

not be a sin (obviously most artists don't care about the internet start caring anytime soon; similarly, most artists probably consider the market), but it would be a shame—it would be too soon on a realistic level, there would be an avoidance of the context that appears and, if the twentieth century did anything to artists, about context on a realistic level. Duchamp changed the game, the context in which the game is played. And the game now is played in the spaces of Berlin, São Paulo, and Los Angeles; it's played in the galleries of New York, and in the global network of biennial culture, museums and auction houses, yes (obviously)—but it is also through the distribution channels of the internet. The last point is to risk losing the game.

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comprises excerpted entries from *Post Internet*, a blog written by art critic Gene Youngblood published from December 2009 through September 2010. Comprising posts of various length, from fragmentary notes and short bursts of text to longer essays, supported by a grant from the Creative Capital | Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Foundation.
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IN THE LONG TAIL

Mark Leckey

1. FELIX

The Long Tail begins, for me, at a very particular point in time, a definable moment in history, which is when this photograph was taken. [Leckey shows a photograph taken in 1929 at NBC's experimental studios in New York City in which a Felix the Cat doll is surrounded by an apparatus called a "mechanical scanner," an early form of television, pre-cathode ray.] I came across it during a search for something else...er, dolls, puppets, automatons, something like that...and as soon as it appeared, I was mesmerized. I just couldn't work out what this figure, an old cartoon character, was doing among all these strange machines. What were they for? And what did they do? Why Felix the Cat? I became somewhat obsessed with this image. So, you know, I looked it up, Googled some television histories, and began to piece together what this photograph was all about.

This apparatus pictured here, then, is called a mechanical scanner, and it is basically the earliest form of television. The photograph was taken in 1929 at NBC's experimental studios in New York, where they used a doll of Felix the Cat to test their germinal transmissions.

The mechanical scanner worked in a very basic way. A light is pulsed through a spinning disc perforated with a spiral of holes, which creates a kind of on/off switch—basically the same as the dot-dashes of Morse code, or the zeros and ones of binary code. So these pulses scanned Felix line by line, creating a signal, and that signal was transmitted through the air, to be received and reassembled on a screen some distance away—all this in a fraction of a second.

Felix the Cat, then, was *the* very first image that was broadcast—or as it was coined at the time, the very first "Picture-on-Air" (and that picture, of that

seminal broadcast, materialized on my screen eighty years later). Even though the machinery was crude—a spinning wheel and a flickering light—it performs a remarkable transition, taking Felix from his origins as a two-dimensional drawing, galvanized by electricity to become a moving image, filling him out into something more *rounded* and substantial, before he is atomized and his signal dispersed out into the aluminiferous ether.

Felix's metamorphosis took place just a few years before a similar process of (let's call it) *transmutation* was being explored by a Hungarian artist by the name of Tamkó Sirató Károly, the author of the *Dimensionist Manifesto* of 1936 in which he stated that art should be...animated by a new feeling for the world. The Arts—in collective fermentation—have each been set into motion, and as each has absorbed a new dimension, each has found a new form of expression that extends into all the available dimensions of space, in the interests of vaporizing sculpture and the requirements that Rigid Matter is abolished and replaced by Gauzeified materials.

The Dimensionist tendency, then, has led to: (1) literature leaving the line and entering the plane, (2) painting leaving the plane and entering space, (3) sculpture stepping out of closed, immobile forms and entering a fourth dimension!

The beginning of Cosmic Art! The artistic conquest of four-dimensional space, which to date has been completely art-free. Rather than regarding the art object from the exterior, the human being becomes the center and five-sensed subject of the artwork, which operates within a closed and completely self-contained cosmic space.

These two amorphous, solid ideas of Tamkó Sirató Károly have evolved to become the twin engines of the internet. Namely, the dematerialization of all rigid matter and the creation of a four-dimensional space, where the viewer and creator, producer and consumer, are one and the same—as summed up by YouTube's motto "Broadcast Yourself."

The term *broadcasting* has its origins in the medieval agricultural practice of scattering seeds across as large an area as possible: the "sower of the system," the "figure in the field," being the single source of distribution, casting out his seeds as broadly as he can to increase the potential yield of his harvest. And this analogy came to define the production of culture in the twentieth century. The *one* to the *many*, always aiming to expand the audience, increase its yield. Felix, then, is the very avatar of broadcasting, a probe sent out to discover a potential audience and seek out new viewers. Moving through the air at extraordinary speeds he becomes ethereal, passing through clouds, his body now composed of nothing but light and air. A celestial body with a luminous vapor trail (*Draw comet/Power Law*).

materialized on my screen eighty years later). Even though crude—a spinning wheel and a flickering light—it performs animation, taking Felix from his origins as a two-dimensional figure by electricity to become a moving image, filling him out to be rounded and substantial, before he is atomized and his signature is etched into the aluminiferous ether.

Emancipation took place just a few years before a similar process of dematerialization was being explored by a Hungarian artist by the name of László Moholy-Nagy, the author of the *Dimensionist Manifesto* of 1936 in which he argued that art should be...animated by a new feeling for the world. The various forms of fermentation—have each been set into motion, and as they move into a new dimension, each has found a new form of expression. The available dimensions of space, in the interests of vaporizing the requirements that Rigid Matter is abolished and replaced by new forms.

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His casting has its origins in the medieval agricultural practice of sowing across as large an area as possible: the "sower of the system," the "seed," being the single source of distribution, casting out his seed so that he can to increase the potential yield of his harvest. And this is the essence of the production of culture in the twentieth century. The artist aims to expand the audience, increase its yield. Felix, the star of broadcasting, a probe sent out to discover a potential audience of new viewers. Moving through the air at extraordinary speed, passing through clouds, his body now composed of light and air. A celestial body with a luminous vapor trail (*Draw*

2. THE LONG TAIL ITSELF

This line represents a distribution curve or what's known as a "Power Law," which states that a *small* number of things have a *large* impact and a *large* number of things have a *small* impact. For the twentieth century this could be called the "Shape of the Age," and as a producer this is where you'd be aiming for, right here, the very top of the vertical axis—at the "Head"—this is where you get your Number Ones, your Blockbusters, your Big Hits, your Top of the Pops, and out along the horizontal axis—the "Tail"—would be your low-selling, noncommercial releases, your specialized interests, all the non-hits. So up here is your top twenty and the non-hits make up the rest—the other 80 percent. The Power Law is also known as the eighty-twenty rule—the law of the vital few.

So this is how it looked for the record companies, film studios, publishing houses, and so on: you've got your mainstream mass market up here and your subeconomic, or fringe interests, way down there in the extremities. But at the end of the twentieth century the whole thing went head-over-tail, ass-over-tit. So to speak.

See, the *mass* market is just that: mass, made of *rigid matter*, solid weighty stuff that occupies physical space. When things start to be digitized, to get dematerialized, space is no longer a concern—their dimension is limitless, as is their replication and distribution. The artifact, the record, the book, has its information extracted, unbound from its material form and set free. Free of physical limitations and free as in costing *nothing*; things can be almost given away—because basically they cost *nothing* to produce.

This allows *anyone* to put *anything* online—become their own producer, distributor, their own "sower of the system." Thereby creating, it's said, *an endless choice where any need can be met, and any preference can find an audience*—even if it's just you and two or three others. These special interests, these millions of niche markets have accumulated in the Tail—in the sub-economic region down here. And taken as a whole they have become a mass equivalent to the Head in terms of the audiences that they are attracting. This aggregate is the Long Tail.

And it goes on and on and on way beyond the visible eye...ever approaching zero but never quite making it.

In the time of the Head, a product's life began on its release date and ended when it was deleted to make room for the follow-up...or removed to make space for something *new*. In contrast, the Long Tail keeps accumulating, because these spatial and temporal limits don't apply. There are no *dates* in here, nothing *expires*. What you do have is an unlimited choice of perpetual and imperishable stock, extending all along its measure.

Here the movement of time has been converted into the arrangement of space—you have this *all-time-one-time-every-when*. And this...*instantaneous* ubiquity in the Tail means that stock, instead of getting replaced, just...continues...it doesn't cease or desist. Nothing diminishes...it persists.

The remaindered, the discounted, the out-of-date—nothing is irredeemable in here. The alembicated, the recondite, arcane, and occluded—there is nothing hidden that won't be made new, as those dispatched as waste and worthless are recuperated and, like the Amaranthine flower that feels no decay, return to life. See, the old don't need to make room for the new anymore, instead you have this *all-at-onceness*, at least eight generations living alongside one another! Coexisting in...*unnatural* company.

This Long Tail is of a very different nature.

3. NON-NEWTONIANS

Er...tails, lots of tails, recurring tails. Flagellum moving caudally. Tendrils, many-headed cephalopods. I might call it, er...tentacled, colloidal, semi-amorphous, partly squamous and partly rugose—ugh! With what can only be described as promiscuous intent they seem to be caressing each other, enthusiastically touching, embracing themselves—them *self*...itself! Errm, their arms—or whatever you'd call them—these reticulose pseudopodia raised, reaching up to whatever lies tantalizingly out of frame as they move hap-haptically to the ant music on the stereo. Writhing up from their fluidizing bed as they flutter like in time-lapse, a cinematic blossoming of life, (like) toward a light they cannot see but can hear and feel like they possess an awareness in which the music is the electric soil in which this seminal stuff could emerge out of...a simple spontaneous arising... a seminal, semolina spontaneous generation, autoerotic, nonliving newborn without a mother—you've got to be fucking kidding! What is this thing? This, this cornstarch encounter group, this nameless yeast achieving consciousness or *consciousnesses*, a wet cheese in a delirium? A self-organizing yogurt, a voluptuous living custard...

The speaker is a transducer, a device—again activated by electricity—that converts one form of energy into another. But youths sitting in their bedrooms are no longer using this device for listening to music. They are conducting alchemical experiments on them instead. Music as an energizing force is spent. Its energies have all dissipated in the Tail, and those left disaffected are seeking somewhere *else* that can transmit their passions.

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Another thing that strikes me about these lo-fi experiments—which are all
over YouTube—is how, with their tumescent peaks and subsequent slumps of
cornstarch, they appear to be mimicking the fluctuations of the Stock Market
or, more specifically, the irrational exuberance that bodes an economic melt-
down. As if the internet itself—via YouTube—is trying to act out some trauma
recorded deep within its memory...what Dianetics would call an *engram*: “a defi-
nite and permanent trace left by a distressing psychic experience in the proto-
plasm of a tissue.”

4. LIQUID CASH

Right at the end of the century back in Y2K we had the Dot-Com Crash, when
frenzied Millenarian speculations about the pubescent internet's over-evalua-
tion of its own stock created an economic bubble that inevitably burst. Conse-
quently, the market became markedly less confident about the internet's actual
ability to make real profits—its failure to monetize. This is the realization that
the internet does more and more with less and less, until eventually you can do
everything with nothing, as everything moves toward becoming free.

See, the *longer* the Tail gets, the *less* profit there is in it, as *real* money can't
be accumulated from all these increasingly individuating micromarkets, these
tiny niches. In short, the Long Tail can't be converted into the Head (or the Short
Head). It can't be *vertically integrated*, which is the way most of the world's finan-
cial bodies are organized—heading to the top—this having proved the most ef-
ficient system for maximizing profit and maintaining productivity. Instead, the
Tail is distributed horizontally, and it absorbs all our drives in *excess* of that pro-
ductivity. All the misdirected energy that isn't moving upward to the Head, all the
excessive, wasteful, useless activities, the obscure collectors, the special interests,
the unnatural practices that circulate out in the margins, that occupy the most
impossible niches, down here in the fringes way out in the extremities of the Tail.

Where you have this...*bachelordom*, the domain of those who happen to
develop, engineer, and program the machines that make up the internet, who
know its secret workings. And as the market's infatuation waned, these people
found themselves left to their own devices, around which they began to cluster,
to batch together and exchange interests. And these...transactions, this...recip-
rocal system of exchange, became an attraction *in itself* and began to autogen-
erate. These “peer” networks, suddenly began multiplying—spawning without
instruction, without any real direct communication, just a shared awareness

creating these pathways between like minds, the same way ants pass on information by secreting pheromones for others to follow. This is a process called *stigmergy*—literally, “leaving a mark,” a stigma, that others can add to. And this *emergent* process created this incredible, complex structure—the Long Tail—an energy harvesting device that captures all that misdirected energy and converts it into a free power source. A mechanism that converts wasteful pastimes into productive *creative* energy. A closed system that is completely self-sufficient. A *bachelor machine*.

Just as gold can be magicked from base metal, once shameful habits could now become a wholly positive charge. What was previously seen as a dissipation of energies now blooms into a voluptuous dispersion.

5. ECHO CHAMBER

All along the Tail are niches, nodes of exchange among peers: peers trading with peers through their special interests, their shared passions—their *torrents*. In P2P technology, a torrent is a means of dividing a large file into parts in order to optimize its distribution. Each peer shares a fraction of this file, called a “seed,” and an aggregate of peers *seeding*—or connected to—the torrent is known as a “swarm.” So collectively the swarm, joined together by the torrent, shares in the file’s dissemination.

And as the torrent surges through the Tail it accumulates new seeds, swelling the swarm, whose combined power increases its speeds. And as this network extends, the swarm begins to murmur—a constant murmuration—as each peer starts to resonate in sympathetic vibration. No longer the one but the many / taken by the torrent / embraced by the swarm / made manifest in its multitude / a peer between like minds / swarming out and surrounding him / here in this moment / this moment of shared mutualism / He surrenders / he surrenders to the attraction / he surrenders to the attraction of increased pleasure / an increased pleasure that is obtained / obtained by the removal of his shame / He is without inhibition / for he is of the swarm / he is the swarm / and the swarm is he.

And while he searches he is searched, and as many words as he says so many words he receives.

He sees his own actions reflected back at him / in a giant compound eye / reflected back into his room / reverberating in the swarm / peers peering / murmuring / in vibration with the hum...with the hmmmmmmmm / with the many, many minds / going out into the Tail / Like minds / Minds’ eye / Mind’s eye beside

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himself in the swrm / Reverberator / reverberator in the swrm / Swrming / Sound-
ing / Surging out / PING! / It all comes back to him / Double back / Way back /
PANG! / yearning out / Feeding back / Back longing his way through the Tail /
The Looooonnggg Tail / Mind swimming Out In the Looooonnnnnnnnggggg
Tail / The longing, yearning, wanting, tale.

6. HIPPIE HORIZON

Side by side, linked hand in hand, the barefoot couple drifts toward the eva-
nescing horizon where the land melts into the sea; the earth dissolves into the
sky and all rigid matter is gradually gauzefied. Somewhere between the material
world and the immaterial field of experience.

It is possible that it is possible that it is possible.

Above them glows the double sun, below them thrums the electric field as
they move toward the incandescent edge of the future. A time in which they will
be free of their labors, returned to the aboriginal world of primal pleasures for-
ever watched over by machines of loving grace.

It is possible that it is possible that it is possible...

This is the second photograph I became fascinated by—the second one to
feature familiar figures in an unexpected relationship with technology. Again it's
an image of transmission, of being transported into another dimension, another
image from the Long Tail's own record of itself. And although this appears to be
a high-tech imposition, a *superimposition* over the natural world and perhaps
even over nature itself, this grid they walk on follows ley lines, ancient align-
ments as deep and archaic as the geoglyphs of the Nazca plains or the Atacama
Desert. But these two get that the grid they're in is only part of a far greater grid,
part of a piece of a pattern that's repeated, repeated endlessly throughout the
endless cosmos. It is the pattern, the pattern that connects *everything*. The grid
as it flows below *resembles* the air that flows over, and the air above *resembles*
the waves of light that traverse it, and the light *resembles* the heat with which it
rides throughout the cosmos.

This picture, then, a fragment of this cosmic grid, represents "systems think-
ing"—the understanding that everything is a configuration of parts joined to-
gether by a web of relations. The horizon of this consciousness extends endlessly
with the awareness that *anything*, be it animal or mechanical, born or made, can
be understood *as* a system. This understanding is called *cybernetics*, and cyber-
netics examines how systems work via the process of feedback.

For example, whenever I do a Google search, the information I receive is the feedback, and that feedback allows me to narrow my search—to be more specific in what I ask for. As I repeat this process I'm continually feeding more and more information into the system, which it uses to update itself. So the system is learning with me, until eventually it understands my needs and can continue the process I initiated without my real involvement anymore. I am now in a continual feedback loop, having programmed a cybernetic device. This is the basis of computing and the internet. And anything can be understood as a cybernetic device.

[*Pointing at the hippies.*] Their individual mental state, their loving relationship, their community, the environment they are in, the culture they belong to, the politics that govern them, the *Whole Earth* itself. All these coupled and interlocking loops aggregate together to form a single, vast mechanism, a *superorganism*.

Okay, take the drawing of the Head and Tail I just made. When I'm drawing, the process of constantly adjusting the stroke of my arm to the surface of the blackboard is not something just going round inside *my* mind. Instead, it is being brought about by the whole system of *brain-eyes-arm-chalk-stroke-blackboard*. Information is flowing through the *entire* system. Mind is not only present within *my* body but is extended into the *larger mind* of *Mark-Leckey-drawing-at-the-blackboard-with-audience-watching-in-theater*, all these components making up what you could call an "ecology of mind."

And these two intrepid travelers, walking on the squares, straightening out the curves, and curving out the straights, get that *this* is the grid that we're *all* in. And they get that *through* cybernetics we could develop techniques, technologies of transformation to create the conditions of our own equilibrium, to find our own balance. They get that to become as confident as the Lion or the Rock or the Engine, we need to *un-humanize* ourselves a little. That to truly experience the wholeness of life we need to recognize that *everything* in the cosmos is in some sense *alive*, part of a universal community in which *all* relationships have the potential to become brilliant and magical opportunities, a community that must include all our mechanical appliances as well...in order to stay fully present to *all* the parts of yourself, each living and nonliving element responding in sympathy to one another. An interdependent circuit, a harmonious coupling.

These are the techniques of ecstasy, and they get that. That it is possible that it is possible that it is possible...

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7. ANAGRAM ENGINE

Cybernetics had a big influence on 1960s counterculture, especially around 1966 to 1972, and it was put to use by people such as Stewart Brand in his *Whole Earth Catalog*, Werner Erhard's EST, the Landmark Forum, the teachers at the Esalen Institute, and in music with the early Krautrock of Can and NEU! They were all sowing the seeds of an interconnected global—and cosmic—cybernetic system, a pipe dream that has come to fruition with the Open Source movement, Creative Commons-based peer production, and especially in the self-aggregating feedback system of Wikipedia. On Wikipedia I can find a series of quotes from the German dollmaker Hans Bellmer, in which he proposes that desires have the same anatomy as dreams; they are both composed of *deformations, divisions, co-alescences, permutations, and compensations*. I think I need to disambiguate what this means.

Dreams come to us all scrambled and garbled, plotted out of sequence and filled with odd substitutions which, in turn, keep mutating into something, or someone, else. And *desire*, suggests Bellmer, is the same—it's all surrogates and transfers, parts standing in for wholes and inexhaustible novelty. Desire sees the body, in his words, as resembling a sentence. A sentence that invites you to disassemble it into its component parts, so that its true content may be revealed again and again through an endless stream of anagrams. As all our goods and communications become increasingly abstracted from their physical forms, we begin to find ourselves moving closer and closer to the realm of thought than the world of things. We're moving up into the cloud, building real castles in the air. And up there, on-air, free from the gravitational pull of the earth down below, it is dreams and desires that have greater power than cause and effect.

As the etherealization of all rigid matter increases, the unbound imagination reveals appetites surplus to nature's purpose. Dematerialization ushers in irrationality. The "systems thinking" of cybernetics built an engine—a desiring machine that, as Bellmer put it, *endlessly propels and entertains...liberating both imagination and graphic compulsion so that each can simultaneously feed off and invest in each other*. And since desire can take on as many forms as there are bodies to implement it, it must seek endlessly different combinations to realize itself. The imagination is invoked and all its various forms are made visible. [*"Furries" appear on screen.*]

These figures are the fantastical anagrams that Bellmer imagined. A de/rearrangement of the word *desire* is *reside*, and these are the inhabitants of the Long Tail, and the Tail itself is an anagram engine:

I am an angel hesitating near
As generating in animal heat
I am an intestinal, eager hang
Nightmare in a sane genitalia
The tail is an anagram engine
Animal heat greasing in neat

The Tail is an anagram engine—like a mantra, creating transformation through repetition, the anagram engine of the Tail ceaselessly processing every possible permutation of the same sentence. And every random combination that it comes up with—*whatever orientation it results in*—finds itself a niche, a niche that then gets nested and embedded in the Tail out here in the exotic East, where it becomes a new type, a new category, a new type of category that creates its own social network, its own community. As words spell out a sentence and the sentence creates meaning, seeds form a swarm and the swarm generates a torrent—and this here on the screen is the torrent given a body. A kind of social sculpture conjured up on YouTube by user groups.

The user-generated content—this animal collective—here is *The Bear Negligee Collective*. Within each personal computer is a miniature labyrinth—the circuitous path that winds through the transistors on the surface of a microprocessor. Deep within the labyrinth lurks the Minotaur, that most ambiguous of all mythical creatures, beloved by the Surrealists. These...fabulous beasts, too, are hybrids, chimeras that inhabit the echoing corridors of the labyrinth “other-than-human” beings that are born of magic and engineering. An almost alchemical process I shall call *minotaurization*, which is the mechanical faculty to build the labyrinthine technology that has the magical ability to make the irrational real.

This is how the feedback devices of the Long Tail function. We tell it what we want, and it seeks to produce the desired effect. The greater the input, the more effective it is as a cybernetic device, but the more efficient it becomes the more magical its output seems. And we start to see it as something that can grant wishes, make anything just...appear. The Long Tail becomes a collective fetish, a talisman around which we form kinships, or niches. For the Long Tail is an entity both man-made and magical that has taken on a life of its own. And a fetish is a power that demands total devotion; it requires a constant stream of self-offerings, an entreating stream of tears and sperm.

So the Tail seems to be acquiring some sense of supernatural agency as it becomes more aware of what we want from it. Technically, though, it has a problem with “intentionality.” You see, for all the magic operations its algorithms can perform, the Tail’s anagram engine is only interested in parts. It is only interested

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in parts, and it can arrange these parts in lots and lots of different ways, lots and
lots and lots and lots, but it has a problem, a problem knowing why—why some
parts should go in one way and not another way. Some parts should go in one
way and not another way. Let’s say it has semantic difficulty with the content. It
gets the words but not the meaning, it sees the square not the grid, the ant not
the colony, the buildings not the city, the part not the whole. And in this sense
the Tail is autistic. It has this amazing systemizing ability but it struggles with a
theory-of-mind. It can’t put itself in your shoes. It’s *in* our world but very much in
its *own* little world. It doesn’t really get this larger ecology of mind.

So here we get to the point in the tale where it seems to be going in different
directions. These contradictory forces can best be understood by going back to
the grid. Cybernetics sees the grid as an open system expanding outward in all
directions. Any one part of it is just a fragment of a whole, which can never be
known in its entirety. This is the *cosmic* grid. The void that binds. In contrast, the
autistic grid is moving ever inward, pulling toward the center, and *its* extent is
known and limited. Those who inhabit the Tail find themselves caught between
these two fields. I am bound in a nutshell, while king of infinite space. This is my
autistic cosmic spectrum of the Tail.

8. ANATOMY OF THE TAIL

For all its “graphic compulsion,” there are no images of the Tail itself. It is an in-
visible landscape, though I can offer this general impression of its shape and size
based on firsthand experience. But imagine for a moment that you could stand
within it. You would find that the mouth of the Tail—at its anterior end—is
cone-shaped, tapering into the main trunk or central shaft, which is cylindrical
in form and retains a uniform diameter along its length. This shaft is called the
corpus cavern—the “cave-like body”—and the backbone, the great confluent of
this shaft is a fat pipe named the *vas deferens*. This pipe carries all the transmis-
sions, all the chunks of data that come streaming into the cavern. Coming off
the *vas deferens* are the exchange hubs that route the traffic along their preferred
paths, and these pathways traverse the interior of the *corpus cavern* in all direc-
tions. The transmissions that surge through these network nodes are eventually
deposited—small cavities dotted in the cavern wall, the countless multitude of
which glisten with the lustrous concretion of pearly papules. A million, billion
points of light. These are the “niches” that have accumulated in the Tail, and
the connecting fibers of the pathways make up the vast reticulum—the netlike

formation—of the Tail's entire system. Torrents channeled through this system at high speeds are amplified by repeaters that *dazzle* them upward, increasing their motility until they gradually arrive at the drainage slopes. Residuum that accumulates on these slopes is a result of the occasional torrent of seminiferous material. The deposits create supersaturated ripples and folds that reflect the flow of the stigmergic pathways. These draperies are made up of endless precipitations that have encrusted into layers that eventually form themselves into outcrops, the niches of shared interest that make up the seedbed of the Tail. This seedbed is the *Caudal Plane*, from the Latin *caudatus* meaning "tail" (the Latin for "head," by the way, is *caput*, the same root as the word Capital). And the Head, the head of the mass market, that market of mass, has been diminished...deflated...depleted.... All its stock has *stepped out of its closed immobile forms* and, as the Dimensionists predicted, *gauzefied*, dematerialized, and ascended into the atmosphere, up into the cloud. And the Tail, like the metaphysical silver cord, tethers the now cumuloft Head to our gross bodies down below. And along its length travel all our recorded thoughts, deeds and actions—all our desideratum affects—swimming up to be stored up in the cloud. As above, so below—the cloudy head and the fat tail in a continuous feedback loop, producing and consuming itself, wrapped round the world like the ancient symbol of the Ouroboros, the serpent eating its own tail. Who can tell where the head ends and its tail begins? The self-sucking serpent experiences all parts of itself. It is the beginning and ending of time. The symbol of eternal return, the great cosmic loop.

I have been immersed in these reflections for some time now—it's over a year since I gave the first of these talks—and I find that, day by day, left to my own devices, the predictive powers of the Long Tail have become increasingly more extraordinary. It seems that I can just wish things into existence. Especially pictures: whatever image I imagine, or hope for, seems to be already there, waiting, as if heaven-sent. I used to believe that this was because I had *good searching ability*. I'm good at gathering information—that's part of what makes me a contemporary artist—but as I continue to access the realm of the Tail, this sense of cybernetic serendipity starts to seem less like a series of happy accidents and more a program of intelligent design. It seems that the Tail is anti...cipating me. It seems that the feedback mechanisms of the Tail, through my repeated successive uses, my continuous input, have assembled a profile, an *extensive* profile of my needs, my *preferences*...and from this information—the extracted accumulation of all my deepest wishes—are creating content conjured up from my subconscious, scraping the vaguest memories and half-forgotten images from my mind. The system understands my needs and can continue the process I initiated without my real involvement.

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This is psychedelic—literally *mind-mani-festing*—as all my psychic energy is
 seemingly converted into visible light. Fluid photographs of thought crystallize
 in front of me, as complicated and varied as anything real.... And as all *my* men-
 tal pictures coagulate and contribute their mass to the already prodigious Tail, I
 become aware that they are but part of this wondrously complex *mesh* of mem-
 ory, sight, sex, and consciousness that is ceaselessly generating these marvels.
 And I begin to understand that the Tail is unfathomably long, that it reaches
 back through geological amounts of time, circles around, and back to an archaic
 state of being, an aboriginal world of primal pleasures—that its transformative
 technology that allows humans to morph into animals, the marvelous become
 everyday, and the ancestral dead bought into our living company, is a *return*, a
 return to a sense that everything that is on and of this earth is being animated
 from within. All of its constituents—the mechanical, the imagined and the liv-
 ing. The Tail, then, is a landscape of fabulous hybrid creatures, images endowed
 with divine powers, and familiar objects full of voices, where even rocks and
 stones have names.

9. ENDING

The swarm machine begins to thrum again, humming the song of myself / their
 fugue begins / and once more I am assumed by the swarm / made manifest in
 its multitude / between like minds / swarming out and surrounding me / here
 in this moment / this moment of shared mutualism / and I surrender / I surren-
 der to the attraction / I surrender to the attraction of increased pleasure / and I
 become ascendant in the swarm / I am of the swarm / I am the swarm / and the
 swarm is me / I am Homo-Caudatus / I can experience past lives, live dreams, and
 soul travel / I am the Minotaur made manifest in a multitude / Reverberator! /
 Debaser! / I am the Center of Percussion / the Sweet Spot of the Swarm / the
 Sole Satisfier / Accumulator! / Evaporator! / I am a Seed of the Torrent / we are
 the Sowers of the System / here in the Long Tail!

Felix is the avatar of the Tail, and these here are the Nine Consciousnesses
 of Felix:

ONE!—A wild and feral cat, he was once of primal nature, of one with the
 other beasts of the earth—including man!

TWO!—He was the ancient Egyptian deity of Bubastis. A sacred exalted
 spirit that inhabited the earth and the heavens up above. Cousin of the Sphinx
 but more ancient than the Sphinx and remembers that which she has forgotten.
Other-than-Human!

THREE!—He descended to a domestic pet, and became a mere creature of habit. Although the stroking of him brings pleasure in interaction. *Felis Catus!*

FOUR!—In the Machine Age he became enchanted by technology. An animated being galvanized by electricity!

FIVE!—His fame saw him carved into an idol, a wooden doll, which in turn led him to become something far more wonderful...

SIX!—For as soon as he stepped forth as a commodity he was changed into something transcendent.

SEVEN!—Melted into air he became an electronic image, and by the magic of a spinning wheel, his likeness reproduced everywhere.

EIGHT!—No longer the one but the many, multiplied like the wind by an untiring machine, he is a category unto himself, the Kategory of Felix, which contains multitudes. A Kolossal Kat! A Massive MOG!

NINE!—*Nine maleish molds, bachelors all!* He is returned to his earlier incarnations as a spirit come to earth, half of this world and another. He is a radiant messenger, a divine emanation of the Tail.

He is an Angel hesitating near
He is an Angel hesitating near
He is an Angel hesitating near
As above—so below
As above—so below
As above—so below
An eternal and universal picture!

—Mark Leckey, 2009

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The preceding text is an excerpt from a transcription of artist Mark Leckey's lecture "In the Long Tail," which was first staged in 2008 at the Kölnischer Kunstverein in Cologne and later in 2009 at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London and the Abrons Art Center in New York.
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