a live audience. When I hyperimprovise my VJ sets with video images being captured, streamed, and remixed *in the performance space itself*, I become a kind of simultaneous and continuous fusion of all of the spontaneously generated imagery I have thus far captured. My embodied thoughtographical gestures take on the shape of a living, breathing, digital apparatus that rhetorically charges the visual language of the performance environment. I use the transmission of manipulated images and sounds to further modify the relationship between the performer and the audience—*especially the relationship between their bodies*. These bodies pass through the all-encompassing image-sound mix and can also *become part of the image-sound mix* in an electronic mesh of robust synaesthetic happenstance. The bodies become screens and sound boards as well as social engines to remix the performance energy into a poetically tinged playing field of *net-*

work potential. What I find in my live field research, particularly in small clubs and loft parties, is that during live performances, these manipulated images and sounds pass through my body as both an active memory I am remixing from previous gigs as well as manipulated flashbacks of my prior video location shoots. I find myself composing more digital source material *out of* my fictional memories (yes, active fictional memory generation, as digital source material).

The hyperimprovised image-sound mix that I'm creating in live social environments is thus composed primarily of my own manipulated memories captured on digital video and exported through a wide array of fictional filters and effects. This then becomes something like a customized Life Style Practice that emerges from the depths of the creative unconscious. Forget phrases like "Sometimes my life feels like a movie." No movie can even come close to capturing the live VJ performance my fringe-flow sensations pass through as I live my life on Planet O.

The net effects of these manipulated memory-visions that I hyperimprovisationally compose in live performance are known to linger. Sometimes, the day after a long VJ performance, I will drift through the maze of streets in the foreign city I happen to be in, looking around at the light and shadows on the surfaces I am exposed to, and see that they resonate with what I generated twelve hours earlier in the performance space I was gigging in the night before. Am I hallucinating my manipulated memories on to the walls and pavement of the city I performed in the night before? Or are my eyes tricking me into seeing what's not really there? And yet I am convinced that without the unreal there is no Real.

For me, there is no need to get totally hung up on it all. I just do what I do: *I play with the data.* And by playing with it—by self-reflexively manipulating it while making my presence felt (hyperintuitively aware of my role as artist plug-in turning the knobs of my readiness potential on to autopilot)—I always go meta on you. *Going meta* is what a postcontemporary fictional artist does when randomly composing many digital flux personas in the networked space of flows. I (whoever that is) make spontaneous visual connections and link these spur-of-the-moment remixes of past-present-future dream-memory-performances into my various stories and emerging digital poetics— the ones that are always embodied in this distributed media fiction I am continuously in the process of becoming (like here, in this aimless drift that's been going on for how long now?).

Sometimes I imagine these blurred boundaries as a way of life—as enacting multiple ways of seeing. Other times I digitally capture these active memories onto my camera's DV tape and download them on my computers. Sometimes I edit them for various Net, DVD, and performance art projects. The editing sessions can feel like séances with the living dead (active memories might be viewed as an homage to the living-dead images we have all come to know). The projects that grow out of these intensive séancelike editing sessions are exhibited in museums, galleries, and festivals or generated in front of live audiences. Because they come across as the digital traces I am leaving behind, they are easily translated or even interpreted as an intentional manipulation of form. This form then forms my reputation and informs others about my Life Style Practice, even if I can totally separate myself from it and say to myself, "That is not-me." The fact that I am sure it is not-me no longer matters. What matters is that these digital traces, this form that follows me wherever I go, becomes my life as an aimless drift that is, for reasons I'll never understand, always open to interpretation.

But I cannot look back and report on my form. Even here, as part of an emerging digital poetics, I have no choice but to plow ahead, manipulated memories and dreams and performances always intact, ready for dissolution. Anticipating the present is where I am most comfortable as I intuit my next mode of action. Making myself up as I go along, my Life Style Practice is always and forever reaching peak moments of hyperintuitive awareness and has become *one totally fluid narrative field of action* that is intimately synced with my postcognitive self as it continually *plays with my seeing*. As Bergson reminds us in his blurry definition of *matter* as only he can see it, "Everything is changed in the interior movements of my perceptive centers." Today we might call them *cyberceptive centers* or, to malign a phrase from Peter Weibel's essay on "The Intelligent Image: Neurocinema or Quantum Cinema?," *opiscopic centers*—where *opiscopy* (the seeing of seeing) is part of a creative process involving the observation of observing mechanisms, suggesting a change from cinematography's "writing of motion" to something more like the "writing of seeing." In a more romantic setting, this might lead me to say something like, "Whenever I am around you, I write like I have never seen before."

The digital images that are generated by the nomadic Net artist / VJ in asynchronous realtime are the living, breathing record of image *écriture*'s digital traces being left behind like footprints in the sand. They can no longer be

conceived of as cinema. They are something beyond cinema, beyond database, beyond compression technologies, and certainly beyond literature. Perhaps the term *thoughtographical* would be a useful way to look at transmissions from the otherworld. The literal bowels of that ultimate image reservoir (dream-databank) called Planet Oblivion are a rhizomatic and networked space of flows that you may not always be aware of but are always playing with nonetheless. This is a space artists must, out of necessity, feed off like a belly of sunshine and that will eventually kill you no matter how many images you procreate over the course of your life. Given this reality, why not hack into that intuitive process of becoming that precedes consciousness and just let the neuroimages flow?

The digitally manipulated neuroimages that are generated during the live performance of the nomadic Net artist / VJ are never truly settled, never still life, and yet they can emerge from a grounded body-brain-apparatus achievement hallucinated by the artist. These images seem to appear from nowhere and take on a life of their own. And when images take on a life of their own, they become bioimages. Only later, in a quiet moment of poetic solitude and patient research, can the artist even begin to meditate on the potential meaning of these biomorphic images, performing a kind of autobiopsy on them and surgically removing whatever nuggets of context or even personal theory that may be metastasizing.

And yet, and yet . . . no matter how much theory is surgically removed, you can never be sure you got rid of it all. All it takes is some stubborn little bit to keep you elaborating and revising some metacommentary on what you imagine to be your very own Life Style Practice. The VJ, the artist-medium, the flux persona, the hactivist, the aimless drifter, and the digital thoughtographer (especially one who grows out of and continually integrates a nomadic Net art practice into a touring schedule) cannot merely role-play some convenient version of the avant-garde artist who squares an aestheticized ontology with visionary experience. Like all alchemists dedicated to working with the latest in remix technology, artists must continuously turn themselves into a foreign substance that triggers the mysterious neural mechanism inside the unconscious body so that they can transmit an *image écriture* into and onto that compositional force field where the social network *comes to life* in asynchronous realtime—that is, *unrealtime.*

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