

Internet Art

I feel it's time now to give a light on the origin of the term—“net.art.” Actually, it's a readymade. In December 1995 [Slovenian artist] Vuk Cosic got a message, sent via anonymous mailer. Because of incompatibility of software, the opened text appeared to be practically unreadable ascii abracadabra. The only fragment of it that made any sense looked something like:

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[ ... ]J8~g#\;Net. Art{-^s1 [ ... ]
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—ALEXEI SHULGIN, *Nettime*

Protocol

- Alexander R. Sallaway

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In part III of this book, I have been examining the future of protocol. This future arrives through both successes and failures, and indeed failures that are also successes and successes that are also failures.¹ My previous discussion of hacking and tactical media shows that the advent and assumption of certain techno-subcultures both inaugurate the new protocological era and act to “crash” it by muddying its waters, jumping its fences, and generally monkey-wrenching with the new protocological systems of control.

Much of my analysis in preceding chapters focused on *form*, with the assumption that a revolutionary critique of the protocological media is simply a critique of their formal qualities: Determine a nonoppressive form and an emancipated media will follow. And indeed this is the main goal of media liberation theorists like Enzensberger.

The philosophy of formal critique later became a central problematic for many in the video movements of the 1960s and 1970s. What was at stake for video was the idea of specificity. For, the argument goes, if video is in fact a *specific* medium with its own practices and formal qualities, then it may distance itself from less desirable media such as television.

As museum director David Ross notes, “Video art has continually benefited from its inherently radical character. . . . [I]t has always been associated with the concepts of superindependent alternatives to the hegemony of commercial television.”² Curator John Hanhardt agrees, writing that video was formed by “its opposition to the dominant institution of commercial television.”³

Epigraphs: Alexei Shulgin, *Nettime*, March 18, 1997, cited in *Net_condition: Art and Global Media*, ed. Peter Weibel and Timothy Druckrey (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), p. 25. Vuk Ćosić, cited in Tilman Baumgärtel, “The Materiality of Test,” Dec. 22, 1997, available online at <http://www.rewired.com/97/1922.html>.

1. William Morris’s fantastic aphorism, which appears as the epigraph to Hardt and Negri’s *Empire*, reads: “Men fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and then it turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name.” See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

2. David Ross, “Forward,” in *Illuminating Video*, ed. Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer (New York: Aperture, 1990), p. 10.

3. John Hanhardt, “Dé-collage/Collage: Notes Toward a Reexamination of the Origins of Video Art,” in *Illuminating Video*, ed. Doug Hall and Sally Jo Fifer (New York: Aperture, 1990), p. 71.

Television was opposed for several reasons, including its centralized broadcast structure, its prohibitive costs, and its near total control by commercial interests. Thus, video is less a critical method than a critical *practice*; its mere existence is its attempt at critique.

It was more difficult for video artists to distance themselves from television than from film, for on the one hand the formal differences between film and video are manifest (magnetic tape versus celluloid, viewed on a monitor versus on a screen, low resolution versus high resolution, etc.), while on the other hand the differences between video and television are largely structural (individual versus commercial, local production/viewing versus large-scale production and broadcast, etc.).

Derrida offers an intriguing commentary on the question of video and its specificity as a medium. In doing so, he both empties it of its previous political content and injects it with a new utopian sensibility. After attacking video as having no essential unity or specificity, Derrida writes, in typically elliptical fashion, that “one never sees a new art, one thinks one sees it; but a ‘new art,’ as people say a little loosely, may be recognized by the fact that it is not recognized.”⁴ Thus, a truly subversive art form would, in fact, be invisible. The moment video is seen as art, it is divorced from its “newness.”

Then, in a rare positive thrust, Derrida begins to map the terrain for a *radically* new type of video, what he describes as the “possibility that . . . is called video.”⁵ It is “vigilant” and “unpredictable” and it brings with it “other social spaces, other modes of production, of ‘representation,’ archiving, reproducibility . . . [and] the chance for a new aura.”⁶

Let me suggest that the “new art” that Derrida calls for is not in fact video, but the new media art that has appeared over the last few decades with the arrival of digital computers.⁷ New media art—which I would define as

4. Jacques Derrida, “Videor,” in *Resolutions*, ed. Michael Renov and Erika Suderburg (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1996), p. 75.

5. Derrida, “Videor,” p. 73, emphasis mine.

6. Derrida, “Videor,” p. 77, emphasis mine.

7. At the end of the 1960s computers were only beginning to enter the art world, despite the fact that they had been in public use for over two decades. The organization Experiments in Art and Technology, founded in 1966, was a pioneer in this area, producing a series of perfor-

any contemporary art that uses new media technology—covers the fields of Internet art, CD-ROM, certain kinds of installation art, digital video, electronic games, Net radio, and so on. Internet art, more specifically, refers to any type of artistic practice within the global Internet, be it the World Wide Web, email, telnet, or any other such protocological technology. Further, as I argue in this chapter, a subgenre of Internet art has emerged since 1995 called “net.art.” This subgenre refers to the low-tech aesthetic popularized by the 7-11 email list and artists like Jodi.⁸

Media critic Timothy Druckrey writes that the first recorded usage of this term was on the *Nettime* email list. In a message written by Russian artist Alexei Shulgin, a citation from Slovenian artist Vuk Ćosić mentions that the expression “net.art” was created by accidentally picking out two connected words in a corrupted, unreadable email message.⁹ The first critical discussion

mances that year called “Nine Evenings.” Gene Youngblood’s *Expanded Cinema* from 1970 is often cited as the first book to address art and new technologies at any length. Other texts from that period address the question of machinic technology and begin to touch on the question of electronics or computers. See Jack Burnham’s “Systems Esthetics,” *Artforum*, September 1968; Grace Marmor Spruch’s interesting “Report on a Symposium on Art and Science Held at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, March 20–22, 1968,” *Artforum*, January 1969; Robert Mallary’s “Computer Sculpture: Six Levels of Cybernetics,” *Artforum*, May 1969; Thelma R. Newman’s interview with Les Levine, “The Artist Speaks: Les Levine,” *Art in America*, November 1969; J. W. Burnham’s “The Aesthetics of Intelligent Systems,” in the Guggenheim Museum’s *On the Future of Art* (New York: Viking, 1970). A 1969 exhibition at the London ICA called “Cybernetic Serendipity,” plus two shows in 1970, “Information” at the New York Museum of Modern Art and “Software” at the Jewish Museum, are considered to be the first museum shows to deal directly with computer art. “Software” was reviewed widely in such publications as *Art International*, *Art News*, and *Artforum*. The journal *October*, often a barometer for artistic and intellectual trends, does not cover the media arts until 1985 with Raymond Bellour’s “An Interview With Bill Viola,” *October*, Fall 1985.

8. See <http://www.7-11.org> and <http://www.jodi.org>. Jodi is a collaboration between Dirk Paesmans and Joan Heemskerck.

9. See Timothy Druckrey’s essay entitled “[. . .] J8~.g#\;NET.ART[-s1[. . .],” in *Net condition: Art and Global Media*, ed. Peter Weibel and Timothy Druckrey (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), p. 25. Some consider Vuk Ćosić’s description of the origin of the word “net.art” to be embellished or possibly apocryphal. It’s important to point out also that the term was not actually coined in Alexei Shulgin’s March 18, 1997, email to the *Nettime* list. The term was in

of net.art appeared around 1997, as Druckrey notes: "The first extended discussion of net.art appeared in *ZKP 4*,"¹⁰ a broadside published in 1997 in Ljubljana by the *Nettime* email community. The *ZKP4* (the fourth in a series of "ZKP" publications from *Nettime*'s so-called Central Committee) had a print run of 10,000 copies and is also available online.¹¹ The term "net.art" was in common use by the winter of 1996–1997.

I argue in this chapter that the definition of Internet art has always been a tactical one, that Internet art doesn't simply mean using browsers and HTML, but instead is an aesthetic defined by its oppositional position vis-à-vis previous, often inadequate, forms of cultural production. While the history of film and video practice is important, the greatest struggle of Internet art has been to prove its autonomy as an artistic practice—in the same way that video longed to be different from television. Marshall McLuhan offered a useful insight in this context. He wrote that the content of every new medium is generally the previous medium. That is to say, as new media formats appear historically, they often appear as mere wrappers for older formats—a perfect example of the logic of protocol.

Only through distinct breaks with the past will a medium gain its own specificity. For instance, cinematic techniques during the primitive phase of filmmaking at the turn of the century were primarily holdovers from previous entertainment formats such as vaudeville. Many shots were staged in the manner of a theatrical performance, with the camera held in a stationary position (mimicking the imaginary theatergoer's point of view) opposite a two-dimensional tableau formation of actors. Only later did filmmakers begin to move the camera, and thus begin to experiment with a specifically cinematic method of representation.

In the case of the Internet, many have tried to make painting or video or even hypertext the content of Internet art, yet they are thwarted by several factors that are unique to the medium, what might be called the medium's

circulation on several email lists, including *Nettime* and *Rbizome*, prior to March 1997. For example, the first recorded use of the expression "net.art" on the *Rbizome* email list was by Vuk Ćosić in May, 1996 in his announcement for the gathering entitled "Net.art per se."

10. Druckrey, "[...] J8-.g#\;NET.ART[-s1 [...]," p. 25.

11. See <http://www.nettime.org>.

Web site specificity. Marina Gržinić has commented interestingly on this fact in her essay “Exposure Time, the Aura, and Telerobotics” where she argues that the very limitations of new media technology, what she describes as the “delays in transmission-time, busy signals from service providers, crashing web browsers,”¹² are what bring about its specificity as an artistic medium. Always at the margins of the art world, Internet art has massively disengaged itself from mainstream practices in order to find its own space. Following Gržinić, I suggest here that computer crashes, technical glitches, corrupted code, and otherwise degraded aesthetics are the key to this disengagement. They are the “tactical” qualities of Internet art’s deep-seated desire to become specific to its own medium, for they are the moments when the medium itself shines through and becomes important. eh.

Internet art emerged in a specific political context. The two dominant forces vis-à-vis modern computing were hacking, which predates Internet art by many years, and the rather recent invention (at least in its present incarnation) of tactical media, both of which I have discussed in previous chapters. As stated earlier, computer hacking was the first cultural practice to employ affected interaction with computers. Its superficial virtues are unsanctioned exploration and pure freedom of information. In its depoliticized form, hacking is simply curious exploration. However, in its politicized form hacking generally follows a libertarian philosophy: Freedom for all information, down with bureaucratic control, and get the cops/teachers/parents off our backs.

Here is The Mentor’s “Hacker Manifesto” again:

We explore . . . and you call us criminals. We seek after knowledge . . . and you call us criminals. We exist without skin color, without nationality, without religious bias . . . and you call us criminals. . . . Yes, I am a criminal. My crime is that of curiosity. My crime is that of judging people by what they say and think, not what they look like. My crime is that of outsmarting you, something that you will never forgive me for. I am a hacker, and this is my manifesto.¹³

12. Marina Gržinić, “Exposure Time, the Aura, and Telerobotics,” in *The Robot in the Garden*, ✱
ed. Ken Goldberg (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).

13. See <http://www.iit.edu/~beberg/manifesto.html>.

This type of rhetoric—“we explore . . . and you call us criminals, we seek after knowledge . . . and you call us criminals”—is common in hacker manifestos. Many on the Left have been disappointed with the political potential of hacking because of this libertarian, gee-whiz desire for freedom of information. Tactical media, on the other hand, is almost synonymous with the Left because it is driven almost exclusively by progressive politics.

These two worlds collided in September 1998 at the Ars Electronica Festival in Linz, Austria, when the Electronic Disturbance Theater (EDT) was criticized by the HEART group (Hackers for Electronic Arts). The dispute was sparked by a piece of software used by the EDT. The software, called *Floodnet*, uses a technique called a Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack to stage political protests on the Internet. (The EDT has used *Floodnet* to stage dozens of these so-called virtual sit-ins in solidarity with the Mexican Zapatista movement.) In the same way that a real-world protest helps bring a certain political cause into the public eye, *Floodnet* is primarily a *visualization* tool, but for abstract networks rather than real world situations. It makes the Internet and the people in it more visible—and their political cause with them—by creating what EDT founder Ricardo Dominguez calls “disturbances” within protocol. Like many other examples of tactical media, *Floodnet* cannot be categorized as merely an art project or merely a political tool, but must be both at the same time. Its ability to aesthetically render the abstract space of protocological networks into a visible “disturbance” is precisely its value as both a political tool and a work of art.

The HEART hackers argued however that *Floodnet* should not be deployed because, by using the DDoS attacks to create disturbances on the Internet, it in essence limits access to information. Undesirable information, perhaps, but information nonetheless. Freedom of all information was more important to the HEART hackers than the political disturbances. Furthermore, the hackers suggested that *Floodnet* was technically flawed because it was relatively easy to defeat.

As I suggest in part I, the protocols that underlie the Internet are not politically neutral. They regulate physical media, sculpt cultural formations, and exercise political control. This fact helps one understand the difference of opinion between the hackers and the artists/activists. If the network itself is political from the start, then any artistic practice within that network must engage politics or feign ignorance.

Simple Net Art Diagram

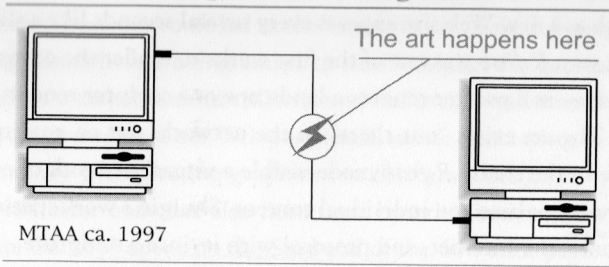


Figure 7.1

"Simple Net Art Diagram" (Courtesy of M. River and T. Whid Art Associates; 1997.)

This argument is very similar to Blake Stimson's account of the origins of conceptual art when he argues that the elevated political climate of the 1960s was largely responsible for creating conceptualism as an artistic movement: "Conceptualism challenged the authority of the institutional apparatus framing its place in society and sought out other means for art to function in the world."¹⁴ One must consider the network itself to be the "institutional apparatus" responsible for the birth of today's Internet artists (see figure 7.1).

Let me now take a closer look at Internet art by examining some of its specific aesthetic qualities. The Internet's early autonomous communities were the first space where pure network aesthetics (Web site specificity) emerged—email lists like *7-11*, *Nettime*, *recode*, *Rhizome*, and *Syndicate*.

Primitive signs were seen in early net.art projects, such as Alexei Shulgin's *Refresh*, an art project consisting of nothing but links between Web pages.¹⁵ *Refresh* involves many different organizations working together, using many different computers all around the world. In *Refresh* a chain of Web pages is created. Each page is programmed to link automatically (on a 10-second delay) to the next Web page in the chain. Shulgin describes the project as "A Multi-Nodal Web-Surf-Create-Session for an Unspecified Number of Players."¹⁶ Anyone can collaborate in the project by slipping his or her own page

14. Blake Stimson, "The Promise of Conceptual Art," in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), p. xxxix.

15. See <http://sunsite.cs.msu.su/wwwart/refresh.htm>.

16. See <http://sunsite.cs.msu.su/wwwart/refresh.htm>.

into the link of refreshes. The user may load any Web page in the chain, and then watch as a new Web site appears every several seconds like a slide show.

In this way, *Refresh* was one of the first works to render the network in an artistic way—as a painter renders a landscape or a sculptor renders a physical form. The art exists “out there” in the network, not on any individual Web page in the chain. *Refresh* made visible a virtual network of collaboration that was not based on individual content. Shulgin’s work spatializes the Web. It turns the Internet, and protocol with it, into a sculpture.

Journalist and cultural critic Tilman Baumgärtel articulates this self-referential quality of Internet art very clearly when he writes:

It has always been emphasized that the first and most important theme of Net art is the Internet itself. Net art addresses its own medium; it deals with the specific conditions the Internet offers. It explores the possibilities that arise from its taking place within this electronic network and is therefore “Net specific.” *Net art plays with the protocols of the Internet, with its technical peculiarities.* It puts known or as yet undiscovered errors within the system to its own use. It deals creatively with software and with the rules software follows in order to work. It only has any meaning at all within its medium, the Internet.¹⁷

While Shulgin’s work is highly conceptual, more formal work was also produced in this period. Perhaps the best example of formal work is from the European duo Jodi.¹⁸ For several years Jodi has refined a formal style by making computers both the subject and content of their art making. Focusing specifically on those places where computers break down, Jodi derives a positive computer aesthetic by examining its negative, its point of collapse.

For example, in Jodi’s work *404*,¹⁹ which alludes to the Web’s ubiquitous “file not found” 404 error code (which is built into Berners-Lee’s HTTP protocol), the artists use the default fonts and simple colors available to primitive Web browsers. *404* is a collection of pages where users can post text

17. Tilman Baumgärtel, *net.art 2.0: New Materials towards Net art* (Nürnberg: Verlag für moderne Kunst Nürnberg, 2001), p. 24, emphasis mine.

18. See <http://www.jodi.org>.

19. See <http://404.jodi.org>.

messages and see what other users have written. But this simple bulletin board system becomes confused as the input text is pushed through various distorting filters before being added to the Web page for general viewing. The result is a rather curious collection of bathroom-wall scrawl that foregrounds the protocols of the Web page itself, rather than trying to cover over the technology with pleasing graphics or a deliberate design.

The 404 error code has also been used by other artists. Lisa Jevbratt's "Non-Site Gallery" opens up the dead end of the 404 error page. She transforms the 404 message into a generative doorway, where the requested page is generated on the fly, as if it had always existed for the user and was not the result of a mistake.

The 404 error code was also used in a more conceptual sense by the EDT. As part of its virtual sit-ins the EDT have created software that sends out Web requests for nonexistent Web pages on remote servers embedded with special messages—addresses in the form of `www.server.com/_special_message_`. Since the Web pages do not exist on the remote server (and were never intended to exist), an error message is immediately generated by the server and returned to the EDT software.

However—and this is the trick—since Web servers record *all* traffic to their Web site including errors, the error acts like a Trojan horse and the "special message" is recorded in the remote server's log book along with the rest of its Web traffic. This accomplishes the difficult task of actually uploading a certain specified piece of information to the server of one's choice (albeit in a rather obscure, unthreatening location). As the messages pass from the protester to the protested site, a relationship is created between the local user and the remote server, like a type of virtual sculpture.

While the artwork may offer little aesthetic gratification, it has importance as a conceptual artwork. It moves the moment of art making outside the aesthetic realm and into the invisible space of protocols: Web addresses and server error messages.

As work from the EDT suggests, Internet conceptualism is often achieved through a spatialization of the Web: It turns protocol into a sculpture. As the Internet changes, expanding its complex digital mass, one sees that the Web itself is a type of art object—a basis for myriad artistic projects. It is a space in which the distinction between art and not art becomes harder and harder to see. It is a space that offers itself up *as art*.

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The cluster of servers that make up the *Name.Space* alternative network—a web within the Web that uses a different, more flexible (not to mention cheaper and nonmonopolistic) addressing scheme—are a perfect example of this type of Internet conceptualism.²⁰ Control over Internet naming (DNS) is crucial for *Name.Space* founder Paul Garrin who considers it a type of poetic subversion to break out of the limitations of the com/edu/net addressing scheme for top-level domain names. *Name.Space* is a strategic intervention within the structure of the Web—art and politics are inseparable in this instance. Garrin calls the art project an “independent tactical network,” with the goal of insuring that there will always be “a home for free media and alternative voices and visions on the ever changing internet.”

The *Web Stalker*²¹ is also a good example of the conceptual nature of Internet art. It is an alternate browser that offers a completely different interface for moving through pages on the Web. The *Web Stalker* takes the idea of the visual browser (e.g., Netscape Navigator or Internet Explorer) and turns it on its head. Instead of showing the art on the Web through interpreting HTML and displaying in-line images, it exhibits the Web itself *as art* through a making-visible of its latent structure. The user opens a Web address, then watches as the *Stalker* spits back the HTML source for that address. In a parallel window the *Web Stalker* exhaustively maps each page linked from that URL, exponentially enlarging the group of scanned pages and finally pushing an entire set of interlinked pages to the user. The pages are mapped in a deep, complex hypertextual relation.

The *Web Stalker* doesn't produce art but, in Matthew Fuller's words, “produces a *relationship* to art.”²² The *Stalker* slips into a new category, the “not-just-art” that exists when revolutionary thinking is supplemented by aesthetic production.

Let me now propose a simple periodization that will help readers understand Internet art practice from 1995 to the present. *Early Internet art*—the highly conceptual phase known as “net.art”—is concerned primarily with the net-

20. See <http://name.space.xs2.net>.

21. See <http://www.backspace.org/iod>.

22. Matthew Fuller, “A Means of Mutation,” available online at <http://bak.spc.org/iod/mutation.html>.

work, while later Internet art—what can be called the corporate or commercial phase—has been concerned primarily with software. This is the consequence of a rather dramatic change in the nature of art making concurrent with the control societies and protocological media discussed throughout this book. ✧

The first phase, net.art, is a dirty aesthetic deeply limited, but also facilitated, by the network. The network's primary limitation is the limitation on bandwidth (the speed at which data can travel), but other limitations also exist such as the primitive nature of simple network protocols like HTML. Because of this, one sees a type of art making that is a mapping of the network's technological limitations and failures—as the wasp is a map of the orchid on which it alights, to use Deleuze and Guattari's expression. Examples include Jodi, Olia Lialina, Heath Bunting, Alexei Shulgín, Vuk Ćosić, and many others. Net.art is a very exciting aesthetic, full of creativity and interesting conceptual moves.

Yet this first phase may already be coming to an end. Baumgärtel recently observed that it is “the end of an era. The first formative period of net culture seems to be over.”²³ He is referring to a series of years from 1995 to 1999 when the genre of net.art was first developed. In this period, due to prominent technical constraints such as bandwidth and computer speed, many artists were forced to turn toward conceptual uses of the Internet that were not hindered by these technical constraints, or, in fact, *made these constraints the subject of the work*. All art media involve constraints, and through these constraints creativity is born. Net.art is low bandwidth through and through. This is visible in ASCII art, form art, HTML conceptualism—anything that can fit quickly and easily through a modem.

But this primary limitation has now begun to disappear. Today Internet art is much more influenced by the limitations of certain commercial contexts. These contexts can take many different forms, from commercial animation suites such as Flash, to the genre of video gaming (a fundamentally commercial genre), to the corporate aesthetic seen in the work of RTMark, Etoy, and others. My argument is aesthetic, not economic. Thus, it is not a ✧

23. Tilman Baumgärtel, “Art on the Internet—The Rough Remix,” in *README!* ed. Josephine Bosma et al. (New York: Autonomedia, 1999), p. 229.

question of “selling out” but rather of moving to a new artistic playing field. As computers and network bandwidth improved during the late 1990s, the primary physical reality that governed the aesthetic space of net.art began to fall away. Taking its place is the more commercial context of software, what may be seen as a new phase in Internet art. Let me consider these two phases in turn.

Internet Art as Art of the Network

- ④ All art up to now has been merely a substitute for the Internet.

—VUK ĆOSIĆ

Amid the proliferation of hi-tech graphic design, browser plug-ins, and special media applications that appeared in the years 1995–1999, many art Web sites ignored such technological improvements and instead concentrated on making a new kind of Web-specific art that focused on the Internet itself as art object and receptacle. Instead of scanning offline art and porting it over to the Internet or digitizing film and uploading it to a Web server (an unfortunate practice known as shovelware), artists like Jodi made art specifically for, and of, the Web.

Jodi love the look of raw computer code and use it often in their work; the duo love snapshots of computer desktops; they love the aesthetic of the computer crash. With a rather degraded and simplified aesthetic, Jodi’s project entitled *day66*²⁴ typifies net.art. With illegible images stacking up in the background and prominent use of the Javascript “scroll” feature, the piece skids into view. Just as the page loads, it begins frantically to move, scrolling diagonally across the screen as if the user’s operating system had been replaced by a massive conveyor belt.

While it may be easy for some to write off Jodi as so much hostile nonsense, a certain type of technological aesthetic present in their work is worth a second look. Past the full-screen blink tags, and past the wild animated GIF images, there is a keen interest in computer protocols themselves as the focal point and structuring framework for artistic production. No other style of net.art reflects so directly on the nature of the Web as a medium.

24. See <http://www.jodi.org/day66/>.

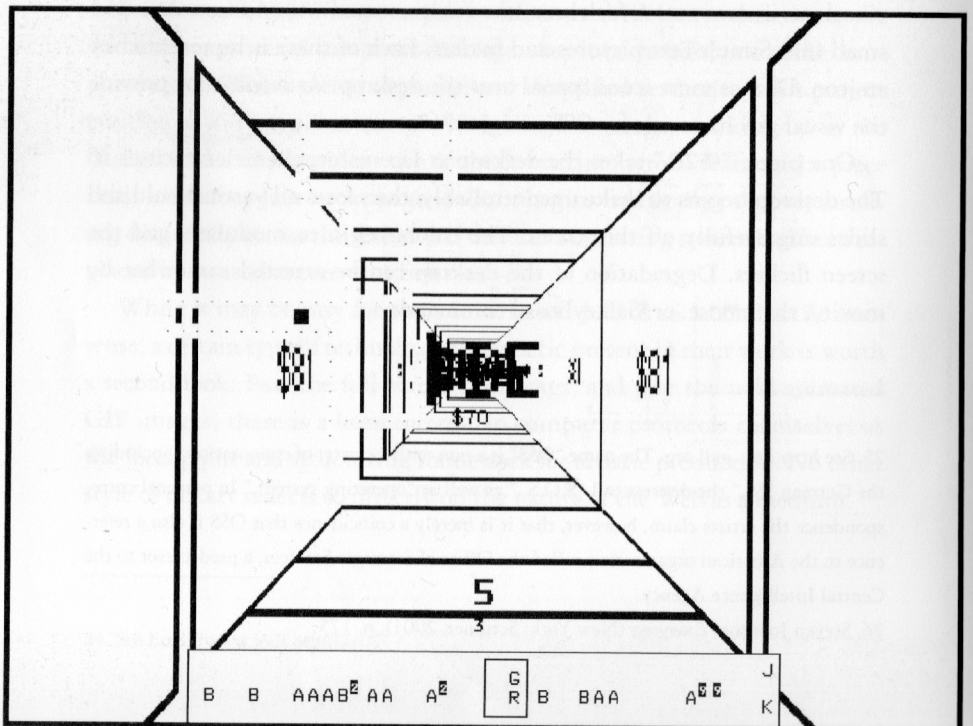
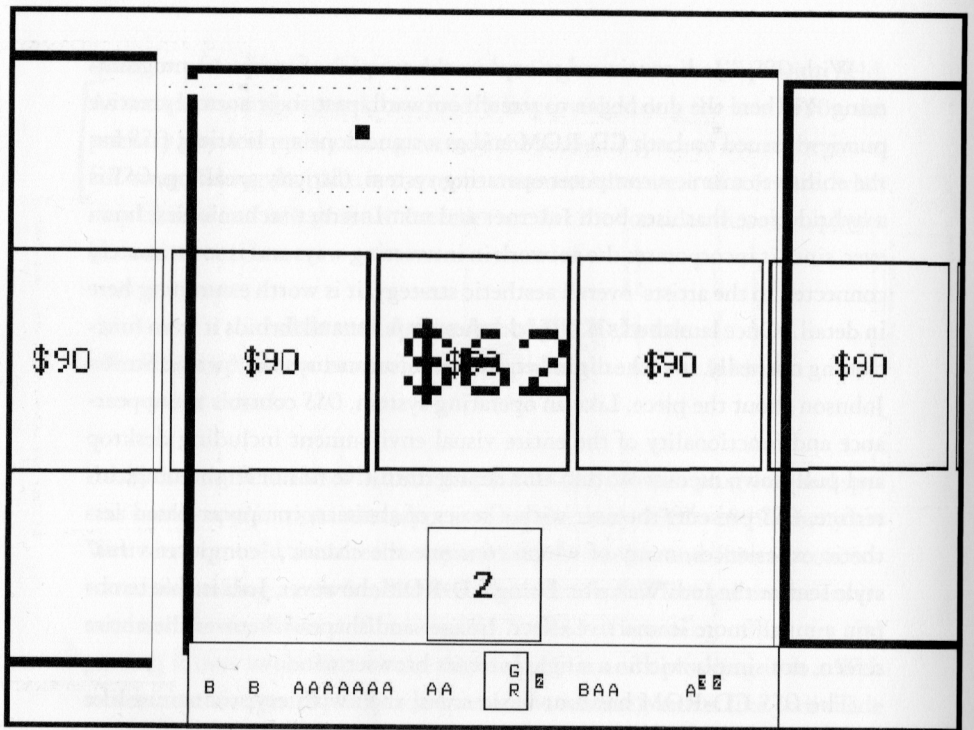
With *OSS*,²⁵ Jodi continued to explore the margins of computer programming. Yet here the duo began to stretch outward, past their normal creative purview. Issued on both CD-ROM and as a standalone application, *OSS* has the ability to mimic a computer operating system. (Strictly speaking, *OSS* is a hybrid piece that uses both Internet and non-Internet technologies; however, since it incorporates the network in interesting ways and is so intimately connected to the artists' overall aesthetic strategy, it is worth examining here in detail.) Once launched, *OSS* hijacks the computer and forbids it from functioning normally. It's "the digital equivalent of an aneurysm,"²⁶ writes Steven Johnson about the piece. Like an operating system, *OSS* controls the appearance and functionality of the entire visual environment including desktop and pull-down menus. Within this counterintuitive (if not frightening) interface, *OSS* presents the user with a series of abstract, computer-based aesthetic experiences, many of which continue the chaotic, "computer virus" style seen at the Jodi Web site. Using CD-ROM, however, Jodi is able to obtain a much more immersive effect. Images and shapes take over the entire screen, not simply within a single Internet browser window.

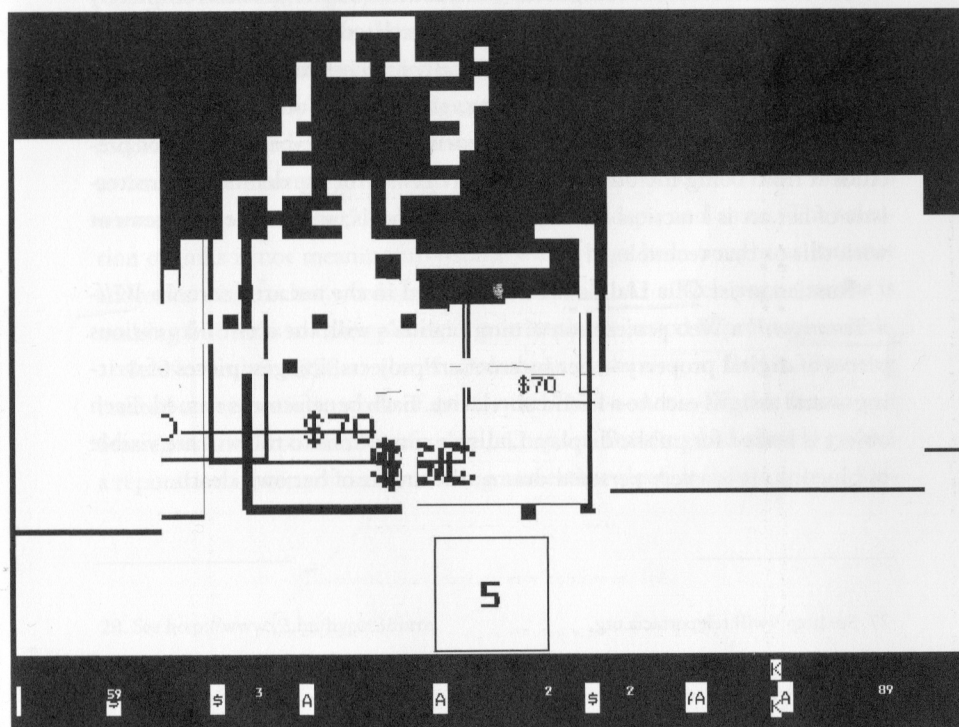
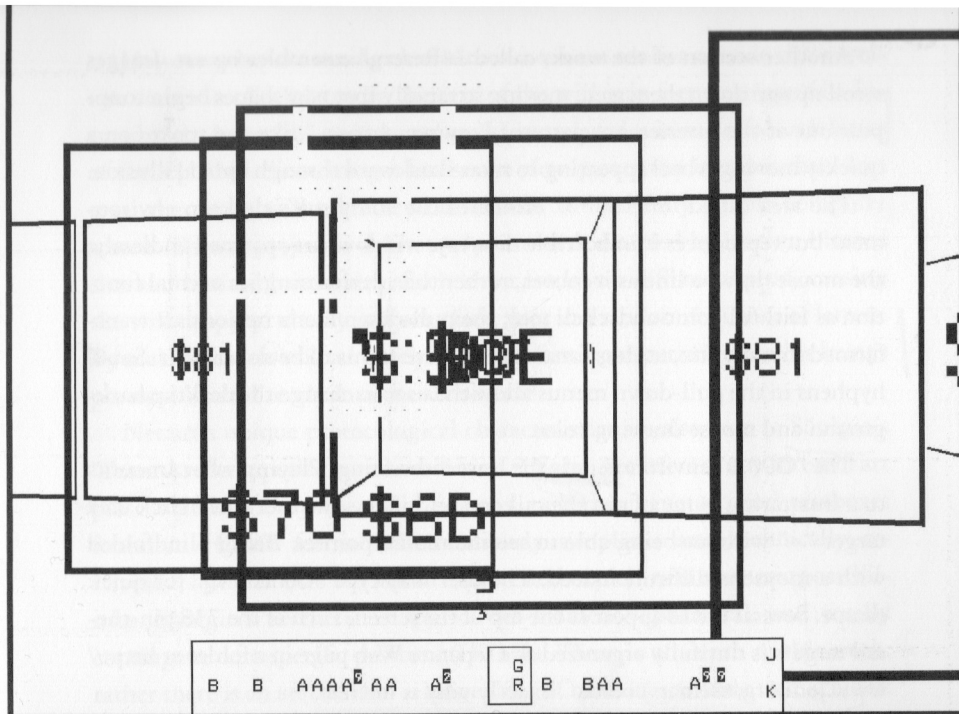
The *OSS* CD-ROM has four basic areas, each with cryptic names like "#Reset;" or "%20." These four basic areas plunge the user into different visual environments. A fifth area, the folder named "****," contains 255 small (6k) SimpleText pictures and folders. Each of these is represented by an icon. Dozens more icons spread over the desktop. As icons, they provide the visual raw materials for *OSS*'s original four areas.

One piece, "%20," takes the desktop at face value, then electrocutes it. The desktop begins to shake uncontrollably, then loses all vertical hold and slides ungracefully off the screen. The colors begin to modulate, and the screen flickers. Degradation of the desktop can be arrested somewhat by moving the mouse, or via keyboard commands.

25. See <http://oss.jodi.org>. The name "OSS" is a pun with a cluster of connotations, including the German "SS," the distress call "S.O.S.," as well as "operating system." In personal correspondence the artists claim, however, that it is merely a coincidence that *OSS* is also a reference to the American organization called the Office of Strategic Services, a predecessor to the Central Intelligence Agency.

26. Steven Johnson, *Emergence* (New York: Scribner, 2001), p. 175.





Another section of the work, called “#Reset;,” resembles op art. Images scroll up and down the screen, moving so rapidly that new shapes begin to appear out of the interference patterns between shapes—like the spokes on a quickly moving wheel appearing to rotate backward through optical illusion.

The area called “**** **” emulates the computer’s desktop environment but reproduces it in horrible disarray: windows are spawned endlessly; the mouse draws a line as it moves, rather than performing its normal function as faithful point-and-click tool; the pull-down menu options are transformed into cryptic, useless ornaments. There seems to be no way out. Small hyphens in the pull-down menus allow the user to change the desktop background and mouse drawing color.

The “O00,0” environment is the least interesting. Playing what amounts to a frustrating game of pin the tail on the donkey, the user must click on a target “+” without being able to see the mouse pointer. Being blindfolded with a mouse is difficult indeed. The user may type “Control-Q” for quick escape. Several URLs appear at the top of the screen. Each of the 738 pin-the-tail targets is dutifully organized as a separate Web page in a folder at <http://www.jodi.org/usemap/coords/>. Exactly why is unclear.

OSS is abstract art for computers. In it, content itself has been completely subordinated to the sometimes jarring and pixelized topography of the computer operating system. Focusing specifically on those moments where computers break down (the crash, the bug, the glitch), Jodi discovers a new, autonomous aesthetic. That OSS is not strictly Internet-based does not preclude it from being included in the net.art genre, for the defining characteristic of net.art is a tactical relationship to protocols, not simple engagement with this or that technology.

Russian artist Olia Lialina has also worked in the net.art genre. In *Will-n-Testament*,²⁷ a Web project containing Lialina’s will, the artist lists various pieces of digital property—her Internet art projects, images, pieces of writing—and assigns each to a friend or relative. Each benefactor is named. Each object is linked for public display. Lialina’s corrections to the will are visible in blue ink. It is a very personal drama, the drama of her own death.

27. See <http://will.teleportacia.org>.

However, the interesting element vis-à-vis net.art lies outside this narrative structure. Each letter in the text of the will is in fact an image file. Instead of the letter “a,” an image of an “a” is replaced, and so on for each letter of the alphabet. Since images load more slowly over the Internet than does text, the entire will takes several seconds to load fully on the computer screen. The art project is deliberately retarded, disabled by its own bloated size and limited bandwidth. Each letter loads at a different speed, causing the will to appear slowly in front of the user in a random sequence of letters. By making the download time part of the viewing experience, Lialina brings protocol itself directly into the art object.

Net.art’s unique protocological characteristics are also seen in Shulgin’s “Form Art” competition and exhibition.²⁸ Form Art refers to any Internet art piece that uses only the radio buttons, pull-down menus, and textboxes found in HTML forms. Self-consciously simplistic and technically restrained, form art uses HTML to explore and exploit new aesthetic possibilities. Shulgin’s aesthetic is spur-of-the-moment, ephemeral, and totally contingent on a specific protocol (HTML). There is no depth to this work, rather there is an aesthetic of relationality, of machines talking to machines.

Heath Bunting, in projects such as *_readme*, has focused on a total dissolution of the art object into the network. *_readme* is similar to Lialina’s *Will-n-Testament*, but transforms digitized text in a slightly different manner. After copying a randomly selected magazine article onto his Web page, Bunting modified the article so that each word of written text becomes a hyperlink to itself. For example, the word “is” links to www.is.com, “on” links to www.on.com, “together” links to www.together.com, and so on. The selection of links is not meaningful—some words have been bought as Internet addresses while other words remain inaccessible. As a Web page *_readme* is nothing but links to other places; it is an aestheticization of protocol as such.

In November 1998 at the Kunstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin, Bunting created a very unique work of art for the “Net—Art—World: Reception Strategies and Problems” conference on net.art. Bunting had already gained a reputation in net.art circles as being somewhat aloof, a digital nomad who

28. See <http://www.c3.hu/hyper3/form>.

reputedly owned no possessions except for a single set of clothes and a CD-ROM that hung on a chain around his neck. Rumors had also circulated that Bunting, dissatisfied with harassment from the Euro-American art clique, had turned to making works of cyberterrorism, funded exclusively by rogue nations.

During his presentation in Berlin, Bunting stepped onstage and attempted to display a Web art project hosted on the Cuban domain www.castro.cu. While the audience waited for the art project to download and appear on the overhead screen, Bunting continued to talk about his other work. After a minute or two, the Web site request timed out and returned an error message. Embarrassed, Bunting quickly typed in another address under the www.castro.cu domain, hoping to save face in front of the waiting audience. The expectation that Bunting must be collaborating with the Cuban government added to the audience's curiosity. But the second attempt also stalled, and after a few minutes the screen returned the same error message. Feigning confusion Bunting concluded his presentation and left the stage.

What may not have been immediately clear to the audience was that Bunting's presentation was in fact a performance. He deliberately attempted to load nonexistent Web pages—artwork that didn't exist at all—in a radical expression of solidarity with the network itself. No art object, Web page or otherwise, was necessary for Bunting. Letting the artwork disappear was the very means by which the audience could *experience* the network protocols themselves. *Cage*

Bunting writes that he was making a point about “the end of net.art,” and thus the presentation of nonexistent Web addresses was akin to making a presentation about “no existing work.”²⁹ And Bunting's premonition was correct, for online art making gradually shifted in the late 1990s from being focused on the network (net.art) to being focused on various commercial contexts such as the software industry.

Internet Art as Art of Software

If the birth of net.art can be tied to an email received by Vuk Ćosić in December 1995, then the symbolic starting point for the second phase of In-

29. Heath Bunting, personal correspondence, September 20, 2000.

ternet art—a phase I suggest is tempered not by the interests of the network, but by the more commercial interests of the software industry—was January 25, 2000, when the lawsuit against Swiss artists Etoy was withdrawn, signaling the end of the *Toywar*,³⁰ a two-month global art event that Etoy describes as “the single most expensive performance in art history: \$4.5 billion in damage!”³¹ *Toywar* was an online gaming platform playable simultaneously by multiple users around the world. The goal of the game was to negatively affect specific capital valuations on the NASDAQ stock market. *Toywar* went on to receive an honorable mention in the Prix Ars Electronica awarded annually at the Ars Electronica festival in Linz.

While corporate organizations have long aestheticized their moneymaking practices in the realm of culture—in everything from Nike advertisements to Giorgio Armani’s 2000 exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum—it is only recently that artists have reversed this process and started to aestheticize moneymaking practices in the corporate realm.³² Taking a cue from the

30. On January 25, 2000, an unofficial settlement was signed by eToys and Etoy. The lawsuit was officially dismissed on February 16, 2000. See <http://www.toywar.com>.

31. Cited from the liner notes to the audio CD *TOYWAR.lullabies* (Etoy 2000).

32. While I argue that a distinct trend has only recently appeared, several historical referents exist as exceptions to the rule. More recent examples include Ingold Airlines, a fictional airline created by Swiss artist Res Ingold, and NSK (Neue Slowenische Kunst), a corps of Slovenian artists who issue passports and engage in other pseudo-commercial state activities. Earlier in the century, Yves Klein, in moments of anti-commercial irreverence, would consummate “transactional” art pieces by flinging gold dust into the Seine River. Other artists have used money as the content of their work including conceptualist Chris Burden, who in the early 1970s received an artist’s award from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. He cashed the check for two hundred \$10-bills, which he then individually mailed (inside Christmas cards) to his list of top art world insiders. American artist J. S. G. Boggs gained notoriety for his detailed drawings of money. “Arte-Reembolso” (Art Rebate), a public art project by David Avalos, Elizabeth Sisco, and Louis Hock in San Diego, California, in 1994, also used money as the content of the art performance. In this piece, \$10 bills were given out to 450 illegal aliens at the U.S.–Mexico border. The piece was funded by San Diego’s Museum of Contemporary Art. Finally, in the most extreme example prior to *Toywar*, Jimmy Cauty and Bill Drummond of the K Foundation (formerly of the pop music group KLF) burned £1 million in Scotland on August 23, 1994. The act is documented in the film *Watch The KLF Burn A Million Quid*. I

corporate sensibilities of art factory production models in the 1980s and the gusto of the late-nineties software industry, artist groups like Etoy and RTMark have begun to think and act like corporations, even going so far as to create mutual funds and issue stocks *as art objects*.

RTMark³³ is a corporation dedicated to anticorporate sabotage activities. It was instrumental in several now famous actions such as the Barbie Liberation Organization in the 1980s, the *Deconstructing Beck* CD from the late 1990s, and also the *Toywar* activities of December 1999. They were featured in the 2000 Whitney Biennial Exhibition in New York.

RTMark is a corporation for practical reasons. Being a corporation displaces liability for culturally subversive and sometimes illegal work. While the artists often dress in corporate attire and give presentations that would be more at home in the boardroom than the museum gallery, it is not simply in uniform that RTMark resembles a corporation. It operates very much like a financial services institution, offering a range of investment products to consumers. Whereas a commercial bank has a range of capital receptacles, from high-tech funds to IRAs, RTMark offers a series of funds that represent different fields of subversive cultural production. For example, the "Media Fund," managed by writer Andrei Codrescu, focuses on acts of corporate sabotage in the mediascape. Invest in culture, says RTMark, not capital.

Like RTMark, the Bureau of Inverse Technology (BIT) is a corporate art production entity. BIT proudly identifies itself as a full-service agency for production, marketing, and commentary, revealing a critical cynicism about the political fabric of techno-products and the persistent lack of "transcendent poetics" in these products. "The cultural force of products frame[s] how we work, how we incorporate nonhuman agency in the mundane daily interactions that form human habit, which then gets called human nature," the agency writes. "The Bureau produces a brand legacy and brand story with ambitions not unlike Nike and Disney. Brand loyalty for the sophisticated consumer is produced through heterogeneous networks of material and

thank Benjamin Weil, David Ross, Kerry Tribe, and Jennifer Crowe for bringing some of these artworks to my attention.

33. See <http://www.rtmark.com>. The name (pronounced ART-mark) is a pun using both the registered symbol (®) and the trademark symbol (™).

ephemeral culture in which products are embedded. Technoart engages this, unwittingly or not.”

Similarly, in her early Internet art project *Bodies INCorporated*³⁴ Victoria Vesna investigated both corporate business practices and the corporeal body, playing on the meaning of the word “incorporate.” In the virtual world of *Bodies INCorporated*, users earn shares based on how involved they are in the various activities and options offered to them. Consequently, more shares allow for greater participation in the community of body owners.

By far the most successful corporate artists are the Swiss art group Etoy.³⁵ Since 1995 it has won several awards and has received extensive international media attention. As an artist group that is also a corporation, it issues what are called “etoy.SHARES.” The shares represent ownership in the company and operate similarly to capital ownership in the stock market system. Etoy.SHARES have a monetary value and can be bought directly from the corporation. Upon receiving an investment from the “client” (the art collector), Etoy issues an original stock certificate printed on aluminum and rendered unique by an embedded “smart chip.”³⁶ The value of etoy.SHARES is recorded on a stock chart maintained by the organization. The rise and fall of the share value corresponds directly to the relative success or failure of the art group in the cultural arena. The etoy.SHARES represent the cultural capital associated with the art group at any given moment. The cultural dividend returned by the artists grows and shrinks in accordance with the share value.

In 1999 Etoy was sued by the Internet toy retailer eToys, who claimed that Internet toy buyers might be confused and potentially offended by the artists’s Web site if they typed E-T-O-Y into their Internet browsers rather than E-T-O-Y-S. Since the artists had been using the name well prior to the toy retailer, many in the art world were upset by the lawsuit. The pro-Etoy position received extensive grassroots support from thousands of Internet users including civil liberties advocate John Perry Barlow and author Douglas Rushkoff. The press was also very supportive of the anti-eToys campaign.

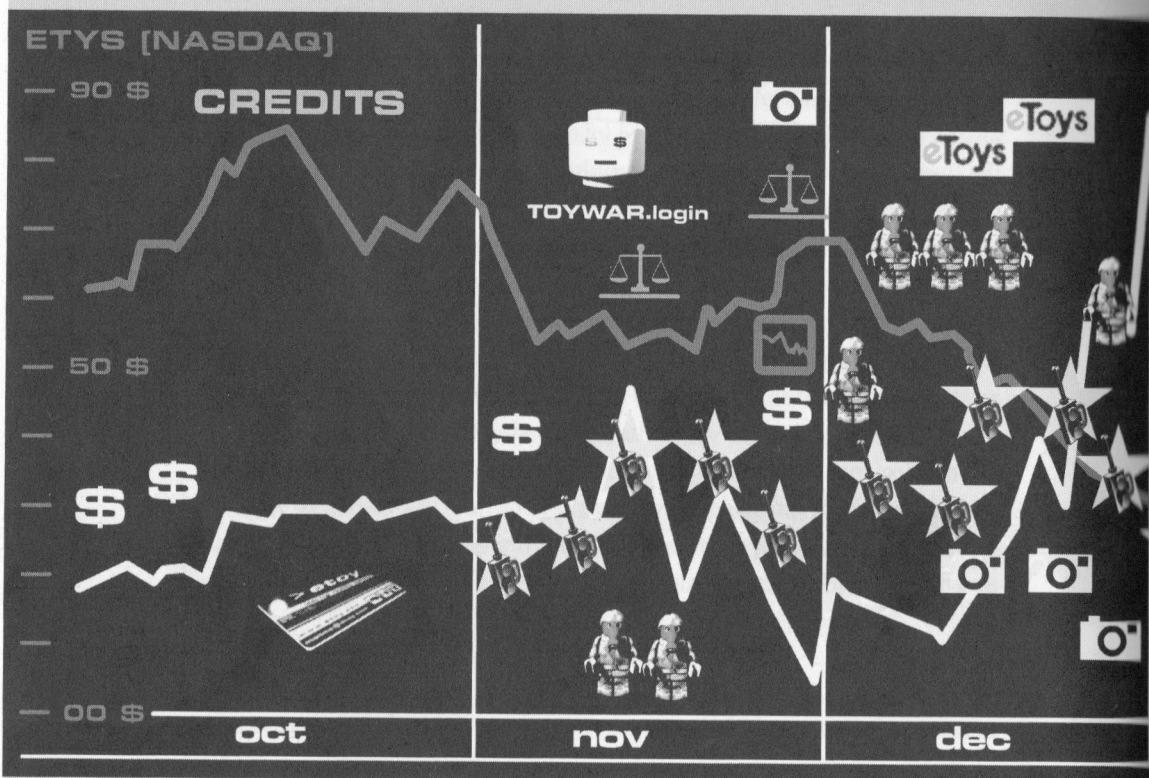
34. See <http://www.arts.ucsb.edu/bodiesinc>.

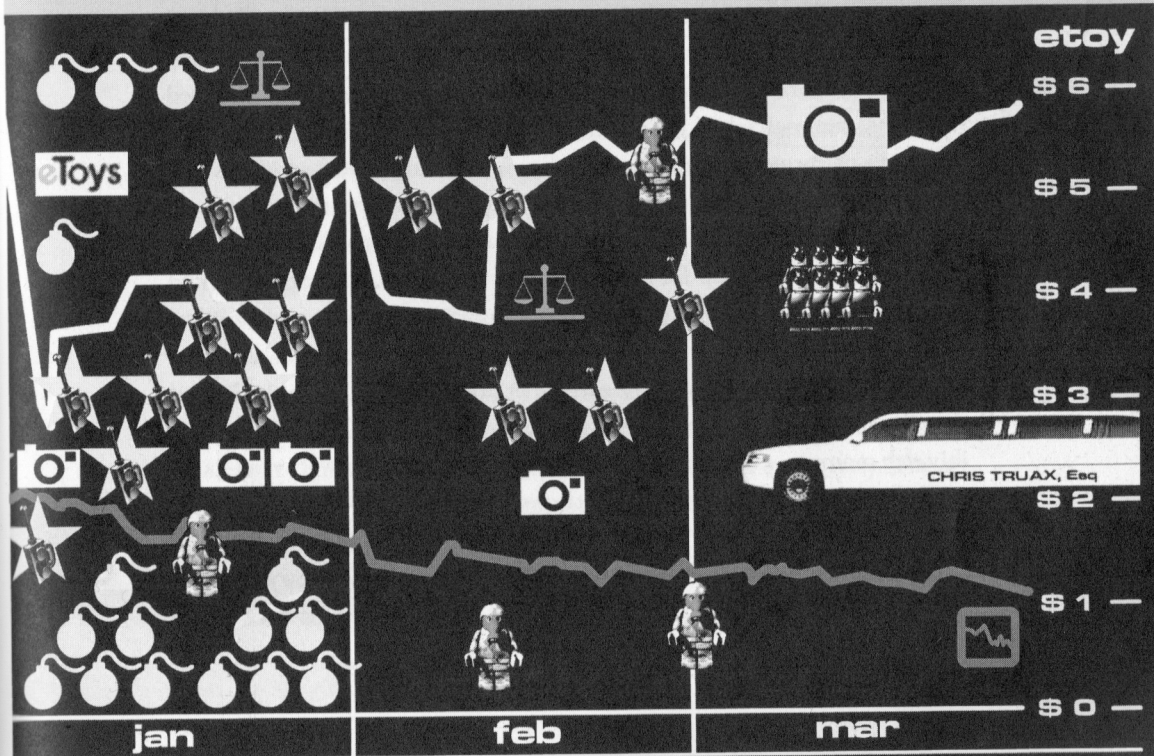
35. See <http://www.etoy.com>.

36. A collection of Etoy stock certificates were exhibited for the first time in New York in the spring of 2000 at Postmasters Gallery.

War

If the birth of net.art can be tied to an email received by Vuk Ćosić in December 1995, then the symbolic starting point for the second phase of Internet art was January 25, 2000, when the lawsuit against Swiss artists Etoy was withdrawn, signaling the end of the *Toywar*, a two-month global art event that Etoy describes as “the single most expensive performance in art history: \$4.5 billion in damage!”





Etoy, TOYWAR.timeline (2000)

But this was no ordinary anticorporate protest. Etoy itself did something that was truly breathtaking. It created a piece of software called *Toywar*, which was an online gaming platform for multiple users. "We will release sort of an action entertainment game," the Etoy press speaker announced in December 1999. "People are part of a huge battlefield, where they can fight against eToys Inc. People will have their own character and will have an income—if they work hard they get etoy.SHARE options. They will also decide what's going on—what the next step will be, because the shareholders will decide whether to sell etoy or not."³⁷ The *Toywar* battlefield is a complex, self-contained system, with its own internal email, its own monetary system, its own social actors, geography, hazards, heroes and martyrs. The goal of *Toywar* was to wage "art war" on eToys Inc., trying to drive its stock price to as low a value as possible—and in the first two weeks of *Toywar*, eToys' stock price on the NASDAQ plummeted by over 50 percent and continued to nosedive. The corporate efficiency and energy of Etoy, who itself would rather disband than part with its dot-com domain name (as this is the very core of its corporate artistic identity), had now been inverted and redirected to another commercial entity, creating what may indeed have been the most expensive performance piece in art history. The strategy worked. eToys Inc. dropped its lawsuit against the artists and declared bankruptcy in 2001.

During *Toywar* art making changed a great deal. Not only did whole new aesthetic sectors open up for art making (in particular, the unprecedented artistic practice of destroying capital on international stock markets), but also the nature of Internet art itself shifted from being defined by the limitations of the network (seen in the earlier net.art movement) to being defined more by the commercial interests of the software industry. This is an incredibly rich moment, a moment that sits nicely in a larger history of avant-garde desires, yet that discovers new aesthetic possibilities specific to the protocols of new media.

Like the struggle in the software industry between proprietary technologies and open, protocological ones, Internet art has struggled between an

37. Etoy, personal correspondence, December 1999. "Selling Etoy" is a reference to the half-million-dollar price tag that eToys offered Etoy to purchase its name. Etoy had declined to sell at that price, prompting the subsequent lawsuit.

aesthetic focused on network protocols, seen in the earlier work, and an aesthetic focused on more commercial software, seen in the later work.

Auctionism

One particular subgenre of Internet art that mixes both sides of the aesthetic divide (art as network and art as software) in interesting ways is auction art. Auction art is any art that uses online auction Web sites like eBay, the Internet's leading auction Web site where scores of articles are auctioned off over the Web every minute of the day. As Robert Atkins writes on the subject: "After Yahoo!, eBay, the online auction site, may be the most well known corporate enterprise on the web. (The four and a half-year-old 'online trading community' currently features 4.4 million items in 4,320 categories on its site.)"³⁸ eBay art is therefore primarily a commercial art genre in that it engages with the context of buying and selling via the Web. So, eBay art should be considered in the same category as video game art, or software art, or other related commercial genres. But eBay art is also a way of aestheticizing the network itself, and network relations. The actual Web page on eBay is important, but other related places and events are important too, such as the email lists to which the artist posts the announcements of his or her auction, and the interest brought on by the bidding war. The communal network or social space created by the auction art piece supplements the artist's eBay Web page.

The art world first used eBay for very practical tasks such as selling artworks or other artifacts. For example, Wolfgang Staehle of The Thing³⁹ in New York tried in April 2000 to auction a Web interface taken from The Thing's Web site.⁴⁰ In an interview with Baumgärtel, Staehle notes that "the buyer acquires the old Thing interface and domain exclusively. The art projects [hosted on The Thing] are nonexclusive. I feel it is important that the whole project will be preserved in its original context and accessible to the future scholars, historians, etc. What you buy is—in a sense—a bit of

38. Robert Atkins, "Art as Auction," available online at <http://www.mediachannel.org/arts/perspectives/auction>.

39. See <http://www.thing.net>.

40. See Wolfgang Staehle, "THE THING 4 SALE," *Rhizome*, April 23, 2000.

history.”⁴¹ (The reserve price was not met during the auction and the interface was not sold.)

Another example involved the Electronic Disturbance Theater. The EDT also tried to use the auction context in a practical or nonartistic way, to auction off an archive of its work from the period from 1997 to 1999.⁴² The artists set a minimum bid price of \$8,000. Whoever won the bid would receive a Web archive of its work either on CD-ROM or as a data file. In another example, Staehle used eBay to field donations for the Etoy legal defense fund in December 1999.⁴³

These are all examples of the nonartistic uses of eBay by members of the art community. But the auction Web site has also been used as an actual medium for art making or otherwise artistic interventions. In the first recorded usage of the medium, Washington, DC–based artist Jeff Gates sold his personal demographics using the eBay Web site. His announcement read: “Information. The currency of the new millennium! You have it? You want it? What are you willing to pay for it? I’m selling my personal demographics to the highest bidder! What more perfect place to do so but on Ebay, the world’s largest flea market.”⁴⁴ In an interview with Laura McGough, the artist admits: “Everyone wants to know who I am! Information is the commodity of the new millennium. Facts about me, my family, our likes and dislikes, and what we eat, drink, and buy are bought and sold at lightning speeds.”⁴⁵

In a similar work, young artist Michael Daines auctioned off his body to the highest bidder during an eBay auction in May 2000.⁴⁶ To announce the

41. Wolfgang Staehle, “W. Staehle on The thing Sale,” *Nettime*, May 12, 1999.

42. The material under auction was originally housed at <http://www.thing.net/~rdom>. See my “Auction Art Resource List,” *Rhizome*, July 19, 2000.

43. The original eBay URL was <http://cgi.ebay.com/aw-cgi/eBayISAPI.dll?ViewItem&item=219249164>. See Wolfgang Staehle, “contribute to the etoy defense fund,” November 13, 1999.

44. Jeff Gates, “Artist Sells Himself on Ebay!,” *Rhizome*, June 1, 1999.

45. See Laura McGough, “ebay.art,” available online at <http://www.nomadnet.org/message6/ebayart>.

46. See Michael Daines, “The Body of Michael Daines,” *Rhizome*, April 25, 2000. The original eBay webpage, now offline, is archived at the artist’s Web site. See <http://mdaines.com/body>.

auction, the artist simply wrote: “now showing at eBay: The body of a 16 year old male. Overall good condition with minor imperfections.”⁴⁷

In spring 2000, RTMark, a participating artist in that year’s Biennial exhibition at the Whitney Museum in New York, auctioned off its tickets to the Biennial party (hot commodities, available only to the art world “A” list).⁴⁸ In this way, the winning bidder would also be able to participate in the Biennial despite not originally being invited, attending the VIP party in lieu of the original artist. In an email announcement for the artistic intervention, RTMark wrote: “Offered: four artist tickets (for two) to the Whitney Biennial’s exclusive VIP party for patrons, curators, and Biennial artists only. Winning bidders will become official Whitney Biennial artists.”⁴⁹ RTMark’s artwork in the Biennial was similar in spirit. It allowed its Web site to be hijacked during the course of the exhibition by letting anyone submit a URL that would then replace the original RTMark Web site. Any Web artist could, then, participate in the Biennial for a few minutes or even a day or two by including his or her URL within the framework of the RTMark Web site.

In a similar intervention, the AKSHUN collective at the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia auctioned off a block of time in the school’s main gallery space to the highest bidder: “Opening bid—\$5.00. More than 300 feet of wall space available for exhibition at prestigious art institute from December 11–December 16, 1999. White walls, track lighting, 24 hour access and security, excellent condition. Located in institute’s main building, near central entryway. Guaranteed audience of no less than 1200 art critics, curators and artists.”⁵⁰ They received bids and inquiries from around the world. The winning bid was a Fluxus exhibition entitled “KLONDIKE: International Fluxus Group Show” organized by Alan Bukoff that hung in the Main Gallery of CalArts from December 12 to December 18, 1999.

47. Daines, “The Body of Michael Daines.”

48. This piece is partially archived at <http://rtmark.com/more/whitneyebay.html>.

49. RTMark, “Whitney Biennial Artist Tickets and Status for Sale on eBay,” *Rbizome*, March 9, 2000.

50. AKSHUN, “73,440 Minutes of Fame!,” *Nettime*, October 15, 2000.

The Body Of Michael Daines

Item #317865927

Antiques & Art:Art:Fine:Sculptures



Currently **\$5.00**
 Quantity **1**
 Time left **9 days, 0 hours +**

First bid **\$5.00**
 # of bids **0** ([bid history](#)) ([with emails](#))
 Location **Calgary, AB**
 Country **Canada**



Started **Apr-25-00 16:08:53 PDT**
 Ends **May-05-00 16:08:53 PDT**

([mail this auction to a friend](#))
 ([request a gift alert](#))

Seller (Rating) **[emdehns \(1\)](#)**

([view comments in seller's Feedback Profile](#)) ([view seller's other auctions](#))
[\(ask seller a question\)](#)

Watch this item

High bid **--**

Payment **Money Order/Cashiers Checks, COD (collect on delivery), Personal Checks**
 Shipping **Buyer pays actual shipping charges, Will ship to United States and the following regions: Canada**

Update item **Seller:** If this item has received no bids, you may [revise it](#).
[Seller revised](#) this item before first bid.

Seller assumes all responsibility for listing this item. You should contact the seller to resolve any questions before bidding. Auction currency is U.S. dollars (\$) unless otherwise noted.

Description

The body of a 16 year old male.

Overall good condition with minor imperfections.



The Body Of Michael Daines

Item #317865927

Opening bid: \$5.00

Your maximum bid:

(Minimum bid: \$5.00)

[Review bid](#)

They will bid incrementally on your behalf **up to your maximum bid**, which is kept secret from other eBay users. The bid term for this is proxy bidding.

Your bid is a contract - Place a bid only if you're serious about buying the item. If you are the winning bidder, you will enter into a legally binding contract to purchase the item from the seller.

How to Bid



1. [Register to bid](#) - if you haven't already. It's free!
2. [Learn about this seller](#) - read feedback comments left by others.
3. [Know the details](#) - read the item description and payment & shipping terms closely.
4. If you have questions - contact the seller [emdehns](#) before you bid.
5. Place your bid!

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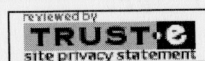
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Michael Daines, *The Body of Michael Daines* (2000)

Other artists are also working in this genre. New York artist Cary Peppermint has used eBay on several occasions, including the project "Use Me As A Medium."⁵¹ Peppermint is cited as writing: "The high-bidder will have the rare opportunity to make art using artist Cary Peppermint . . . High-bidder will email specific instructions/directions for Cary to perform. High-bidder will then receive a 5–15 minute VHS of Peppermint following high-bidder's instruction."⁵² The winning bidder would therefore have complete control over the artist's body, albeit only at a distance, and for a limited period of time.

Auction art, or simply "auctionism," thus exhibits both characteristics of Internet art as I described it earlier. Auctionism unravels the limitations of the network by moving the location of the art object off the Web site and into the social space of the Net, particularly email lists like *Rhizome*, *Nettime*, and others. It is a performance that exists both on eBay and also on the email lists where the piece is advertised. Communities of email list subscribers comment and bid on the artwork, making it a type of social exchange. But at the same time, auctionist art operates within the limitations of the commercial genre of the online auction, thereby showing what I describe as the second phase or theme of Internet art. In conclusion, let me restate the periodization that I suggest helps one understand Internet art practice from 1995 to the present day. The early, conceptual phase of Internet art known as "net.art" is concerned primarily with the network, while the later, corporate phase is concerned primarily with software.

51. This piece is archived at <http://www.restlessculture.net/peppermint/exposures/images/me.gif>.

52. Cited in Robert Atkins, "Art as Auction," available online at <http://www.mediachannel.org/arts/perspectives/auction>.