)f "We Did It Ourselves!," a talk given by artist Guthrie Lonergan on April
ı venue for film and electronic art in Brooklyn, New York.

ılar after 2006, and their activity tapered off with the rise of
)nergan coined the term "surf club" and cofounded Nasty Nets, the

ın artist and collaborator of Guthrie Lonergan.

at: <http://www.theageofmammals.com/2009/acapella2.html>.

EXCERPTS FROM *POST INTERNET*

Gene McHugh

Tuesday, December 29, 2009
Here is a passage from a March 2006 interview between the artist Cory Arcangel and the Brussels-based curator Karen Verschooren:

> CORY: ...[Y]ou can't just put a computer with a browser that's pointing to a website. You have to somehow acknowledge that it is in a gallery, for better or worse. Video, I think, started to do that.... Paper Rad for example presented a huge sculpture, based on animated GIFs. It wasn't necessarily internet art anymore, but it was art that could only exist because the internet exists. That is definitely some kind of solution.... That is what is going to happen I think. It is not going to be pure strict internet art, it's going to be art that exists because of the internet or is influenced by the internet or there was research on the internet.
>
> KAREN: That's almost everything in art. Almost all contemporary art is influenced by the fact that we live in a networked society.
>
> CORY: That's fine, you know. It is going to be seamlessly integrated into everything else. Which is what it should be. But pure internet art, I think, should stay on the internet.

.....

Also:

> KAREN: So, if I understand you correctly, you are saying that it is the responsibility of the artist to transform his internet art piece in that

way that it fits into the gallery space. It is not the gallery that has to change its economic model of exhibiting because of their mission statement or whatever.

CORY: Yes.

.....

Verschooren sums up this strategy as roughly "the art needs to change to fit the gallery," instead of "the gallery needs to change to fit the art." Arcangel answers affirmatively, but I wonder if it is this simple. I think that postinternet art does not just bend itself to work as "art," it also changes one's conception of "art." Working in the confines of the white cube is not necessarily always limiting to artists. By playing with that history of what has been marked as "art" and successfully entering into that dialogue, these artists are changing what one thinks of as "art" in the same way that Daniel Buren, Michael Asher, and earlier artists like Jasper Johns or (of course) Marcel Duchamp worked within the gallery to change what could be shown in the gallery and thus be reflected upon as "art."

KAREN: So, if I understand you correctly, you are saying that it is the responsibility of the artist to transform his internet art piece in that way that it fits into the gallery space. It is not the gallery that has to change its economic model of exhibiting because of their mission statement or whatever.

CORY: Yes.

It's a two-way street, and the best pieces, including pieces by Arcangel, are able to be read as "art," and do it well enough that they demand "art" to reevaluate its conception of itself.

Wednesday, December 30, 2009
Four ways that one can talk about "postinternet":

1. New media art made after the launch of the world wide web, and thus, the introduction of mainstream culture to the internet.
2. Marisa Olson's definition: Art made after one's use of the internet. "The yield" of her surfing and computer use, as she describes it.

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3. Art responding to a condition that may also be described as "postinternet"—when the internet is less a novelty and more a banality.
4. What Guthrie Lonergan described as "internet aware"—or when the photo of the art object is more widely dispersed than the object itself.

Wednesday, January 13, 2010
If you were not acquainted with Cory Arcangel as an artist and you came across his YouTube video of U2's "With or Without You" mashed up with footage of the Berlin Wall coming down, it would read as a "normal" YouTube video. It seems like something that is native to YouTube and not to art.

We could say that it is a work, but not a work "of art."

Furthermore, it is a really good example of a YouTube video. There is something stirring about it—emotional, even. And it seems as though Arcangel went through a lot of work to make it as good as it is.

However, Arcangel is an artist and anything creative he does will inevitably function as an artwork in an art context.

So, what happens when this video is thought of as a work "of art"?

It works as a readymade, illuminating the genre of YouTube video that it mimics—the mashup.

In the end, though, the beauty of it is not that it works as a YouTube video or as a work of art. Rather, by doing nothing other than shifting context, it illuminates the bridge between the two.

Wednesday, January 27, 2010
Kevin Bewersdorf has said that art now is based not on art objects or individual projects, but rather on "persona empires," which are the brands that artists develop over time.

He writes:

> Whether a net artist brands themself with a sparse list of links on a humble white field or with loud layers of noise and color or with contrived logos in a bland grid, they are constructing their own web persona for all to see. They are branding their self corporation. I think this self branding can be done with functionless art intentions rather than functioning business intentions. All the marketing materials are just shouted into the roaring whirlpool of the web where they swirl around in the great database with everyone else's personal information empires. I

think these persona empires are the great artworks of our time, and they inspire me to keep building my own brand.

.....

Bewersdorf is an important postinternet artist because he realizes very clearly that the quality of art on the internet is not measured in individual posts, but in the artist's performance through time. On Facebook, a user is judged not by one status update, but rather by their style and pace of updating. The same is true for internet artists.

Thursday, January 28, 2010
Writing about Kevin Bewersdorf's work prior to 2009 is difficult.

Bewersdorf erased his website, maximumsorrow.com, as well as all of the texts, photos, songs, and documentation of sculptures that were housed on the site.

While there are scattered traces of his thought floating in various blogs, the ability to view the scope and meaning of it is greatly diminished.

If this work is to survive, then, one must attempt to translate it—piece together his project in one's own words, from one's own memories of it.

Monday, May 17, 2010
In "Free Art," a text by The Jogging, it is suggested that the web's economy of re-blogging and fast-paced communal interaction creates its own economic model, and thus, its own best practices for understanding how value around work is accrued.

Furthermore, it is thought that the art world—even if it did acknowledge this work—would not know what to do with it, as this online economy is alien to its own, premised as it is on the exchange of materially sensual objects for amounts of (financial) capital unavailable to all but the most wealthy members of society.

The Jogging writes:

> In the lives of contemporary artists, Free Art is a place to find one's self through the existence of others—to individually reclaim the ability to self-mythologize and empathetically pick from your peers for influence. Thus, Free Art is marked by the compulsive urge of searching (or, surfing) to connect with others in a way that is not dictated by profitability, but found and shared charitably among individuals based on personal interests.

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A couple of thoughts:

I'm not sure that the web is any less tainted by economics than the art market. The re-blogging format preferred by The Jogging did not appear out of nowhere; power relations are alive and well (t)here, as one might say that all of this activity is ultimately in the service of market research for corporations.

Meanwhile, the world of contemporary art is obviously not perfect, but it's not entirely dominated by auctions and abusive gatekeeping, either.

And if one is interested in placing their creative endeavors on the web in both the most critically sympathetic as well as the most critically astute environment possible (the environment in which it will be judged as more than style alone), one can't so easily dismiss the art world, as it has been thinking about these questions very seriously for a very long time.

Furthermore, the work will (if it is as good as it thinks it is) end up back in the art system as saleable objects; the question here, then, is how much control the artist exerts over this entry into the system.

This is just to say that the conversation occurring inside the art world is worth taking a second look at before one abandons it outright.

Also, The Jogging's reference to the immaterial or dematerialized quality of the work is problematic.

For the sake of argument (and it is debatable), let's say that—yes—a virtual JPEG of a sculpture is immaterial, free of the problems of aura and material commodification that the sculpture depicted in the JPEG itself affords.

But what about the hardware displaying this content?

The notion that the web has accomplished some sort of Hegelian transcendence is precisely what, say, Steve Jobs wants consumers to believe: Go on, keep chatting with your friends, watching videos, listening to music—it's all fluid and immaterial now, and that's great—just so long as you do so through the iPad.

These devices that display the work which The Jogging thinks of as lacking aura are, in fact, highly susceptible to aura, or from a slightly different angle, fetishism.

One can't wait to get home and log on to their machine, touch it, ride the time of computing cycles; anytime the threat of boredom creeps in, one can immediately start fingering their iPhone, dexterously running their hands all over it in hopes of generating more immaterial content.

Indeed, perhaps one could think of the endless stream of a blog as lubricant—sweet nothings in one's ear, easing one's entry into a more rhythmically sustained fingering of their device.

This is just to say that the materiality of digital culture is worth taking a second look at before one denies its presence outright.

Now, all that said (and on the other hand), there's another consideration that comes into play here: "Free Art" was posted on the The Jogging Tumblr on May 12, 2010.

In the five days that have passed since the twelfth, The Jogging has posted six additional unique works—each possessing their own unique power and each propelling my own following of their posts (as in an ongoing performance).

As a matter of fact, this immediacy and performative enthusiasm is relatively more exciting (to me, anyway) than most things happening in most of the shows advertised via, say, e-flux.

Which is precisely the effect that The Jogging describes in the text.

An anxiety arises: I have some issues with the idea, but I'm compelled to follow it nonetheless.

That is to say, it can't be dismissed outright, as the artists demonstrate it for me, placing it directly in front of me, demanding my acknowledgment.

And through this acknowledgment, I may never quite decide for certain if the idea of Free Art is naïve or pioneering (or both), but I may be infected by it, nonetheless.

Friday, June 18, 2010

Still Available by Oliver Laric is an ongoing list of web domain names that are still available to be taken.

Laric's work *Taken* is an ongoing list of all of those domain names listed in the *Still Available* series which have, in fact, subsequently been taken (at present, almost seventy domains are now taken from the over three hundred listed over the course of the series' five installments).

In the earliest iteration of *Still Available*—*Still Available 17.10.08*—approximately 135 potential domain names are listed, each of which refers to keywords rich in value relevant to that particular historical time period, regarding, for example, politicians, political theorists, luxury commodities, pornography, artists, art theorists, art world events, physics, pop culture, or cities.

These domain names are often funny and perceptive in the way in which they pinpoint strategies employed by "parked domain" companies that buy up domains in bulk using keyword strategies not unlike those employed by Laric himself.

So, for example, he lists domains that have no value other than a speculative one regarding the future of value-rich keywords, such as elections2032.com, documenta13.com, and beverlyhillsninja3.com; or domains that combine vaguely related, value-rich keywords at that particular moment in historical time, such as putinpalin.com, gucciprada.com, and platinumclit.com; or else domains that

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just sound as though they could be actual domains, such as botoxbros.com, divorcebattle.com, or thenewsocialism.com.

Likewise, in the following four iterations of *Still Available*, a similar method is employed.

In this way, Laric creates a portrait of the practice of domain-naming as an increasingly complicated and speculative enterprise that, in turn, results in a web consisting of as many empty, "parked" domains awaiting potential owners as it does active ones—a portrait of the web as a space undergoing not exploration, but relentless colonization into the predicted value-rich keywords of the future.

The *Taken* list of domain names underlines this understanding.

On the one hand, it's true that some of the domain names from the list are taken by "normal" people or small not-for-profits such as the artist Billy Rennekamp taking billyrennekamp.com, a modest Amon Düül fan site taking amonduul.com, the "Frankly My Darling..." blog run by a middle-aged woman taking 13dimensions.com, or the breast milk donation info hub taking breastmilkdonation.com.

However, most of the domains were taken by web-based companies in the business of parking on domains in order to cybersquat or provide advertising space (my favorite example is steaksonaplane.com, which was taken by the GoDaddy.com company to advertise its own services).

With all of this in mind, what one views here is the way in which this increasingly colonized landscape is different from the geographical landscape of Earth, in the sense that its potential space for expansion is itself continuously expanding as world events and memes both high and low open it up to the contingency of the moment.

The artist's website, as a publicly accessible database, may be followed by a public interested in the artist's work. As an artist continues to create work, this creation is knowingly performed—one views the drama of an unfolding practice in which each "move" is in dynamic dialogue with past practice as well as a navigation into future practice. If I encounter the work of the contemporary artist through their managed presence on the internet, and I do it again and again and again and again, then this managed presence itself becomes a performative work.

.....

There are many examples of this type of approach to making work in the context of the web. One of those examples is Poster Company by Travess Smalley and Max Pitegoff.

Poster Company is a Flickr page consisting of over two hundred paintings produced between July 2009 and May 2010. In this project, the artists first focus on collisions between automatic effects that read as either "painterly" or "digital," and second, shift the focus of their labor in the work from the production of an individual painting to the performance of producing many paintings over the course of months. As such, their work is in dialogue with the painter On Kawara's "Today" series and Josh Smith's influential painting project—each of which is meaningful when considered as a reaction to the automatic reproducibility of images as well as an ongoing, long-form performance.

The question "what is a digital painting?" (a noun) is here better phrased as "what is digital painting?" (a verb). The significance of Poster Company's work lies not in the individual compositions, nor in the volume of output (although these elements are undeniably crucial for the full execution of the work), but rather in the performance of the work.

Sunday, August 15, 2010

PERFORMANCE 4

An artist has a website. At first, this website is, depending on the artist, either a handy novelty or a frustrating necessity of the digital age. Either way, it's not that super important. One makes a work—be it digitally created or handmade—and one, then, uploads a photograph or some other form of representation of this work to their website to serve as a second-hand reference for curators, collectors, critics, and the general contemporary art audience.

An artist maintains this website. Gradually the artist comes to realize just how handy and how necessary this tool is for the dissemination of their work. As newspapers, mainstream culture, an exploding amateur culture, communication with friends, banking, and a host of other day-to-day activities are increasingly conducted via the internet, the artist realizes that not only do people greatly prefer, and even expect, the ease of viewing the work through this website, but the once-obvious line between the actual work and the representation of the work is becoming oddly blurry. For many members of the artist's audience, including curators, critics, and other arts professionals, the image of the work on the website is good enough. This is exacerbated by the increasingly global nature of contemporary art, perhaps best represented by biennial culture.

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All of a sudden, the way the artist thinks about their work is at least as much dictated by how a JPEG of the piece looks in the context of their website as by how it would look in the physical art space. This is what the artist Guthrie Lonergan calls "postinternet" art—the art after the internet changed the way that art reaches an audience.

For many younger artists who, by historical accident, came of age without ever really experiencing the "pre-internet" relationship between artist and audience, this is not a novelty, but an obvious fact that almost goes without saying. Even if one works in traditional mediums, art is primarily experienced on the internet.

The art/curatorial collective VVORK curated a show in 2009 called "The Real Thing," which was based on the idea that, as members of mediatized cultures, most of their own knowledge of art was not accrued through the original, but through art history books, lectures, conversations, and, of course, the internet. In other words, through "versions." In their statement for the show, which was held at MU in Eindhoven, they write:

> Some of our favourite works have only been described to us, unsurprisingly as the majority of our art experiences have been mediated in one form or other. The majority of works presented in this show have been selected through written commentaries, verbal descriptions and jpegs found online. In fact most of the works presented at MU are the type of manifestations mentioned above: stories, descriptions, translations and interpretations, all understood as primary experiences.

One of VVORK's cited inspirations for the show is the following Seth Price quote from his essay "Dispersion":

> Does one have an obligation to view the work first-hand? What happens when a more intimate, thoughtful, and enduring understanding comes from mediated discussions of an exhibition, rather than from a direct experience of the work? Is it incumbent upon the consumer to bear witness, or can one's art experience derive from magazines, the internet, books, and conversation?

Sunday, September 5, 2010

PAINTING 1

If one is to take the history of painting as a meme spreading from mind to mind through its history—from cave paintings to Piero della Francesca to Thomas Gainsborough to Nancy Spero and beyond, each iteration in the history of the meme mutating itself in response to its own context—then what would it mean to extend the painting meme into the context of digital computer networks?... How would the painting meme be translated when a painting is still an object, but an object dispersed through the network as a mutable digital photograph, as well?...

An alternative response to the question of the painting meme's life in the network is being developed by young artists working on or around the internet. For these artists:

1. The computer screen is the primary surface on which painting will be viewed, and because of this, a new suite of phenomenological effects occurring between painting and viewer are opened for exploration.
2. The rate of speed at which paintings travel is atrophied when uploaded directly to computer networks, and this increase in speed allows one to, then, view the flow of painting in time.

In what follows, I'll say a few more words about the relationship between painting and the computer, describe a recent trajectory of the painting meme among a group of internet artists, and then focus, in particular, on the work of the PAINT FX collective.

2

It's possible that an "actual" Abstract-Expressionist painting produced in the 1940s and a "fake" Abstract-Expressionist painting created through the application of digital effects in a piece of software could be effectively indistinguishable when viewed through the light of the computer screen. With this in mind, some painters have shifted their concerns from those native to the paradigm of the white cube to, instead, those native to the paradigm of the computer screen. This shift has repercussions, though. For example, the phenomenological effects of painting shift from the materiality of paint on canvas to the light spilling

5, 2010

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from a computer screen. This bias toward the surface of the screen, then, nudges artists toward exploring different types of bodily shock effects. The relationship of the body to the computer screen after all is different from that of the body to the physical painting in space—computers are open circuits in which cybernetic feedback relationships between computer databases and users allow users to actively shape the mediascape they inhabit. These cybernetic relationships create a desire for clicking, scrolling, and following—dynamic motion premised on sifting through an accumulation of data rather than gazing for very long at a single pattern of light. The internet painter, then, begins to think in terms of multiplicity, the aesthetics of the surfeit, and, crucially, a strong temporal element that transforms painting into a variation on performance art. Furthermore, JPEGs, as digital files, are mutable, meaning that they can be radically transformed instantaneously at the level of code. If one wants to merely touch up a single brush stroke or slap a picture of a sea shell on the top layer of the painting, the technology is agnostic in regard to the amount of variation each of these types of alterations suggests. This mutability means that once it is part of the network, other artists and non-artists as well are given free rein to appropriate the image and alter it themselves, re-disseminating the mutated image through alleyways of the network that the painting's original creator could not anticipate. In other words, paintings here are a network of versions, a stream of evolving memes.

3

The meeting of painting and the computer is not new. MS Paint, for example, has long been mined for painting effects. In the context of the internet, the artist Tom Moody (a former "actual" painter) has built an important practice at the interface of painting and the computer screen, which has evolved into making animated GIFs and placing them on his own blog and sites like dump.fm. This is not meant to be an authoritative history, though, so I'll focus on the life of one strain of the painting meme as I've witnessed it over the past two or three years.

I first began to notice artists working on painting at the tail end of the surf club phenomenon. Artists like Will Simpson, Thomas Galloway, and Travess Smalley on the surf club Loshadka, for example, were moving away from appropriated content derived from internet surfing and toward original content created in painting software programs.

Around this time, the artist Charles Broskoski began increasingly focusing his work away from Conceptual art pieces toward a painting practice premised on

volume, performativity, and innovations in presentation that were native to the computer screen. The artist Harm van den Dorpel was working on a similar project, in which he straddled the borders between a computer model of a work and a work in physical space, and allowed that very tension to become illuminated as the work. Along the way, he raised an interesting set of questions regarding artistic deskilling and the borders between handmade effects and automated effects. In short, the "hand of the artist" was, on the internet of all places, becoming an interesting area to explore. Soon enough, there seemed to be an internal logic and momentum to this digital painting meme, and the Supercentral II surf club and Poster Company by Travess Smalley and Max Pitegoff pushed it further, actualizing what was in the air. A slightly younger generation of artists working on the Tumblr platform and an emerging body of critical reflection by artists such as Ry David Bradley on his *PAINTED, ETC.* blog continued to sustain the evolution of the meme, polishing certain presentational elements and building a community of people interested in these ideas. Painting in the network was about fast-paced collective dialogue and mind-bending abstractions. It was also about painting. The imagery of these works are often collisions between digital gestures and painterly gestures, but, generally speaking, the concern is with the tradition of painting pre-internet, as opposed to the animated GIF scene, whose roughly concurrent rise (in the net.art context) posed as a nice counterpoint to the painting meme.

If one was watching, one could view the evolution of the meme as it started in a sort of experimental phase, gained some steam, developed a community, and achieved some sort of level of self-consciousness about itself. The meme here takes on its own form of life, which one can watch live on the internet.

Sunday, September 12, 2010

SCIENCE FICTION 1

"Postinternet" is a term I heard Marisa Olson talk about somewhere between 2007 and 2009.

The internet, of course, was not over. That wasn't the point. Rather, let's say this: what we mean when we say "internet" changed, and "postinternet" served as shorthand for this change.

So, what changed? What about what we mean when we say "internet" changed so drastically that we can speak of "postinternet" with a straight face?

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hand of the artist" was, on the internet of all places, becom-
ea to explore. Soon enough, there seemed to be an internal
n to this digital painting meme, and the Supercentral II surf
pany by Travess Smalley and Max Pitegoff pushed it further,
s in the air. A slightly younger generation of artists working
form and an emerging body of critical reflection by artists
adley on his *PAINTED, ETC.* blog continued to sustain the
me, polishing certain presentational elements and building a
le interested in these ideas. Painting in the network was about
e dialogue and mind-bending abstractions. It was also about
ery of these works are often collisions between digital ges-
r gestures, but, generally speaking, the concern is with the
g pre-internet, as opposed to the animated GIF scene, whose
: rise (in the net.art context) posed as a nice counterpoint to

.

ching, one could view the evolution of the meme as it started
ental phase, gained some steam, developed a community, and
t of level of self-consciousness about itself. The meme here
rm of life, which one can watch live on the internet.

r 12, 2010

1

term I heard Marisa Olson talk about somewhere between

of course, was not over. That wasn't the point. Rather, let's say
n when we say "internet" changed, and "postinternet" served
his change.
ged? What about what we mean when we say "internet" changed
we can speak of "postinternet" with a straight face?

On some general level, the rise of social networking and the professionalization of web design reduced the technical nature of network computing, shifting the internet from a specialized world for nerds and the technologically minded, to a mainstream world for nerds, the technologically minded, and grandmas and sports fans and business people and painters and everyone else. Here comes everybody.

Furthermore, any hope for the internet to make things easier, to reduce the anxiety of my existence, was simply over—it failed—and it was just another thing to deal with. What we mean when we say "internet" became not a thing in the world to escape into, but rather the world one sought escape from. It became the place where business was conducted, and bills were paid. It became the place where people tracked you down.

2

Accompanying this change in what we mean when we say "internet," there was a change in what we mean when we say "art on the internet," and "postinternet art" served as shorthand for this change.

On some general level, the shift of the internet to a mainstream world in which *a lot* of people read the newspaper, play games, meet sexual partners, go to the bathroom, etc., necessitated a shift in what we mean when we say "art on the internet," from a specialized world for nerds and the technologically minded, to a mainstream world for nerds, the technologically minded, and painters and sculptors and Conceptual artists and agitprop artists and everyone else. No matter what your deal was/is as an artist, you had/have to deal with the internet—not necessarily as a medium in the sense of formal aesthetics (glitch art, GIFs, etc.), but as a distribution platform, a machine for altering and rechanneling work. What Seth Price called "Dispersion." What Oliver Laric called "Versions."

Even if the artist doesn't put it on the internet, the work will be cast into the internet world, and at this point, contemporary art, as a category, is forced against its will to deal with this new distribution context, or at least acknowledge it.

"Acknowledge" is key here. It's not that all contemporary artists must right now start making hypertext poetry and cat memes, but rather that, somewhere in the basic conceptual framework of their work, an understanding of what the internet is doing to their work—how it distributes the work, how it devalues the work and revalues it—must be acknowledged in the way that one would acknowledge, say, the market. What Guthrie Lonergan called "Internet Aware." To

not do this would not be a sin (obviously most artists don't care about the internet at all and won't start caring anytime soon; similarly, most artists probably don't want to consider the market), but it would be a shame—it would be too bad. Somewhere, on a realistic level, there would be an avoidance of the context in which the work appears and, if the twentieth century did anything to artists, it made them care about context on a realistic level. Duchamp changed the game by acknowledging the context in which the game is played. And the game now is played in the project spaces of Berlin, São Paulo, and Los Angeles; it's played in the commercial galleries of New York, and in the global network of biennial culture; it's played in museums and auction houses, yes (obviously)—but it is also now played through the distribution channels of the internet.

To avoid this last point is to risk losing the game.

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