networked2004

Surface Browsing
Melinda Rackham

Todays artists take it for granted that they operate in global space, utilising ubiquitous technologies to work and play across multiple time zones. A decade after the Netscape web browser heralded our era of internet art, a broad range of networked media, including art sites, data visualisation, browser interventions, poetics, games, tactical media, mailing lists, net.radio, surveillance and wireless works enhance our day-to-day lives.

Networked art has never been a stable medium, always subject to the next software update, hardware upgrade, or language development. Consequently what is produced today is vastly different from the work of just a few years ago where artists tended to explore the medium itself, delving below and within often deeply structured or rhizomic sites. Some of these early sites have since become networked ephemera as they either no longer exist or their functionality has decayed.

Now, as Ollivier Dyens theorises, we have, of necessity, to adopt a different approach to networked media, for "in a society where information, phenomena, actions, reactions, events and histories are overabundant, over produced and over analysed, one must be superficial if one is to comprehend what is going on."[1] Online now there is a sense that there is too much information we need to categorise and browse. We skip from link to link, sampling info bytes, then move onto the next. This is not to denigrate superficiality, but to say this is how we are adapting to living in symbiosis with networked technologies.

Browsing the surfaces, textures and layers of Australian sites produced within the last two years, this show presents diverse works which can be short and superficial; deeply immersive; demandingly confronting; cute and playful; intellectually challenging; and emotionally moving. This snapshot of our networked world is organised into five nodalities:

re:code
Tim Plaisted's *Surface Browser* disrupts our experience of the internet as a stable and flat viewing platform, by recoding our web browser into a swirling vortex sucking images from web pages down our screens. Software artists like Glen Murphy at *body-tag.org* use java and proce55ing to create beautiful and directly interactive screen interfaces. Zina Kaye reinterprets and re-visualizes data sets in *The Line Ahead*, relaying and converting radio scanned aircraft transmissions to an exotic information flow through LEDs in the gallery. Writer geniwate employs a *Generative Poetry* shockwave engine to produce *Burroughs*esque cut-up texts - evocative word fragments commenting on contemporary world events. Rebecca Cannon's delightful parody machinima, *Buff and the Brutal* modifies our cultural expectations by overlaying the drama(queens) of day time soap opera into the multiplayer Quake Arena game.

softscape
Networked media invites us to enter into immersive softscapes like the blended reality of Chris Caines' *Go this Way*. A walking hypertext through the lane ways of Melbourne adjacent to the ACMI building delivered via GPRS over mobile phones or PDAs, the work overlays an electronic narrative upon physical space. In Adam Nash's *Scorched Happiness* we experience as avatars, the emotional geography of rich three dimensional visual and audio virtual reality multi-user worlds; and we can play god in creating and tweaking the cute electronic life forms in Troy Innocent's *Lifesigns* datascape. Inhabiting soft environments can make solid imaginary worlds like Anita Johnson's *Underland*, a dark game space version of

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[1] Ollivier Dyens, [-empyre-] superficiality and immersion
http://lists.cofa.unsw.edu.au/pipermail/ empyre/2002-January/000059.html

Alice in Wonderland, or invoke current political agendas by recreating geographically located places like the refugee detention camp in *Escape from Woomera*.

flash gen:
The hard edged vector graphic Flash Generation aesthetic continues in popularity, being adopted by emerging artists like Luke Gibbs' for his short randomly regenerated *This is Your Life* and Isobel Knowles' super cute interactive animated street arcade portal *ik.rocks.it*. In his introduction to his game *Kelman to the Rescue*, Nathan Jurevicius indicates that ease of production and mass distribution potential of themedia is of prime importance, and flash animation has crawled from its origin in the primordial net swamp to occupy a major place at film festivals. Flash music video clips are now produced for both online distribution and television broadcast like the seemingly innocent car journey of Architrecture in Helsinki's *Like a Call,* and Deepchild's moving plea for peace and sanity against war and greed in *Whats Going Wrong?*

connect up
In the third millennium the human condition is no longer predicated on individuality or separateness - we are technologically enmeshed with others as daily we connect up to distributed communities. In *inbox,* Qnoors members inhabit cardboard box structures in Berlin and Melbourne for a week, transmitting net.radio, facilitating chats and bloggs, and mixing sound and image if they occupied a single physical space. Our connection may take a textual form where we engage in digital discourse via online mailing lists like empyre which discusses all aspects of media arts practice and theory, or fibreculture which deals more academically with technology and media issues. We can get involved at places like boat-people.org's website which is a tactical media campaign engine, an art distribution centre, and shop where everything is free.

blogger
Networked space bends the boundaries of privacy as blogs and wickis become prolific net phenomena. These online diaries ranges from sites like Damien Frost's *Object Not Found* where intimate observations penned on lost postcards are lovingly archived; to peeks into private lives as Miss Helen at *spycore.net* shares her enthusiasm for Australian rock, the western suburbs, knitting and stuffed toys; to the political blogs like those of Salam Pax during the Iraq war. New forms have emerged in the public space of the networks with Adrian Miles' *Vogs* exploring the detail of day-to-day life with interactive video, while Peter Murphy's *Panoramic V R Weblog* immerses us in 3 dimensional visual grandeur, transporting us into current artistic, cultural and political events.

Networked2004 makes often ephemeral electronically produced artworks tangible, bringing them together online; in gallery installations; in an interactive zone; in artefacts from tactical media practice and online communities; and in online forums. Browsing these fresh Australian works in soft networked space, reflects on the surface a participation in global trends, while confirming a loyalty to local concerns.