

**The Post-Internet Condition:
A political reevaluation of new media art through the postmedia perspective**

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Introduction

Some ‘new media’ artists and writers have recently started to describe the pervasiveness of digital network culture as Post-Internet. Paraphrasing the discourse on the topic, Post-Internet describes our contemporary moment, in which the Internet has become banal rather than extraordinary because of its sheer ubiquity. As such, we are not living after the Internet, as the ‘Post’ might imply; instead, we are living in the wake of its creation. Its condition describes the effects of living in the ‘network society,’ described by Manuel Castells in his seminal text *The Rise of Network Society*, which analyzes the ‘new economy’ of the late twentieth century through the lens of the information technology revolution.¹ Given the pervasiveness of information technologies ‘throughout the whole realm of human activity,’ Castells contends that this methodology enables an analysis of economics, society, and culture in all of their networked complexity.² However, the scope of this approach is not limited to those who directly engage with the Internet on a day-to-day basis, nor does it suggest that the information technology revolution has caused all of the significant transformations in recent years.³ Instead, Castells asserts that ‘technology *is* society,’ so society must be understood in terms of its technological tools.⁴

The rise of network society can largely be attributed to the ubiquity of the Internet, but also to its accessibility. While the Internet of the 1990s was static, slow, and highly textual,

¹ This is the first volume in *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* trilogy, which also includes *The Power of Identity* and *End of Millennium*. While the three books are conceived as a whole, the first volume is most relevant to the discussion at hand given the emphasis on networks. The first volume was first published in 1996, with a second edition published in 2000.

² Manuel Castells, *The Rise of Network Society: The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Volume I* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 5.

³ As of 30 June 2012, there were 2,405,518,376 Internet users, slightly more than one third of the world’s population. ‘Internet Users in the World Distribution by World Regions – 2012 Q2,’ last modified 17 February 2013, accessed 25 May 2013, <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>.

⁴ Castells, *The Rise of Network Society*, 5.

largely used by specialists, developments in the late 1990s and early years of the millennium led to the second-wave of the Internet, popularly referred to as Web 2.0, which was more dynamic, visually oriented, and overall easier to use.⁵ People thus became ‘users’ – active participants in network culture, communicating with one another and generating content via Web 2.0 platforms. Concurrently, the Internet was becoming more available, with the invention of a range of portable devices with computing and wireless capabilities. With these developments, the distinction between the physical and digital became increasingly blurred. The common abbreviation used online to indicate something in the ‘real world’ as opposed to the ‘Internet world,’ IRL (‘in real life’) is a misnomer, a misconception. The Internet is IRL. Connectedness has since increased, to such an extent that we live our lives in and through the network.⁶

Even so, the mainstream contemporary art world has steadfastly maintained its distance from contemporary technologies of network culture. Some artists revert to analog technologies or retreat from the web by engaging with others solely in the physical. Others use digital technologies, while maintaining a position within the contemporary art world. And still others assimilate to the network, mostly out of the simple fact that one cannot exist today without an online presence, an extension of oneself in the digital network. There is furthermore the art that reflects on what it means to be contemporary, to use and be affected by using digital technologies, to live in the Post-Internet age. It does not distinguish between being online or offline; it is about being *inline* with the network, bringing its posture into artistic practice itself. This is Post-Internet art.

⁵ See Tim O'Reilly, 'What is Web 2.0? Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software,' in *The Social Media Reader*, ed. Michael Mandiberg (New York; London: New York University Press, 2012), 32-53.

⁶ For more on Post-Web 2.0 culture see Yochai Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

On/In his blog/book,⁷ writer, critic, and curator Gene McHugh writes, ‘If contemporary art were pressed to say “contemporary art exists in the digital network as much as it does outside of the digital network,” then contemporary art would all of the sudden be operating from radically different premises.⁸ He goes on to further explain what this might mean:

The ‘white cube’ paradigm (as the site where contemporary art occurs) would be threatened from within. The ‘where’ of ‘where the art occurs’ would be altered as the simulation of the physical work through (primarily) the Web archive would be understood to be art’s arena. To my mind, work which successfully bridges the worlds of the digital computer network and contemporary art is work which, on some level, implicates contemporary art into this very network. It’s not work about the digital computer network, it’s work about contemporary art’s own entanglement in the digital computer network. And for contemporary art to acknowledge this, it would demand that contemporary art changes the way it sees itself. As such, contemporary art wouldn’t be taking in an orphan, but a virus. That’s a lot to ask, but, nonetheless, there’s an urge to start asking.⁹

Post-Internet art begins asking these questions through its practice. Artists who could be labeled as such reflect on and engage with the network, making work that happens in the physical and the digital, using digital, traditional, and/or obsolete media. Recalling Claire Bishop’s contentious article ‘Digital Divide,’ Post-Internet art challenges the foundational questions that situate her argument:

While many artists *use* digital technology, how many really confront the question of what it means to think, see, and filter through the digital? How many *thematize* this, or reflect deeply on how we experience, and are altered by, the digitization of our existence?¹⁰

⁷ Gene McHugh’s blog ‘Post Internet’ (122909a.com) was written between 29 December 2009 (hence, the URL) and 5 September 2010, funded by the Creative Capital | Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant Program. The blog was then made into a book, edited by Domenico Quaranta with McHugh’s assistance. See Gene McHugh, *Post Internet*, 29 December 2009 – 12 September 2010, accessed 20 April 2013, <http://122909a.com/>; *Post Internet: Notes on the Internet and Art 12.29.09 > 09.05.10* (Brescia: LINK Editions, 2011).

⁸ McHugh, *Post Internet*, 1 June 2010.

⁹ McHugh, *Post Internet*, 1 June 2010.

¹⁰ Claire Bishop, ‘Digital Divide: Contemporary Art and New Media,’ *Artforum* 51, No. 2 (September 2012): 436.

According to Bishop, even though many artists (if not all) use digital technology, artistic practice does not reflect on the digitization of our contemporary experience. But Post-Internet artists are achieving precisely what Bishop blindsides, bridging the supposed ‘digital divide’ by thematizing digital network culture.

Thematizing is crucial, because Post-Internet art does not seek to make new media objects; instead, it explores the effects of digital culture. Following Alexander R. Galloway’s program set forth in *The Interface Effect*, I contend that this transition from objects to effects requires a reevaluation of new media art. This reevaluation is inherently political, as the network itself is not a neutral, but rather highly structured and regulated. Since mediation is political, understanding new media as political is essential. Therefore, previous formal readings of new media, such as Lev Manovich’s *The Language of New Media*, must be reassessed given our new understanding of the political forces of the network. In the earliest days of the commercial Internet, its standard browsers and interfaces indicated something that initially appeared inherent, suggesting a sort of media formalism, even new media medium-specificity. While there is an undeniable systematicity to the Internet, this must be reevaluated in terms of its political implications rather than be understood as purely aesthetic, as its impact reaches far beyond the browsers and interfaces through which it is mediated. But first, I will contextualize the current debates around the issue of new media art as it relates to contemporary art. Through an overview and an analysis of this evolving discourse, a framework for a reanalysis of new media art will develop. By focusing on the two foremost contemporary scholars researching this particular debate, Edward A. Shanken and Domenico Quaranta, I propose the necessity of a postmedia perspective in order to understand that new media art can no longer be conceived as a discrete category of artistic practice. It is critical to discuss Post-Internet art in relation to

these debates as it bridges the gap between new media art and contemporary art, functioning as a hybrid practice that realizes the postmedia perspective.

While the discourse produced by self-defined Post-Internet artists, such as Marisa Olson and Artie Vierkant, will factor into my discussion, I instead focus my analysis on the work of (Post)-Internet artists and Hacktivist duo, Eva and Franco Mattes, formerly only known by their pseudonym-slash-URL, 0100101110101101.ORG. Working together since the early 1990s, the Mattes have continuously engaged with the network in its ever-evolving state. Their work could be described as net.art, Tactical Media, Hacktivism, culture jamming, and most recently, Post-Internet art. Following the phases of Internet art described by Galloway in his book *Protocol*, I contend that the Mattes' work is especially illuminating because it enables an understanding of how network culture has changed in the past two decades, necessitating a reevaluation of what constitutes new media art today; or rather, what a postmedia practice might look like.

Chapter 1

Digital Divide

What constitutes new media art today? While this label may have once made sense, in terms of defining a context for art engaging with emergent technologies, it has essentially become meaningless in our age of ubiquitous computing.¹¹ This is not to say that ‘the art

¹¹ Ubiquitous computing refers to the integration of computation into our lived environment, also ‘described by such terms as...“pervasive computing,” “ambient intelligence,” “context-aware environments,” and “smart objects.”’ Lev Manovich ‘Introduction to Info-Aesthetics,’ in *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, Contemporaneity*, ed. Terry Smith et al. (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2008), 336. See also: Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylinska, *Life After New Media: Mediation As A Vital Process* (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 2012).

formerly known as new media¹² is not being made today; in fact, it is thriving more than ever. But new media as we know it cannot exist for much longer – the signs of this are already palpable.

The history of new media art is confusing and difficult to pin down as there is no established canon, nor is there any stable definition of the art itself.¹³ It is constantly shifting and evolving, evading simple classification. Throughout its history, it has become more far-reaching and pluralistic, incorporating more technologies as they develop, and bridging disciplines through its integrative and interdisciplinary approach. These transitive qualities are its defining characteristics, and arguably, ‘its greatest assets.’¹⁴ This makes discussing new media art especially, and increasingly, difficult, as technologies rapidly change, becoming more pervasive and a part of our daily lives. As new media becomes a part of our lived experience, it can no longer be considered as something separate. This is true in terms of artistic production as well; arguably, everything has been affected by digital culture, and the art world is no exception.

Claire Bishop controversially addressed the state of our digital condition and its relationship to the mainstream contemporary art world in an article entitled ‘Digital

¹² The ‘art formerly known as new media’ is the phrase used by Sarah Cook and Steve Deitz to describe art after new media, which is also the subtitle of Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook’s illuminating and decisive text *Rethinking Curating*. See *The Art Formerly Known as New Media*, ed. Sarah Cook and Steve Deitz (Banff: Banff New Media Institute, 2005), exhibition catalogue; Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook, eds., *Rethinking Curating: Art After New Media* (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 2009).

¹³ For the most comprehensive and cogent canon established thus far, see Edward A. Shanken, ed., *Art and Electronic Media* (London; New York: Phaidon, 2009). See also: Shanken, ‘Historicizing Art and Technology: Forging a Method and Firing a Canon,’ in *MediaArtHistories*, ed. Oliver Grau (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 2007), 43-70.

¹⁴ ‘New media art is a continuously evolving field and the development of possible taxonomies for the art form has been a much-discussed topic and an elusive goal. The fact that new media art successfully evades definition is one of its greatest assets and attractions, but at times the art seems more alive than its practitioners want it to be.’ Christiane Paul, ‘The Myth of Immateriality: Presenting and Preserving New Media,’ in *MediaArtHistories*, ed. Oliver Grau (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 2007), 252.

Divide,’ published in the September 2012 issue of *Artforum*. According to Bishop, while many artists now use digital technologies, none actually reflect on the implications of living digital lives.¹⁵ Instead of expounding on this contentious point, Bishop explores the way in which the digital has become the ‘structuring paradox’ of artistic decisions. The bulk of her argument then details various analog and archival practices, including the use of analog media, relational and socially engaged work, and archival research, collecting, and display mechanisms, which she attributes to the pervasiveness of digital culture.

While Bishop’s highly provocative article was met with critical attention, it should be underscored that the ‘divide’ between new media art and mainstream contemporary art is anything but new. In fact, her article being published in *Artforum* and receiving as much attention as it did is symptomatic of mainstream hegemony and the lack of recognition of new media, considering two new media specialists broached the subject several years before Bishop, and the discourse has only continued to develop. Art historian Edward A. Shanken and contemporary art critic and curator Domenico Quaranta have both recently grappled with the divide between mainstream contemporary art and new media, mostly focusing on the privileging of the physical over the digital and the obsession over medium-specificity in relation to new media art, despite the rest of the contemporary art world supposedly working in terms of the ‘post-medium condition,’ as described by Rosalind Krauss.¹⁶ Before delving into their specific arguments, though, it is first necessary to emphasize that this divide is as old as new media itself.

In his essay ‘The Death of Computer Art,’ Lev Manovich describes the differences between the art world and the computer art world, which lead to the divide between the

¹⁵ Only three artworks achieve this status according to Bishop: Frances Stark, *My Best Thing* (2011); Thomas Hirschhorn, *Touching Reality* (2012); Ryan Trecartin *K-Corea INC.K [Section A]* (2009). Bishop, ‘Digital Divide,’ 436.

¹⁶ Rosalind Krauss, ‘*A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*’ (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999).

two. Referring to the art world as ‘Duchamp-land’ and the computer art world as ‘Turing-land,’ Manovich describes their characteristics and then outlines why a convergence between the two lands will never happen. Objects produced in Duchamp-land, he argues, are ‘[o]riented towards “content,”’ such as ‘beauty’ and ‘metaphors about the human condition,’ ‘complicated,’ and are ‘ironic, self-referential, and often literally destructive attitude towards its material.’¹⁷ Alternatively, Turing-Land is ‘characterized by directly opposing characteristics,’ producing objects that are oriented ‘towards new, state-of-the-art computer technology,’ are ‘simple,’ in the sense that they lack irony, and ‘take technology which they use...seriously.’¹⁸ These classifications are not entirely accurate at present given the way in which both worlds have changed over the years and their recent bouts of convergence, which will be discussed at length below; however, it is important to begin with Manovich’s description as it historically positions the divide. At the date of this essay’s publication, 1996, Manovich explains that the art world has just begun to ‘discover’ computers; even so, he asserts that the two worlds will never converge given their opposing characteristics. Therefore, ‘[w]hat we should not expect from Turing-land is art which will be accepted in Duchamp-land. Duchamp-land wants art, not research into new aesthetic possibilities of new media. The convergence will not happen.’¹⁹

While Manovich’s description of Turing-land is specific to computers and their associated technologies, the conception of new media art and a corresponding community functioning autonomously from the mainstream contemporary art world first came into prominence in the 1960s and into the 1970s, especially with the emergence of video as a medium.²⁰ But by the 1990s, video had begun to be accepted by the mainstream art world,

¹⁷ Manovich, ‘The Death of Computer Art,’ 1996, accessed 19 March 2013, <http://www.manovich.net/TEXT/death.html>.

¹⁸ Manovich, ‘The Death of Computer Art.’

¹⁹ Manovich, ‘The Death of Computer Art.’

²⁰ The older ‘new media’ of photography started to become accepted in the late 1960s and into the 1970s with increased museum acquisitions and the expansion of the contemporary

and new media took on a new meaning in the context of the ‘digital revolution.’²¹ In the past two decades, new media art has become increasingly diverse and continues to grow, asserting itself as a valid art form within the new media art world in which it is produced and exhibited.²² However, in the past five years, or since the first Triennial at the New Museum entitled *The Generational: Younger Than Jesus*, new media art has overlapped with contemporary art to such an extent that it has become almost impossible to label something as ‘new media,’ suggesting an end to new media as a distinct category of artistic practice, or new media specificity.²³

Nonetheless, Shanken and Quaranta maintain that there is still a lack of recognition of new media art in the mainstream art world. This is true when considering the entire history of new media art; however, it is a problematic stance today when the label of new media no longer sufficiently describes artistic production. I choose to focus my discussion on Shanken and Quaranta, whose ideas overlap in some respects, but ultimately illustrate how unresolved this issue remains. As Manovich articulated over a decade ago in an article entitled ‘Post-media aesthetics’:

[T]he traditional concept of medium does not work in relation to post-digital, post-net culture. And yet, despite the obvious inadequacy of the concept of medium to describe contemporary cultural and artistic reality, it persists. It persists through sheer inertia – and also because to put in place a better, more adequate conceptual system is easier said than done.²⁴

art market. See Noah Horowitz, *Art of the Deal: Contemporary Art in a Global Financial Market* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011); Krauss, ‘Reinventing the Medium,’ *Critical Inquiry* 25, No. 2 (Winter 1999): 289–305; Julian Stallabrass, ‘Can Art History Digest Net Art?’, *Netpioneers 1.0—contextualising early net-based art* (2009): 165–179.

²¹ This terminology refers to the change from analog to digital or electronic technology, which has taken place since the mid-1980s.

²² Even as it autonomously developed its own niche, new media art has overlapped with mainstream contemporary art. The inclusion of Internet artists at documenta x, RTMark at the 2000 Whitney Biennial, and Vuk Ćosić representing Slovenia at the 2001 Venice Biennale are some notable examples.

²³ *Younger Than Jesus: The Generation Book*, ed. Lauren Cornell et al. (New York: New Museum; Göttingen: Steidl, 2009), exhibition catalogue.

²⁴ Manovich, ‘Post-media aesthetics,’ 2001, accessed 14 April 2013, www.manovich.net/

The concept of medium is inadequate in the context of Post-Internet culture; however, a new conceptual system must be put in place to illustrate this point. Working through Shanken and Quaranta's discourse, I hope to further the discussion of new media and medium-specificity in the Post-Internet age. Through this, I will develop a conceptual framework for imagining what a postmedia perspective might look like, in theory and practice, which will enable a reevaluation of the concept of medium in relation to new media, but also to artistic production in general.

Edward A. Shanken's 'Contemporary Art and New Media: Toward a Hybrid Discourse?' outlines the divide between Mainstream Contemporary Art (MCA) and New Media Art (NMA).²⁵ According to Shanken, both NMA and MCA have grown tremendously since the mid 1990s due to technological and economic developments, respectively. Even so, the two worlds rarely converge, and '[a]s a result, their discourses have become increasingly divergent.'²⁶ In order to synthesize these divergent discourses, Shanken identifies 'the central points of convergence and divergence between MCA and NMA' so that a 'hybrid discourse that offers nuanced insights into each, while laying a foundation for greater mixing between them' might be developed.²⁷ If this hybrid discourse develops, he claims, MCA and NMA would then have a mutually beneficial relationship.²⁸

DOCS/Post_media_aesthetics1.doc.

²⁵ These are the abbreviations used throughout Shanken's text, and for the duration of discussing his text, I will refer to them as such. This overview provided on his website is a working document, as Shanken is currently working on monograph about MCA and NMA discourse.

²⁶ Shanken, 'Contemporary Art and New Media: Toward a Hybrid Discourse?,' 2011, accessed 23 March 2013, <http://hybridge.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/hybrid-discourses-overview-4.pdf>, 1.

²⁷ Shanken, 'Contemporary Art and New Media,' 2.

²⁸ This is contradictory to his argument, considering he claims that MCA does not need NMA in order to assert its authority. Shanken explains, 'it must be recognized that the mainstream contemporary artworld (MCA) does not need new media art (NMA); or at least it does not need NMA in order to justify its authority.' Accordingly, it could be

Although Shanken acknowledges that there are many points of convergence between MCA and NMA,²⁹ he focuses on curator Nicolas Bourriaud's concept of 'relational aesthetics' to illustrate the parallels between the two art worlds.³⁰ Shanken argues that there is a reliance on the language of new media throughout Bourriaud's analysis without any reference to new media art. However, Bourriaud is not unaware of this fact or new media in general, as he recognizes how it shapes contemporary artistic practice. In both *Relational Aesthetics* and *The Radicant*, he contends that the computer and its associated technologies impact artistic practice, but the art being produced with computers is not representative of our contemporary moment.³¹ Bourriaud most succinctly explains this position at a panel discussion organized by Shanken in 2010 at Art Basel. To summarize, he argues that artists attempt to be contemporary, of which technology is only a part; as such, technology indirectly influences the arts.³² The example he cites to illustrate his point is the impact of photography on painting in the nineteenth century, its invention indirectly influencing the arts with the emergence of Impressionism. While it is true that photography informed painterly styles in the nineteenth century, it was not an entirely causal relationship, or

argued that MCA does not need NMA and therefore, a hybrid discourse. Shanken, 'Contemporary Art and New Media,' 5.

²⁹ Shanken notes theoretical discourse concerned with politics and globalization being part of both NMA and MCA, 'Contemporary Art and New Media,' 8.

³⁰ Shanken's ensuing discussion relates to my essay, 'Does New Media Art Exist?: The transcoding of contemporary art, or, the end of new media art as we know it,' (2013), which explores the use of new media language by Bourriaud, among other examples. However, the use of 'transcoding' to illustrate the influence of new media on contemporary artistic discourse and practice is not entirely adequate, given the reevaluation of the supposed formal qualities of new media discussed at length in the pages that follow.

³¹ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods with Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2002); *The Radicant*, trans. James Gussen and Lili Porten (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2009).

³² He originally states this position in *Relational Aesthetics*: 'The most fruitful thinking, however, came from artists who, far from giving up on their critical consciousness, worked on the basis for the possibilities offered by new tools, but without representing them as *techniques*. Degas and Monet thus produced a *photographic way of thinking* that went well beyond the shots of their contemporaries.' Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 67; Shanken, 'Salon: Art and Technology: Contemporary Art and New Media: Toward a Hybrid Discourse?,' YouTube, 36:40, June 2010, accessed 6 April 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9p9VP1r2vc4>.

rather, technologically deterministic, as Bourriaud suggests. He then applies this same concept of indirect influence to the Internet and artistic practice today: ‘the computer, the Internet, and everything that is related to it has an indirect impact on the artist’s way of working and producing.’³³ Although Bourriaud recognizes technology in terms of the way it affects artistic practice, his stance implies that work made with these very technologies is not equally valid, a position maintained by many within MCA.³⁴

Artist and curator Peter Weibel, a member of the same panel, criticized Bourriaud’s position—and arguably, the position held by many of those in MCA—labeling his privileging of the influence of technology on artistic practice over art made with these technologies ‘media injustice.’³⁵ Explaining this further, Weibel stated that while ‘the effects of new media are easily accepted...the artworks, the autonomous status of art of the media, [are] not accepted.’³⁶ This position relates to Weibel’s notion of postmedia, which would eradicate the separation of contemporary art and new media.³⁷ Rather than view the latter as purely theoretical and the former as practical, Weibel suggests that contemporary media enables a reexamination of artistic production in both spheres.

Although Shanken aligns himself with Weibel, it is difficult to gauge if he fully endorses the postmedia perspective. The title of his working article is an indication of this, as he is seeking a hybrid discourse, not necessarily a hybrid practice. With the development of a hybrid discourse, there can be interplay and exchange between the two spheres; however,

³³ Shanken, ‘Salon: Art and Technology.’

³⁴ Boris Groys is a particularly relevant example, as he discusses the effects of the Internet in his writing, yet does not endorse digital practices. See Boris Groys, ‘A Genealogy of Participatory Art,’ in *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now*, ed. Rudolf Frieling et al. (San Francisco; New York: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Thames & Hudson, 2008), 18–31, exhibition catalogue.

³⁵ Shanken, ‘Salon: Art and Technology.’

³⁶ Shanken, ‘Salon: Art and Technology.’

³⁷ Peter Weibel, ‘The Postmedia Condition,’ 2005, accessed 17 April 2013, <http://www.medialabmadrid.org/medialab/medialab.php?l=0&a=a&i=329>.

if a hybrid practice develops, new media art would lose some of its specificity. Citing John Tagg in reference to the history of photography, Shanken explains that while photography was eventually accepted into MCA, many of its more experimental aspects and practitioners are not included in dominant discourse and the canon.³⁸ The same fate might be true for NMA as it becomes accepted into MCA; it is through assimilation that NMA will lose its critical edge, and the very terms that define it. Shanken regards this assimilation as MCA seeing the market potential in NMA, claiming, ‘new media and the longer history of electronic art will be recognized by MCA...once a potential market for it is developed and promoted.’³⁹ Arguably, Shanken is most concerned with MCA recognizing the presence of new media in its own history, and realizing the relationship between NMA and MCA. Even though there is the implication that some distance between the two might be necessary, he closes by asking ‘Why care anymore about MCA or NMA, per se?’⁴⁰ A postmedia perspective is one way to answer this question, but as of now, one can only anticipate what Shanken might come to conclude.

In *Media, New Media, Postmedia*, Domenico Quaranta explores why, despite developments in technology and its innovative uses in artistic practice over the past several decades, so-called ‘New Media Art’ is segregated from the ‘official’ contemporary art world.⁴¹ Quaranta analyzes the current state of new media art in relation to contemporary art as a whole, while also looking to ‘the historical, sociological and conceptual reasons for its marginal

³⁸ See John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988).

³⁹ Shanken, ‘Contemporary Art and New Media,’ 16.

⁴⁰ Shanken, ‘Contemporary Art and New Media,’ 28.

⁴¹ Given that the text is only available in Italian, my discussion of Quaranta’s position in this book come from an abstract published on his website and an English translation of the fifth chapter available on *Rhizome*. Domenico Quaranta, ‘0. English Abstract,’ *Media, New Media, PostMedia*, 23 October 2010, accessed 20 March 2013, <http://medianewmedia.postmedia.wordpress.com/english-abstract/>; ‘The Postmedia Perspective,’ *Rhizome*, 12 January 2011, accessed 20 March 2013, <http://rhizome.org/editorial/2011/jan/12/the-postmedia-perspective/>.

position and under-recognition in recent art history.⁴² Most relevant to the discussion at hand is the notion of segregation and new media art's relationship to the wider field of contemporary art. In his abstract, Quaranta writes: 'New Media Art is more or less absent in the contemporary art market, as well as in mainstream art magazines; and recent accounts on contemporary art history completely forgot it.'⁴³ This line of thinking largely informs the first three chapters of his text, as he seeks to (re)define new media and trace the history of the field, as well as its relationship to contemporary art at large. This lays the groundwork for his final chapter, 'The Postmedia Perspective,' which explores the future of the new media art world and new media art as it moves into the arena of contemporary art. Although new media art has largely developed in its own context, Quaranta suggests that its emphasis on the technological medium as conceptual basis must be reevaluated as its presence increases in contemporary art.

While the notion of medium-specificity in relation to new media is crucial to Quaranta's argument, it is a convoluted trail to follow. This is not the fault of Quaranta, but rather evidence of the very difficult nature of the subject at hand. There is an echoing of Shanken's concern, namely, that new media must retain some of its specificity because this determines its criticality; however, there is also an urge to move beyond conceiving new media as a medium. Citing media theorist Inke Arnes, Quaranta asks, 'how...can we underline New Media Art's "specific forms of contemporaneity"...?'⁴⁴ The answer, for Quaranta, is the postmedia perspective. While Krauss' concept of post-medium is a departure from Greenbergian modernism and medium-specificity, her notion does not in effect apply to new media art, considering that it is discussed and judged based on its 'medium,' while art made in the context of the official contemporary art world is not. Moreover, new media art does not necessarily have a medium in the traditional sense,

⁴² Quaranta, 'The Postmedia Perspective,' *Rhizome*.

⁴³ Quaranta, '0. English Abstract.'

⁴⁴ Quaranta, 'The Postmedia Perspective,' *Rhizome*.

since the computer itself is not a medium; rather, it is a mode of mediation. Therefore, considering new media in the context of post-medium discourse is entirely insufficient. Bourriaud later acknowledges this dilemma at the same panel mentioned above, perhaps without realizing his proposal. Discussing the trouble of conceiving new media as a medium, he states that he has ‘always had a slight theoretical problem’ since he does ‘not believe that the computer or the net constitutes a medium in itself.⁴⁵ In fact, Bourriaud’s assessment is quite accurate, as he articulates the necessity for a postmedia perspective, despite his own reliance on Krauss’ conception of the post-medium condition.⁴⁶ Instead of describing work today as ‘post-medium,’ it is more effective to describe all artistic production as postmedia.

Like Shanken, Quaranta aligns his usage of postmedia with Weibel. In an essay entitled ‘The Postmedia Condition,’ Weibel argues that all art has become postmedia in the digital age. It is worth quoting his explanation in full:

The art of the technical media, i.e. art which has been produced with the aid of a device, constitutes the core of our media experience. This media experience has become the norm for all aesthetic experience. Hence in art there is no longer anything beyond the media. No-one can escape from the media. There is no longer any painting outside and beyond the media experience. There is no longer any sculpture outside and beyond the media experience. There is no longer any photography outside and beyond the media experience.⁴⁷

He goes on, further defining postmedia art as ‘the art that comes after the affirmation of the media; and given that the impact of the media is universal and computers can now simulate all other media, all contemporary art is postmedia.⁴⁸ Therefore, not only is new

⁴⁵ Shanken, ‘Salon: Art and Technology.’

⁴⁶ Bourriaud refers to Krauss’ notion of the post-medium condition in three of his major texts: *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art Repograms the World*, *Relational Aesthetics*, and *The Radicant*.

⁴⁷ Weibel, ‘The Postmedia Condition.’

⁴⁸ Quaranta, ‘The Postmedia Perspective.’

media art better labeled and conceived as postmedia, but so is the entirety of contemporary art production.

Applying the postmedia perspective is easier said than done, as evidenced in the continued description of new media art as such. As outlined above, this label is especially problematic as it perpetuates the notion of medium-specificity. Moreover, for emerging artists, new media has never been new – it has always just been media. Computers have always been a part of their lives, which has a paradoxical, twofold affect: labeling something as new media loses its traction, while the visibility of new media tendencies increases in mainstream practices and institutions. Put simply, it is becoming harder to distinguish between ‘art which uses computers and art which doesn’t,’⁴⁹ and therefore, between old conceptions of new media and mainstream contemporary art. Quaranta cites Ryan Trecartin, Petra Cortright, Cory Arcangel, and Brody Condon as artists working in terms of postmedia, using the computer in different capacities, as a conceptual apparatus and as technological tool that informs their work. This is seemingly contradictory to Quaranta’s contention that new media art is under-recognized in the official contemporary art world, considering all of these artists have achieved some mainstream success.⁵⁰ However, Quaranta’s logic makes sense in that ‘new media’ simply does not explain their varying practices: new media is inherently a part of the work they produce. Technology does not

⁴⁹ Quaranta, ‘The Postmedia Perspective.’

⁵⁰ Trecartin and Arcangel have been included in major group exhibitions in the United States, and both recently had solo exhibitions in New York: Ryan Trecartin: *Any Ever* at MoMA PS 1 (19 June – 3 September 2011); Cory Arcangel: *Pro Tools* at the Whitney Museum of American Art (26 May – 11 September 2011). Petra Cortright has been featured in *Artforum* and, even more mainstream than the mainstream contemporary art world, recently made a line of stickers for Urban Outfitters (August 2012). Brody Condon recently had performances at the Hammer Museum (2010), LACMA (2011), and MoMA PS 1 (2012). See Kevin McGarry, ed., *Any Ever: Ryan Trecartin* (New York: Skira Rizzoli Publications in association with Elizabeth Dee, 2011); Bruce Sterling, ‘Data Mine: Petra Cortright’s *HELL_TREE*, 2012,’ *ArtForum* 51, No. 2 (September 2012): 492-493; ‘Cory Arcangel: Pro Tools, May 26–Sep 11, 2011,’ accessed 20 May 2013, <http://whitney.org/Exhibitions/CoryArcangel>.

indirectly impact their work, as described by Bourriaud. Instead, it informs their practice in all respects.

Coinciding with the dates of Quaranta's publication in Italian and the English translation on *Rhizome*, artists and writers started articulating ideas about the notion of Post-Internet, as a condition and about the art that responds to this condition. While there is no reference to the terminology 'Post-Internet' in Quaranta's text or the addendum to the English translation on *Rhizome*, Quaranta's notion of the postmedia perspective undeniably resonates with the Post-Internet condition and the aims of Post-Internet artists. This is articulated in an interview for *Collecting and Presenting Born-Digital Art: A matter of translation and (historical) knowledge*, organized by Baltan Laboratories in collaboration with the Van Abbemuseum in December 2012. Responding to a question about his alignment with terms such as digital art, new media art, net art, and contemporary art, Quaranta explains:

Medium-based definitions make little sense to me... Contemporary art is the term I usually use to refer to the art I'm dealing with: an art that always responds to the Information Age, which is the specific form of contemporaneity I've been living in since I started a serious affair with art. Sometimes art responds to its time using digital media, other times with traditional, obsolete or even dead media; sometimes it happens online, other times it doesn't.⁵¹

Quaranta's response is in line with the discourse on Post-Internet art, as it is a practice that seeks to move beyond medium and new media specificities, working in terms of postmedia.

⁵¹ Quaranta, 'Conversations with Curators #2,' *Collecting and Presenting Born-Digital Art: A matter of translation and (historical) knowledge*, Baltan Laboratories in collaboration with the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 14 – 15 December 2012, accessed 5 April 2013, <http://www.baltanlaboratories.org/borndigital/conservations-with-curators-2/>.

Chapter 2

Post-Internet

In 2009 the New Museum of Contemporary Art held its first Triennial, entitled *The Generational: Younger Than Jesus*. All of the fifty artists were born after 1976, making them members of ‘Generation Y,’ ‘Millenials,’ and younger than Jesus at his death. Two of the artists featured were Ryan Trecartin and Cory Arcangel, as discussed by Quaranta in ‘The Postmedia Perspective.’ This exhibition serves as the symbolic starting point for Post-Internet art, or rather, when the label of ‘new media’ becomes obfuscated by the fact that all participating artists were ‘born-digital,’ or what is often referred to as being a ‘digital native.’⁵² While this label is not entirely accurate, considering that the oldest of these artists would have been eighteen when web browsers came into wide use, it is useful as a symbolic reference point for conceptualizing the end of new media specificity.⁵³

In the same year, the term ‘Post-Internet’ became popularized through the dissemination of an interview between artist, curator, and writer Marisa Olson and Régine Debatty of *We*

⁵² Marc Prensky coined the term ‘digital native’ in his article ‘Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants,’ to describe students who have grown up surrounded by digital technologies. It has since become a popular way to describe individuals accustomed to digital culture. While the term is valuable for its convenience, Prensky’s article fails to acknowledge socio-economic conditions, assuming that all students have grown up with the privilege of using technologies at home. Since 2007, the term ‘born-digital’ has gained traction. Marc Prensky, ‘Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants,’ *On the Horizon* 9, No. 5 (October 2001), accessed 15 May 2013, <http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/prensky%20-%20digital%20natives,%20digital%20immigrants%20-%20part1.pdf>.

⁵³ Hans Ulrich Obrist and Simon Castetts recent project, 89plus (89+) is a long-term endeavor mapping the work of emerging artists born in 1989 or after. These artists have grown up with the Internet, coming into adulthood in the Post-Internet age. See ‘About 89+,’ accessed 15 May 2013, <http://89plus.com/about/>; Harry Burke, ‘Younger Than Rihanna,’ *Rhizome*, 14 February 2013, accessed 14 May 2013, <http://rhizome.org/editorial/2013/feb/14/younger-rihanna/>.

*Make Money Not Art.*⁵⁴ Describing the changing nature of the art world because of emerging digital technologies, Olson explains that while there used to be the necessity for ‘a separate space in which to show, discuss, and teach new media,’ in today’s art world, new media is becoming more integrated.⁵⁵ She acknowledges that while these spaces were necessary in the early days of new media, and that they were and remain ghettoized, new media today cannot be so easily separated from other artistic production given the ubiquity of media and its influence on all artistic practice. There is no longer the need to label something as ‘new media,’ or rather, to specify ‘whether technology was used in making the work,’ because ‘everything is a technology, and everyone uses technology to do everything.’⁵⁶ As a result, many artists have begun making what Olson calls ‘Post-Internet’ art in her work.⁵⁷ Since Olson’s description of her work as ‘Post-Internet,’ many other artists and writers have adopted the terminology, adding their own contributions to the discourse in relation to their concurrent practices. The term still remains very much alive, as it is constantly being reinterpreted and reassessed by its practitioners. However, all of its practitioners are in line with Olson’s ultimate statement commenting on new media specificity:

⁵⁴ Marisa Olson used the term before the date of this interview, sometime between 2007 and 2009, according to McHugh, *Post-Internet*, 12 September 2010, accessed 20 April 2013, <http://122909a.com/>.

⁵⁵ Régine Debatty, ‘Interview with Marisa Olson,’ *We Make Money Not Art*, 28 March 2008, accessed 22 April 2013. <http://we-make-money-not-art.com/archives/2008/03/how-does-one-become-marisa.php#.UXT2eoJAvgo>.

⁵⁶ Debatty, ‘Interview with Marisa Olson.’

⁵⁷ Olson cites her Monitor Tracings as an example. These drawings are made on office paper with mechanical pencil, traced directly from the computer screen of Google Image searches for out of date technologies, such as cassette tapes, flip phones and old iPods. ‘The search results indexed highlight the objects we choose to recall, our means of organizing them, and the visual rhetoric of these products’ presentation. Meanwhile, the monitor follows the camera obscura, overhead projector, and other mechanical devices previously used to assist in drawing.’ Marisa Olson, ‘Monitor Tracings,’ accessed 14 April 2013, <http://www.marisaolson.com/>.

I think it's important to address the impacts of the internet [*sic*] on culture at large, and this can be done well on networks but can and should also exist offline. Of course, it's an exciting challenge to explain to someone how this is still internet [*sic*] art... If that really matters.⁵⁸

Post-Internet art is analogous with post-minimalism and postmodernism in this respect, as its critical approach derives from Internet art but is no longer limited to the browser or digital media specifically.⁵⁹ Therefore, Post-Internet art is best understood as after Internet art rather than after the Internet, a point I will return to below.

Since all art is affected by digital network culture, it is therefore necessary to explore what is distinct about Post-Internet art as opposed to art that is symptomatic of the Post-Internet condition. While artists respond to the Post-Internet condition in varying ways, there are three general categories that have become prevalent in mainstream contemporary art: analog and archival tendencies, the use of digital technologies in the context of mainstream contemporary art, and assimilation to network culture. This summation of tendencies is not meant to be exhaustive, nor does it imply that these categories cannot overlap. Instead, I offer a sort of typology through which to understand contemporary artistic practice that is symptomatic of the Post-Internet condition, so that Post-Internet art as a distinct sort of practice might be better gleaned in the pages below.

Bishop illustrates the first of these in 'Digital Divide,' outlining practices that attempt to resist digital culture through analog media (Manon de Boer, Matthew Buckingham, Tacita

⁵⁸ Debatty, 'Interview with Marisa Olson.'

⁵⁹ Comparing Post-Minimalism to Post-Impressionism, Robert Pincus-Witten argues that while Divisionism, proto-Cubism, Symbolism, and Expressionism are seemingly divergent, 'all derive from the formal inquiries posed by Impressionism.' The prefix 'post,' then, is useful in a broad way, as it covers 'a multitude of stylistic resolutions preceded and posited by an apparent generative style.' See Robert Pincus-Witten, *Postminimalism* (New York: Out of London Press, 1977), 15-16; *Postminimalism into Maximalism: American Art, 1966-1986* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1987). In regard to postmodernism drawing on modernism and popularizing its avant-garde innovations, see Perry Anderson, *The Origins of Postmodernity* (London: Verso, 1998); Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

Dean, Rodney Graham, Rosalind Nashashibi, Fiona Tan), relational and socially engaged art, and archival impulses⁶⁰ (Kader Attia, Zoe Leonard, Akram Zaatar).⁶¹ The second category is arguably the most encompassing, as all artists use digital technologies at some point; however, some examples will illustrate this more clearly: Jeff Koons creates digital collages using Photoshop, which are then projected onto canvases and painted on by studio assistants; Jenny Holzer tweets her truisms; Omer Fast uses Google Image search to find content for his high-definition digital videos; Allan McCollum digitally designs templates to make his singular yet mass-produced images and sculptures. Assimilating to the network is the third tendency; examples include museum and gallery websites, photos posted on social networking and image sharing sites, either by viewers of art or artists themselves,⁶² and sites like s[edition] and Artsy,⁶³ which make work by mainstream contemporary artists available to purchase and download via their websites.⁶⁴ This resonates with artist Guthrie Lonergan's conception of 'Internet Aware Art,' which means exactly what it sounds like: that anyone involved in art today must acknowledge the

⁶⁰ Following Hal Foster, 'An Archival Impulse,' *October* 110 (Autumn, 2004): 3-22. Foster's examples include Tacita Dean, Sam Durant, and Thomas Hirschhorn.

⁶¹ Bishop, 'Digital Divide,' 436-438.

⁶² A good indication is curator Hans Ulrich Obrist's Instagram. Obrist regularly takes and posts photos of notes and drawings from and by artists, curators, and others involved in the contemporary art world. A drawing by Pedro Reyes posted on 17 April 2013 depicts a piece of paper and a speech bubble, its contents reading 'drawing in the computer is like cooking in the microwave.' Although Obrist endorses projects like 89plus, this photo, among others, indicates some disdain for the digital. 'hansulrichobrist,' accessed 17 April 2013, <http://instagram.com/hansulrichobrist#>.

⁶³ For more on these sites and virtual curating, see Omar Kholeif, 'The Curator's New Medium,' *Art Monthly* 363 (February 2013): 9-12.

⁶⁴ Pictify is similar to these sites, except it is a social networking site specifically concerned with digital images of artworks. According to the 'What Is Pictify?' section on the website, 'Pictify is the global home for sharing your favorite artworks, seeing other people's, adding your comments, and building your own collection of favorite paintings, sculptures, photography, drawings, or any other art medium.' See 'What Is Pictify?,' accessed 20 May 2013, <http://pictify.com/about/what-is-pictify/>.

presence of the network, and ultimately consider what work will look like once it is on the Internet.⁶⁵

Post-Internet art is a distinct category of its own because it thematizes the Post-Internet condition, rather than just being symptomatic of it, like the three aforementioned tendencies. It can and should be made online and offline, using both digital and non-digital media, in an acknowledgement that the physical and the digital are a continuous flow of space and time, impacting and informing one another. McHugh describes the work of Post-Internet artists as ‘exploring the “virtualized” quality of contemporary experience—the sense that one’s identity could be located here in “real” life and there in the network at the same time.’⁶⁶ In an extended artist’s statement, Artie Vierkant references both Olson and McHugh, building upon their discourse and adding, ‘Post-Internet is defined as a result of the contemporary moment: inherently informed by ubiquitous authorship, the development of attention as currency, the collapse of physical space in networked culture, and the infinite reproducibility and mutability of digital materials.’⁶⁷ As Post-Internet artists thematize these tendencies in their work, there is a shift away from new media specificities, and moreover, the idea of medium-specificity, as it focuses on the cultural implications of technologies rather than technology as a set of tools that define its practice. Because of this shift, Vierkant contends that Post-Internet art

⁶⁵ Lonergan’s initial coinage of ‘Internet Aware’ was used without explanation. However, since then, he has clarified that he was ‘(i) being sarcastic, as in “who’s not aware of the internet?” and/or (ii) thinking more about people who make things off line with an eye to how they will ultimately look on the web (i.e., internet-ready, a la Vvork.com).’ Thomas Beard, ‘Interview with Guthrie Lonergan,’ *Rhizome*, 26 March 2008, accessed 29 April 2013, <http://rhizome.org/editorial/2008/mar/26/interview-with-guthrie-lonergan/>; Tom Moody, ‘Internet Aware Art; Emotions in Net Art,’ 7 June 2008, last modified 2010, accessed 17 May 2013, <http://www.tommoody.us/archives/2008/06/07/internet-aware-art-emotions-in-net-art/>.

⁶⁶ ‘Gene McHugh: Post-Internet (Blog),’ 2009, accessed 21 April 2013, http://artswriters.org/index.php?action=grantee_detail&grantee_id=20&year=2009.

⁶⁷ Artie Vierkant, ‘The Image Object Post-Internet,’ 2010, accessed 19 April 2013, <http://jstchillin.org/artie/vierkant.html>.

mediates New Media Art and Conceptual Art, as it is less focused on the new in new media and more concerned with the conceptual apparatus of exploring its effects. Moving beyond a reliance ‘on the specific materiality of its media’ and actualizing the effects of media, Post-Internet art gives equal weight to the material and immaterial, the physical and the digital, the idea and the object, content and form.

However, Vierkant’s definition of Conceptualism has a negative connotation, as he writes that it ‘presumes a lack of attention to the physical substrate in favor of the methods of disseminating the artwork as idea, image, context, or instruction.’⁶⁸ This wording implies that Conceptual artists neglected the physical substrate in both their thinking and practice. Alexander Alberro’s definition of Conceptual Art provides a more accurate framework for understanding Post-Internet art:

In its broadest possible definition...the conceptual in art means an expanded critique of the cohesiveness and materiality of the art object, a growing wariness towards definitions of artistic practice as purely visual, a fusion of the work with its site and context of display, and an increased emphasis on the possibilities of publicness and distribution.⁶⁹

The tendencies outlined by Alberro are present in Post-Internet art practices, as artists translate the digital into physical display contexts, opening up further possibilities for exploring the effects of digital culture.

The shift from new media objects to the effects of digital culture explored by Post-Internet artists resonates with the agenda set forth by Alexander R. Galloway in his most recent publication, *The Interface Effect* (2012).⁷⁰ The text aptly begins with an analysis and reevaluation of Lev Manovich’s *The Language of New Media* (2001), arguably one of the most

⁶⁸ Vierkant, ‘The Image Object Post-Internet.’

⁶⁹ Alexander Alberro, ‘Reconsidering Conceptual Art, 1966-1977,’ in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 1999), xvii.

⁷⁰ *The Interface Effect* is the third and final volume of *Allegories of Control*, which also includes *Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization* and *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture*.

important and widely cited texts within the field of new media studies. Despite its success, Manovich's text also received a fair amount of criticism, most significantly for his reliance on the cinematic to serve as a guide to understanding the language of new media.⁷¹

Galloway identifies this as the premise of the book, writing that, according to Manovich's approach, 'new media may be defined via reference to a foundational language or set of formal and poetic qualities identified across all sorts of new media objects, and indeed across historical and social context.'⁷² From the perspective of our contemporary moment, Galloway suggests that we are able to reevaluate new media, not as a medium with essential formal qualities, but rather, as an effect with ethical, political implications.

Before unpacking Galloway's text, it is first necessary to return to Manovich and the conception of new media as a new digital medium, which he describes as 'the meta-medium of the digital computer'.⁷³ Manovich's chapter, 'What Is New Media?' is concerned with 'the digital medium itself, its material and local organization'.⁷⁴ It is here that Manovich outlines the principles of new media: numerical representation, modularity, automation, variability, and transcoding.⁷⁵ With these principles, Manovich ascribes a formal logic to new media, which can describe the aesthetic properties of its output. This approach to media, in conjunction with his grafting of avant-garde cinema to serve as a guide for understanding new media, suggest that Manovich's approach to new media is

⁷¹ Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, xiv. Galloway cites criticism from Mark B.N. Hansen *New Philosophy for New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); Brian Holmes 'New Media from the Neolithic to Now,' 22 May 2009, accessed 5 April 2013, <http://brianholmes.wordpress.com/2009/05/22new-media-from-the-neolithic-to-now/>; Krauss and George Baker, 'Introduction,' *October* 100 (Spring 2002): 3-5. See Galloway, *The Interface Effect*, 4-6, 145.

⁷² Galloway, *The Interface Effect*, 2.

⁷³ Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 6.

⁷⁴ Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 11.

⁷⁵ Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 27-48. However, it should be noted that '[n]ot every new media object obeys these principles. They should not be considered as absolute laws but rather general tendencies of a culture undergoing computerization.' Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 27.

that of a modernist, in that the formal qualities of the medium are its defining characteristics. In the tradition of Friedrich Kittler and Marshall McLuhan, Manovich is first and foremost concerned with the formal qualities of media.⁷⁶ Formalism for Manovich essentially functions as binary code: the building blocks enabling new media objects to be conceived as cultural objects.⁷⁷

Even though Manovich ultimately understands new media as cultural objects, Galloway asserts that its basis in formalism is the main problem with his text, because it also gives way to a structuralist methodology for interpreting new media. According to Manovich's logic, 'new media may be defined via reference to a foundational set of formal qualities, and...these qualities form a coherent language that may be identified across all sorts of media objects, and above all...the qualities may be read, and may be interpreted.'⁷⁸ The problem is not so much formalism but the way in which this approach is centered on objects rather than effects. This is problematic because new media is engaged with the social, the political, the everyday, and if it is only to be understood in terms of its objecthood, its ethical properties are neglected if not ignored. Therefore, a methodology and artistic practice must develop that reflects a reformulation and understanding of new media in terms of its effects, and ultimately its politics. Since new media is integral to all contemporary artistic practice in some capacity, this critique applies to formalist and medium-specific theories of art in general, calling for entirely new ways of looking at and understanding artistic production in the digital age. This reevaluation of new media is

⁷⁶ As argued in Galloway, *The Interface Effect*, 5.

⁷⁷ Outlining the organizational strategy of his book, Manovich describes it as 'advancing from the level of binary code to the level of a computer program' which 'then move[s] on to consider the logic of new media objects driven by these programs.' Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 11. Additionally, Manovich asserts, 'new media objects are cultural objects,' and his usage of the word 'object' is meant to 'emphasize that [his] concern is with culture at large rather than new media art alone.' Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, 14-15.

⁷⁸ Galloway, *The Interface Effect*, 23.

particularly forceful, though, as it is an entry point into conceiving a new conceptual apparatus in terms of medium.

Galloway's reevaluation of new media in terms of ethics is developed out of his stance that the network is inherently political, first articulated and theorized in his book *Protocol*. The essence of the text is that the Internet is highly regulated despite being perceived as a chaotic, uncontrollable, and democratic platform. Although the Internet is a decentralized network, protocols are designed to determine the way in which data is presented and control the flow of information.⁷⁹ Given that the network is political, art that engages with the network is consequently political as well. Discussing new media art, specifically Internet art, Galloway asserts, 'If the network itself is political from the start, then any artistic practice within that network must engage politics or feign ignorance.'⁸⁰ This echoes Galloway's contention in *The Interface Effect* that there needs to be shift away from the supposedly inherent qualities of objects to an analysis of effects in order to develop political discourse and artistic practice.⁸¹

In *Protocol*, Galloway identifies Internet art as a practice that engages with the network in a political way, since it disrupts the very flows that the network seeks to control. By using the network against itself, Internet artists were able to dismantle and reassemble the structure of the network on their terms rather than on the terms of those who created its protocols. At the time of its publication, Galloway identified two distinct time periods

⁷⁹ Internet protocol (IP) is the coding system that enables computers to communicate with one another to exchange data. It functionally establishes the Internet. Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) is used along with IP. TCP/IP is the main set of protocols for transmitting data between computers over the Internet. The World Wide Web is a series of web pages linked together with protocols, including Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP), Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), Uniform Resource Locator (URL), and Domain Name System (DNS). See Tim Berners-Lee, *Weaving the Web: The original design and ultimate destiny of the World Wide Web by its inventor* (New York: Harper Business, 2000).

⁸⁰ Galloway, *Protocol*, 214.

⁸¹ Galloway, *The Interface Effect*, 24.

within Internet art: early Internet art, or ‘net.art,’⁸² and the corporate or commercial phase.⁸³ Epitomizing examples from each of these phases would be Jodi.org and etoy, respectively. The earliest Internet artists, or ‘net.artists,’ were conceptually driven, using the aesthetic properties of the browser as their formal medium. Internet art, especially at its earliest stage, was medium-specific in that the medium was the browser; the computer was the tool, subject, and content.⁸⁴ However, Internet artists used these aesthetic properties for their tactical qualities rather than their formalism, engaging with malfunctioning codes, glitches, viruses, and pop-ups to develop a formal language of disengagement. The second period of Internet art, following Galloway’s proposition, is the commercial or corporate phase. Art made specifically for the web began to give way to art more concerned with the commercial aspect of the software industry.⁸⁵ But it was not solely the software industry, as Galloway contends, but more an overwhelming sense of corporate control and commercialism that was spawned by the commercialization of the Internet and its increased network presence. Post-Internet art, then, might be conceived as the third phase of Internet art, since it draws on both of the previous phases, but in a way that thematizes the effects of digital network culture.

Recalling Manovich’s assertion that the concept of medium does not work in post-digital or post-net culture, it is confusing to find his continued basis in formalism. In his recent

⁸² ‘net.art’ refers to a subgenre of Internet artists, including Heath Bunting, Vuk Ćosić, Olia Lialina, Antonio Muntadas, Alexei Shulgin, and Jodi.org (Joan Heemskerk and Dirk Paesmans). The name mythically originated in an e-mail received by Vuk Ćosić on the nettime mailing list. Galloway, *Protocol*, 208-238; Stallabrass, *Internet Art: The Online Clash of Culture and Commerce* (London: Tate Publishing, 2003); Rachel Greene, *Internet Art* (London; New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004).

⁸³ Galloway, *Protocol*, 218-219. See also: Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); *Internet Art*.

⁸⁴ What Galloway refers to as ‘Web site specificity.’ *Protocol*, 213.

⁸⁵ Galloway, *Protocol*, 227.

text ‘Introduction to Info-Aesthetics,’⁸⁶ Manovich contends that information, which ‘contains within it the word “form,”’ has a particular aesthetics: ‘info-aesthetics.’⁸⁷ Employing info-aesthetics, Manovich argues, ‘will allow us to relate together a wide range of cultural phenomenon,’ since information is the defining feature of society today.⁸⁸ For this reason, Manovich chooses the term ‘information society,’ over others, such as Castells’ ‘network society.’ As information will exponentially increase (leading to the concept of ‘more media’ as opposed to ‘old media’ or ‘new media’) Manovich asks what the effects of this will be: ‘Will the increase in the amount of available mediums, and the advent of new tools and conventions used to access them, lead to a new aesthetics in artworks themselves and to new patterns in their reception?’⁸⁹ What we should be asking instead is whether the concept of medium, and moreover, whether aesthetics is adequate to look at the new modes of (artistic) production that have come about in the digital age.

Chapter 3

Eva and Franco Mattes, aka 0100101110101101.ORG

The early work of Eva and Franco Mattes, or the duo formerly (un)known as 0100101110101101.ORG, is illustrative of the two phases of Internet art as outlined by Galloway in *Protocol*, while their more recent work could be described as Post-Internet art, following the shift from new media objects to an abandonment of new media specificities

⁸⁶ Since 2000, Manovich has been developing the idea of ‘info-aesthetics’ on INFO-AESTHETICS, a ‘semi-open source book/Web site in progress.’ Manovich has since published *Info-Aesthetics* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010). See Manovich, ‘Infoaesthetics: Information and Form,’ updated 2 March 2001, accessed 26 May 2013, <http://www.manovich.net/IA/>.

⁸⁷ However, ‘[i]nfo-aesthetics...does not examine “new media” specifically.’ Manovich, ‘Introduction to Info-Aesthetics,’ 333.

⁸⁸ Manovich, ‘Introduction to Info-Aesthetics,’ 333.

⁸⁹ Manovich, ‘Introduction to Info-Aesthetics,’ 339.

as described in *The Interface Effect*. While there a number of self-defined Post-Internet artists, the Mattes are especially relevant to the analysis at hand, given their alignment with the program set forth by Galloway. By analyzing works that coincide with these two phases of Internet art and then looking to their more recent work, the transition from new media art to postmedia practice becomes increasingly clear.

The pair has been collaborating since 1994, making work that could easily be described as Internet art, but also working in the tradition of Tactical Media and culture jamming.⁹⁰ Even so, some of their work resists classification in these terms. Works such as *Life Sharing* (2000 – 2003), in which the Mattes made the contents of their computer accessible to anyone, and *Vopos* (2002), when the artists hooked themselves up to GPS satellite surveillance for a year, have prophetic power beyond what was known of, or being imagined for, the Web at the time these projects were executed. Prescient of Web 2.0, these works anticipated ‘techno-social innovations, but above all the trends of the near future, in a period when technology itself appeared to be heading in a completely different direction – with encryption and data protection – show[ing] their visionary power.’⁹¹ The way in which Franco Mattes describes their relationship to the computer after performing *Life Sharing* for three years could also be read in the context of *Vopos*.

⁹⁰ David Garcia and Geert Lovink first defined Tactical Media as ‘what happens when the cheap “do it yourself” media, made possible by the revolution in consumer electronics and expanded forms of distribution (from public access cable to the internet) are exploited by groups and individuals who feel aggrieved by or excluded from the wider culture.’ See David Garcia and Geert Lovink, ‘The ABC of Tactical Media’, *nettime*, 1997, accessed 17 May 2013, <http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-9705/msg00096.html>. See also: Critical Art Ensemble, *Electronic Civil Disobedience and Other Unpopular Ideas* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia & Critical Art Ensemble, 1996). Negativland coined ‘culture jamming’ on their album *JamCon84* in 1984. The term became popularized with Tactical Media artists such as the Yes Men and publications like Naomi Klein’s *No Logo* (London: Harper Perennial, 2005).

⁹¹ Quaranta, ‘Traveling by Telephone,’ in *Eva and Franco Mattes, aka 0100101110101101.ORG*, with texts by Quaranta et al. (Milano: Charta, 2009), 32.

After three years of performance we are deeply connected with the computer, we cannot unplug it, nor can we think of life without our daily overdose of exposure to public visibility. It's an obsession. We no longer know what is real and what is not, what is private and what is public. Our aim is to be one with the computer, to enter the machine, to be dispersed throughout the Internet.⁹²

For both of these projects, the Mattes let their presence live in and through the network. Everything becomes public and private, actual and virtual, all at once. There is no disconnecting from the computer, even when one is seemingly disengaged. So, although these projects anticipate Web 2.0—Facebook as *Life Sharing*, and *Vopos* being how we all live with ubiquitous computing—what they actually anticipate is a shift to a thematization of the effects of digital culture, which has become the core concern of the work the Mattes are currently making. However, before exploring the pair's most recent work, it is first necessary to review two works that are aligned with the two phases of Internet art as laid out by Galloway.

In 1998 Eva and Franco Mattes traveled to Slovenia to create the fake artist Darko Maver.⁹³ There, they met net.artist Vuk Ćosić, and came to realize the radical potential in net.art as a medium for political intervention. Although they had no formal training, in art or programming, the pair began copying code from websites to understand how sites were constructed. Reflecting on this methodology, Franco Mattes explains: 'We just copied fragments of code and stuck them together. We would change things here and there to see what happened. We downloaded entire sites to see how they were built.'⁹⁴ Two bodies of work came out of this experimentation, *Hybrids* (1998) (Fig. 1) and *Copies* (1999) (Fig. 2). The former combined 'found' fragments of net.art pieces with ordinary websites, mixing

⁹² Quaranta, 'Traveling by Telephone,' 32.

⁹³ Darko Maver was a fake artist created by the Mattes. For about a year and a half, they disseminated his work. His 'death' was staged in 1999, at which point he had already achieved some success in the art world. A posthumous exhibition was held at the 48th Venice Biennale. After the exhibition, 0100101110101101.ORG announced they had created the life and work of the artist. See Joline Blais and Jon Ippolito, *At the Edge of Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006), 123; Quaranta, 'Traveling by Telephone,' 14-16.

⁹⁴ Eva and Franco Mattes, quoted in Quaranta, 'Traveling by Telephone,' 22.

the sites together to create digital collages; the former entailed hacking into, copying, and modifying websites which made their content inaccessible or exclusive, including Hell.com and Art.Teleportacia.org, and then replicating jodi.org.⁹⁵ Hacking, appropriating, and remixing, the Mattes challenged notions of authorship, individuality, creativity, and mechanisms of control.

While the previous two bodies of work are aligned with the first phase of Internet art, *Nike Ground* (2003) coincides with the commercial or corporate phase. In September 2003, the Mattes organized the project in collaboration with Public Netbase,⁹⁶ staging a corporate takeover, or ‘Guerilla-Marketing-Super-Large-Skilled-Media-Campaign,’ of the historic and highly frequented Karlsplatz in Vienna.⁹⁷ This would be the first in a series of rebranding famous cities, as the campaign consisted ‘of buying and renaming famous places in all major cities of the world...including Piazza Nike...Plaza Nike, Nike Beach, Nikestreet, Nikestraße and so on.’⁹⁸ The (alleged) concept was simple: ‘You want to wear it, why shouldn’t cities wear it too?’⁹⁹ Performing as Nike representatives and developing an entire advertising campaign, with a website and an interactive ‘Infobox’ in the middle of the Karlsplatz, the Mattes infuriated the residents and city officials of Vienna and became embroiled in a legal dispute with Nike. The ‘Infobox,’ an eight-ton structure equipped with an elevator, housed didactic images and plans of the giant Nike ‘Swoosh’ purportedly to be installed in the middle of the Karlsplatz, or rather, ‘NikePlatz’ (Figs. 3-6). As a month of performing came to a close, Franco Mattes, wearing a mask to protect his identity—the

⁹⁵ See Blais and Ippolito, *At the Edge of Art*, 152-153; Stallabrass, *Internet Art*, 131.

⁹⁶ Public Netbase was a cultural media initiative active from 1994-2006 that supported emerging electronic art. Netbase/t0, accessed 5 May 2013, <http://www.netbase.org/t0/intro>.

⁹⁷ Nitewalkz, ‘An Interview with Franco and Eva Mattes aka 01.org’ *Culture Jamming*, accessed 1 May 2013, <http://www.culture-jamming.de/interviewIIe.html>.

⁹⁸ Nitewalkz, ‘An Interview with Franco and Eva Mattes aka 01.org.’

⁹⁹ Eva and Franco Mattes, ‘*Nike Ground*,’ Vimeo, 6:00, 2010, accessed 1 May 2013, <http://vimeo.com/18236252#>.

duo was only known as 0100101110101101.ORG at this time—announced to a crowd of onlookers:

I think it is our duty to directly intervene into urban and media space, to bring up the issues of symbolic domination in public space by private interests. We see *Nike Ground* as a statement for the artistic freedom to manipulate the symbols of everyday life.¹⁰⁰

Working with the premise that Nike is one of the most prominent and recognizable brands in the world, the Mattes derisively used the image of the company against itself, intervening in the private production of cultural symbols by reinterpreting and recontextualizing the image in the public sphere.

The duo's most recent exhibition, *Brand Innovations for Ubiquitous Authorship*, at Carroll/Fletcher, London 23 April – 11 May 2013 has the tagline: 'An exhibition stolen by Eva and Franco Mattes.'¹⁰¹ This is not necessarily a new idea for the pair, recalling tactics from *Hybrids* and *Copies*, as well as *Nike Ground*. First curated by Post-Internet artist Artie Vierkant and exhibited at Higher Pictures in New York from 19 July – 17 August 2012, The Mattes' version of *Brand Innovations* borrows, or rather, steals, Vierkant's curatorial idea and strategy, the press release (Figs. 7, 8),¹⁰² even a good portion of the same artists, translating the exhibition into a new space with different contributions or different versions of objects.¹⁰³ For both exhibitions, then, the curators asked participating artists to make their contribution using a custom printing or fabrication service, to be sent directly to the gallery. Accordingly, the artists only know the digital version of their contribution,

¹⁰⁰ Eva and Franco Mattes, '*Nike Ground*'

¹⁰¹ *Brand Innovations for Ubiquitous Authorship*, Carroll/Fletcher (London, 23 April – 11 May 2013), press release and gallery guide.

¹⁰² Using 'Track Changes' in Microsoft Word, the Mattes used the same press release from the Higher Picture exhibition, crossing out and modifying information accordingly. See Figs. 7, 8.

¹⁰³ Vierkant's exhibition included the work of sixty artists, while the Mattes included twenty-seven artists. The artists who appear at both Higher Pictures and Carroll/Fletcher are Body By Body, Martin Kohout, Jaako Pallasuovo, Aaaron Graham, Sean Raspet, Andrew Norma, Matt Goerzen, Jon Rafman, Parker Ito, Daniel Temkin, Borna Sammak, Nick Demarco. See Figs. 7, 8.

and the curators would not know the contents of the exhibition until they arrived to the gallery. In addition to this digital/physical dialectic, there is also the physical gallery site and a corresponding Tumblr site, updated as objects arrive. Clearly a work of Post-Internet art in itself, while also exhibiting works of Post-Internet art, the exhibition draws on both the effects of new media and Conceptual Art, as suggested by Vierkant in his artist's statement. Both tendencies come across through the use of custom printing and fabrication services, as the digital is both virtual and actual, and the idea for the object is actualized through a service using mass-produced materials.¹⁰⁴

The arrangement of the works in the gallery space and the individual works further translates the digital into the physical. As objects appear layered and flattened, one is reminded of a computer desktop; posters on the walls are positioned at the edges and in corners, while a flag, parallel to the posters, hangs from the middle of the gallery, like windows on a computer screen (Fig. 9). Rafaël Rozendaal's *RR Merchandising* (2013), a collection of monogram 'RR' apparel, hangs lifelessly on a clothing rack, while a sheet of paper with his initials is clipped to the rack along with the clothes, literally flattening the idea for an object into an image (Fig. 10).¹⁰⁵ But Rozendaal's piece is not exceptional in

¹⁰⁴ Sol Lewitt's instruction-based pieces obviously correlate with this strategy, but other similarities could be drawn between Dan Flavin using mass-produced fluorescent lights or John Baldessari's word paintings carried out by poster painters. See Lucy R. Lippard, ed., *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966-1972* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

¹⁰⁵ Rozendaal is an interesting selection in the context of this exhibition, as he does not agree with the term Post-Internet art: 'I'm not sure what the exact definition is, but I keep hearing the term "Post internet art" It usually refers to artists who are "internet aware" and then make art inspired by their world wide web impressions. I find the word "post" misleading. It implies that we've moved one step further, beyond the internet, into new territory. We live in a post-newspaper world, post-tv, post music industry, things are changing. But I don't know anything that feels "post-internet." It's much too soon for that word. The futurists were not post-industrial. They were inspired by the industrial revolution and used that as the subject of their art. We might be shifting from an industrial society to an information based one. I am very excited to find out what the next step will be, when the true post-internet will be invented.' Rafaël Rozendaal, 'Post-internet art,' 16 October 2011, accessed 29 April 2013, <http://www.newrafael.com/post-internet-art/>.

this regard, as every object in the space is flattened. The result is a full gallery that feels sparse; yet, there are images everywhere. Key rings, mugs, a calendar, adhesives on the walls: every object is an image. And every image is an object. This materialization of images relates to Hito Steyerl's discussion of participating in images rather than just identifying with them, which ultimately enables a reinterpretation of representation. The image 'doesn't represent reality. It is a fragment of the real world. It is a thing just like any other—a thing like you and me.'¹⁰⁶ The image-objects in *Brand Innovations* are expressionless fragments,¹⁰⁷ revealing more about the digital through their physical instantiations: the digital is as real as a thing just like any other.

Different versions of the same contributions reiterate the redundancy of individualizing these image-objects. Daniel Temkin's *Dither Study #40 Flip Flops* (2013) is translation of a 'Dither Study' onto an accumulation of scattered flip-flops, in a two-tone gradient of pixilated turquoise and magenta (Fig. 11).¹⁰⁸ In 'collaboration with Photoshop,' Temkin 'give[s] the program an impossible task: to draw a solid color or gradient with a palette of incompatible colors, thus exposing the dithering algorithm's complex, seemingly irrational patterns.'¹⁰⁹ These are generally displayed as large-scale prints or on screens, but for his contribution to both versions of *Brand Innovations*, Temkin has translated this 'collaboration' onto two versions of self-customized flip-flops. Like the other objects in the gallery space, they are personalized, yet really, they are all the same. As described on the press release and gallery guide, custom printing and fabrication services 'have arisen as the result of increasing consumer demands toward customization and print-on-demand

¹⁰⁶ Hito Steyerl, *The Wretched of the Screen* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), 52.

¹⁰⁷ Steyerl references Walter Benjamin's notion of expressionless in her discussion of images. Steyerl, *The Wretched of the Screen*, 52, 58.

¹⁰⁸ Temkin's contribution to *Brand Innovations* at Higher Pictures can be seen in Fig. 11 (top).

¹⁰⁹ Daniel Temkin, 'Dither Studies 2011 – ', accessed 20 May 2013, <http://danieltemkin.com/DitherStudies/About.aspx>.

objects, offering a venue for traditional ‘self-expression to be imprinted onto commonplace goods.’¹¹⁰ With the rise of consumer culture and mass-produced products, customization services have become increasingly popular, with services that enable customers to create ‘original custom products in minutes.’¹¹¹ Using these sites, customers can quickly and easily personalize everyday objects such as t-shirts, posters, mugs, key chains, stickers, calendars, cards, hats, mouse pads, baby bibs, and dog jumpers, while other variations of such sites specialize in 3D printing and printed books. All maintain the promise of delivering ‘unique,’ ‘original,’ ‘one-of-a-kind,’ and ‘custom’ products, exemplary of the shift from Fordist to Toyota-style manufacturing, which comes with the informatization of culture and the immaterialization of labor.¹¹²

The premise of custom printing is not unlike those of popular Web 2.0 sites, such as Facebook and YouTube. Although these sites promote self-individuation through the content individuals upload, the interface renders everything the same. It is both a standardizing and socializing injunction, as the contents of one’s life must conform to the formats provided, and the contents uploaded conform to and around the contents of others. In other words, there is a specific netiquette that has emerged as a result of the interface: rather than promoting individuals to be self-expressive, these websites actually encourage the standardization of expression. As a result, there is a staggering amount of homogeneity in content. Several works have revealed and responded to this growing trend of homogeneity online, including Thomson & Craighead’s *Several Interruptions* (2009) (Fig.

¹¹⁰ *Brand Innovations for Ubiquitous Authorship*, Carroll/Fletcher (London, 23 April – 11 May 2013), press release and gallery guide.

¹¹¹ Cafepress and Zazzle are two examples of custom printing sites, while Shapeways specializes in 3D printing, and Lulu specializes in printed books. Cafepress, accessed 15 May 2013, <http://www.cafepress.com/>.

¹¹² This is the product of a profound shift away from Fordist to Toyota-style manufacture that is related to the shift toward an informational economy. See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2000), 289–297.

12), Dennis Knopf's *Bootyclipse* (2007) (Figs. 13, 14), and Natalie Bookchin's *Mass Ornament* (2009) (Fig. 15).¹¹³ For the most part, these artists adopt the same strategy, as they compile and collage YouTube footage to elucidate how people represent themselves online in hauntingly similar ways. *Brand Innovations* responds to this as well, but with different tactics. Rather than only reveal a tendency, the exhibition translates this digital phenomenon into a thematic strategy for an exhibition that takes place through the web and in the physical space of the gallery. The Mattes version augments Vierkant's exhibition by further challenging notions of authorship and object/image, or image-object, production in the digital and physical.

The homogenization of representation online relates to the Galloway's discussion of the unrepresentable in *The Interface Effect*, his core example being maps of the Internet. According to Galloway, 'every map of the Internet looks the same.'¹¹⁴ Although there are different representations of the Internet, which vary slightly, they all fundamentally communicate the same idea. Galloway claims that one explanation for this is 'that no poetics is possible in this uniform aesthetic space.'¹¹⁵ As such, there has yet to be a sufficient mode of representation to emerge that represents contemporaneity in its entirety. To summarize Galloway's position, he breaks down cultural production and interpretation into three instances: the aestheticization of systematicity, which sacrifices 'the aesthetic in favor of the algorithmic;' glitch aesthetics, or what Galloway describes as breaking 'the machine and re-staging it as broken beauty, thereby sacrificing the algorithmic in favor of the aesthetic;' and finally, as both options are insufficient (although the latter is more successful than the former), the need to remap 'the very terms of

¹¹³ For more on these works see Geert Lovink, *Networks Without a Cause: A Critique of Social Media* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2011), 141; McHugh, *Post-Internet*, 13 February 2010; Morgan Quaintance, 'Being-Online,' *Art Monthly* 363 (February 2013): 13-16; Steyerl *The Wretched of the Screen*, 186-187.

¹¹⁴ Galloway, *The Interface Effect*, 85.

¹¹⁵ Galloway, *The Interface Effect*, 85.

representability within the society of control.¹¹⁶ While a counter-aesthetic is the first step towards achieving representability, or the second instance Galloway describes, it does not effectually achieve representation; in order to do so, the very terms from which representability derives must be understood in terms of ethics as opposed to aesthetics. Ultimately, Galloway concludes, ‘we do not yet have the critical or poetic language in which to represent the control society.’¹¹⁷ In other words, we have yet to find the way to represent our contemporaneity; although, Post-Internet art, such as the Mattes’ version of *Brand Innovations*, is a glimpse into what a new sort of representation might look like.

Conclusion

‘We are becoming one with the pixel’

No Fun (2010) is a short film comprising approximately sixteen minutes of the video documentation from a performance carried out on Chatroulette, a popular website that randomly pairs users as chat partners to communicate via text, audio, and video. For the piece, Franco Mattes staged his suicide (hanging was his method of demise), which the pair then broadcasted via webcam on the site, so that other users would randomly come across this horrifying scene. The video is formatted as a diptych, so that his body hangs on one side of the screen, and the random users and their varying responses appear opposite (Figs. 16, 17). Franco Mattes’ hanged body remains constant throughout the duration of the piece, moving slightly as his dead weight swings the rope, while the viewers change according to the algorithmic selections of Chatroulette. For many, the initial reaction is shock, which then leads to disbelief. Some people laugh, take photos with their cell phones, or call over their friends to witness the obscenity before them. Others are

¹¹⁶ Galloway, *The Interface Effect*, 97-98.

¹¹⁷ Galloway, *The Interface Effect*, 98.

apathetic, staring at the scene as blankly as they might any other image. One man begins masturbating; one calls the police.

It is difficult to situate this work, even though the Mattes label it an ‘online performance.’¹¹⁸ Given that the work is dependent upon its networked presence, it might be more accurate to describe it as a ‘networked performance.’ While the initial staging of the performance occurs as Franco Mattes ‘hangs’ himself, the performance is only instantiated through users viewing and reacting to the work through the interface of Chatroulette. The performance is at once physical, in the sense of its various physical locations, but digital in that it can only transpire and become actual through its networked presence. Therefore, not only does the performance happen in both the physical and the digital, but it also depends on both places to inform one another and be conceived as a continuous flow. The Mattes’ slogan ‘Reality is overrated’ comes to mind in the context of this work; however, a reevaluation of what constitutes reality is necessary in the digital age.

It is worth returning to Bishop, and more precisely, her response to a letter co-authored by Lauren Cornell and Brian Droitcour published in *Artforum*’s January 2013 issue. While Cornell and Droitcour attack Bishop’s argument for its unfounded claims about new media art, Bishop clarifies that her article was not about new media, *per se*, but how new media changes us. The aim was not to look to the growth and development of new media art, but rather to illuminate a dilemma that is so glaringly present in contemporary artistic practice that is largely being ignored: the digital in everything. But this is not all: in her concluding remarks, Bishop references Steyerl, explaining what a reevaluation of new media and contemporary art requires: ‘Rather than simply affirming new media’s ubiquity, we need analyses of the way in which...we are becoming one with the pixel, and what this

¹¹⁸ Eva and Franco Mattes, ‘No Fun,’ Vimeo, 9:58, 2010, accessed 19 March 2013, <http://vimeo.com/11467722>.

implies for anthropocentric models of perception.¹¹⁹ Following this line of thinking, it would seem that the digital divide, supposed or actual, is dwindling. In other words, if we are becoming one with the pixel, how could there be a divide, between the physical and the digital? Moreover, if we are to understand this sentence as a metaphor for the divide between mainstream contemporary art and new media art, with ‘we’ standing for the former and ‘pixel’ for the latter, then the possibility of these worlds intersecting and informing one another becomes imaginable. This close reading of Bishop may seem overreaching, but her word choice implies that is not inconceivable to become one with the pixel, as Steyerl suggests. Only when there is a practice that mediates the physical and the digital, the actual and the virtual, will there be an artistic output that truly reflects on our moment of contemporaneity, as we exist in these two worlds simultaneously, at all times. The physical and the digital can no longer be conceived as discrete; neither can contemporary artistic production of any kind.

In his *What Is Contemporary Art?*, Terry Smith tackles this difficult and often avoided question,¹²⁰ determining three currents of contemporary art: the aesthetic of globalization, responses to the postcolonial turn, and participation in the image economy, or ‘the economy,’¹²¹ which draws on the first two currents, albeit with less concern for past power structures, and more concern for the potentialities of and in networked futures. These three currents, he maintains, are decisively contemporary because they are not symptomatic of contemporaneity, but are generated by its conditions. This is reminiscent of Bishop’s contention from ‘Digital Divide,’ as she claims that digital culture is the

¹¹⁹ Lauren Cornell and Brian Droitcour; Bishop, ‘Technical Difficulties,’ *Artforum* 51, No. 5 (January 2013): 38.

¹²⁰ However, there is also the *e-flux journal* publication, which asks the same question in its title. See Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, Anton Vidokle, *What Is Contemporary Art?* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010).

¹²¹ Smith first pens this portmanteau in *The Architecture of Aftermath* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 6-8.

'structuring paradox' of contemporary artistic practices, or rather, that most works are only symptomatic of contemporaneity. Post-Internet could be described on the same terms as Smith's currents, as it thematizes the effects of network culture; it is not merely a symptom of the present. The problem with both Smith's remarks and Post-Internet discourse is that, rather than continuing to debate what it is that constitutes contemporary art, we should be investigating the implications of its effects.

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Figure 1

Eva and Franco Mattes, screenshot of *Index of / ~you%20Wrong*, from *Hybrids*, 1998, digital collage. Eva and Franco Mattes, Brooklyn.

Photo: <http://0100101110101101.org/home/hybrids/00009/index.html>.

Figure 2

Eva and Franco Mattes, screenshot of *jodi.org* (left); screenshot of copy of *jodi.org* (right), from *Copies*, 1999, website(s). Eva and Franco Mattes, Brooklyn.

Photo: <http://0100101110101101.org/home/copies/index.html>.

Figure 3

Eva and Franco Mattes, *Nike Ground* (Infobox), 2003, various materials, installation, Karlsplatz, Vienna. Eva and Franco Mattes, Brooklyn.

Photo: <http://0100101110101101.org/home/nikeground/index.html>.

Figure 4

Eva and Franco Mattes, *Nike Ground* (Infobox, detail), 2003, various materials, installation, Karlsplatz, Vienna. Eva and Franco Mattes, Brooklyn.

Photo: <http://0100101110101101.org/home/nikeground/index.html>.

Figure 5

Eva and Franco Mattes, *Nike Ground* (Infobox, inside), 2003, various materials, installation, Karlsplatz, Vienna. Eva and Franco Mattes, Brooklyn.

Photo: <http://0100101110101101.org/home/nikeground/index.html>.

Figure 6

Eva and Franco Mattes, *Project for the fake Nike Monument in Karlsplatz* (detail), 2003, digital print on canvas. Eva and Franco Mattes, Brooklyn.

Photo: <http://0100101110101101.org/home/nikeground/index.html>.

Figure 7

Artie Vierkant and Higher Pictures, *Brand Innovations for Ubiquitous Authorship*, 2012, press release. Higher Pictures, New York.

Photo: http://www.higherpictures.com/exhibitions/brand_innovations/bifua%20press%20release.pdf.

Figure 8

Eva and Franco Mattes and Carroll/Fletcher, *Brand Innovations for Ubiquitous Authorship*, 2013, press release. Carroll/Fletcher, London.

Photo: http://www.carrollfletcher.com/usr/library/documents/eva-and-franco-mattes/2013_carroll_fletcher_brand_innovations_for_ubiquitous_authorship_press_release.pdf.

Figure 9

Carroll/Fletcher, installation view of *Brand Innovations for Ubiquitous Authorship*, 2013. Carroll/Fletcher, London.

Photo: http://www.carrollfletcher.com/exhibitions/16/installation_shots/installation_shots306/.

Figure 10

Rafaël Rozendaal, RR *Merchandising*, 2013, assorted custom printed apparel. Carroll/Fletcher, London.
Photo: http://www.carrollfletcher.com/exhibitions/16/works/image_two344/.

Figure 11

Daniel Temkin, *Dither Study #1 Flip Flops* (top), 2012; *Dither Study #40 Flip Flops* (bottom), 2013; custom printed flip flops. Higher Pictures, New York; Carroll/Fletcher, London.
Photo: <http://bifua.tumblr.com/>.

Figure 12

Thomson & Craighead (Jon Thomson and Alison Craighead), video still of *Several Interruptions*, 2009, three channel video, color, sound. Carroll/Fletcher, London.
Photo: http://www.carrollfletcher.com/exhibitions/15/works/image_two285/.

Figure 13

Dennis Knopf, video still of *BOOTY!*, from *Bootyclipse*, 2007, digital video, color, sound. Dennis Knopf.
Photo: <http://www.dennisknopf.net/BootyClipse.html>.

Figure 14

Dennis Knopf, video still of *indian booty dance*, from *Bootyclipse*, 2007, digital video, color, sound. Dennis Knopf.
Photo: <http://www.dennisknopf.net/BootyClipse.html>.

Figure 15

Natalie Bookchin, video still of *Mass Ornament*, 2009, single channel video installation. Natalie Bookchin, Los Angeles.
Photo: <http://bookchin.net/projects/massornament.html>.

Figure 16

Eva and Franco Mattes, video still of *No Fun*, 2010, digital video, color, sound. Eva and Franco Mattes, Brooklyn.
Photo: <http://www.0100101110101101.org/home/nofun/>.

Figure 17

Eva and Franco Mattes, video still of *No Fun*, 2010, digital video, color, sound. Eva and Franco Mattes, Brooklyn.
Photo: <http://www.0100101110101101.org/home/nofun/>.

Illustrations

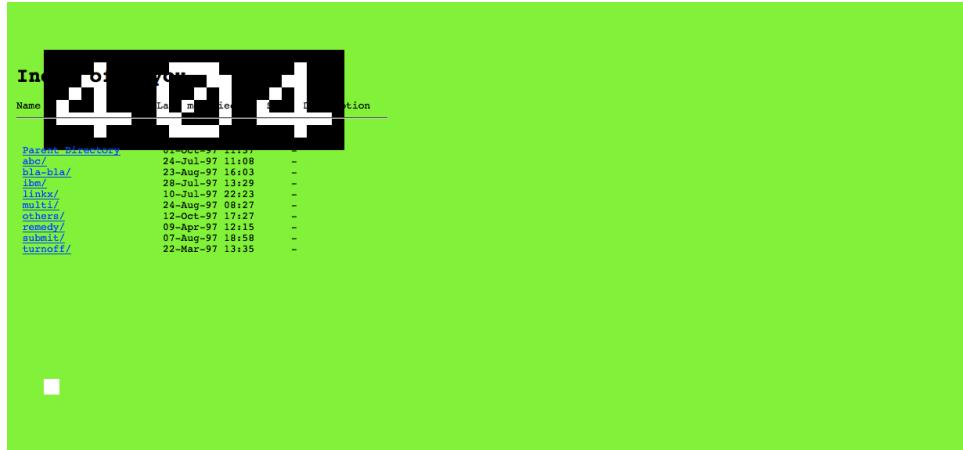


Fig. 1. Eva and Franco Mattes, screenshot of *Index of /~you%20Wrong*, from *Hybrids*, 1998.

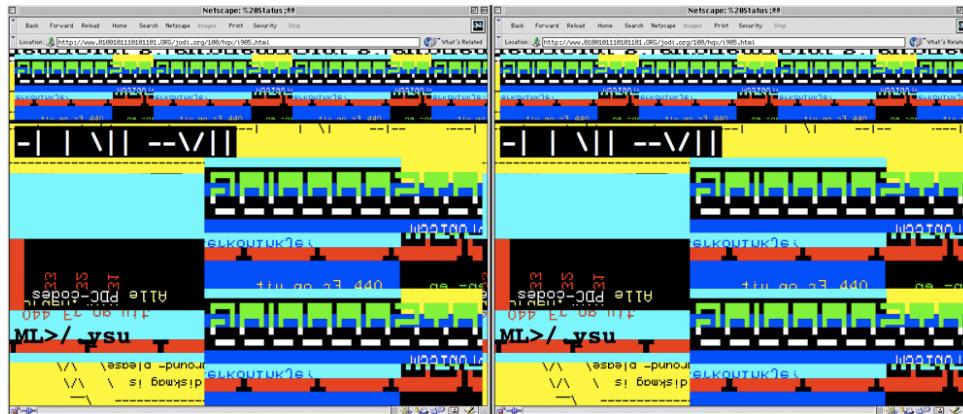


Fig. 2. Eva and Franco Mattes, screenshot of *jodi.org* (left); screenshot of copy of *jodi.org* (right), from *Copies*, 1999.



Fig. 3. Eva and Franco Mattes, *Nike Ground* (Infobox), 2003.



Fig. 4. Eva and Franco Mattes, *Nike Ground* (Infobox, detail), 2003.



Fig. 5. Eva and Franco Mattes, *Nike Ground* (Infobox, inside), 2003.

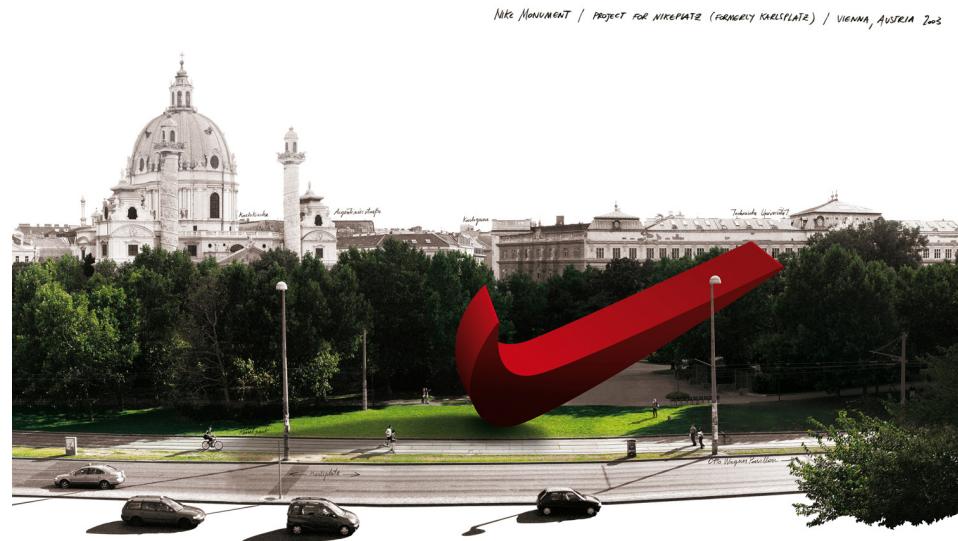


Fig. 6. Eva and Franco Mattes, *Project for the fake Nike Monument in Karlsplatz* (detail), 2003.

HIGHER PICTURES

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NEWS RELEASE

Exhibition: Brand Innovations for Ubiquitous Authorship

Date: July 19 – August 17, 2012

Organized by Artie Vierkant & Higher Pictures

Higher Pictures and Artie Vierkant present *Brand Innovations for Ubiquitous Authorship*, a group show of more than sixty artists.

For this exhibition a large group of international artists were asked to produce an object using a custom printing or fabrication service such as CafePress, Zazzle and Walmart, which delivered the objects in sealed boxes directly to the gallery.

Higher Pictures has not seen a single piece in this show as of the writing of this news release. We expect this backwards approach to be filled with highs, lows, and hopefully more than a few transcendent successes. The result will be a gallery of art, artifact and artifice.

For further information contact Kim Bourus at 212.249.6100.

Patrick Armstrong	Jesse Harding	Ryder Rипps
Conor Backman	Martijn Hendriks	Borna Sammak
Steve Bishop	Ann Hirsch	David Schoerner
Boško Blagojević	John Houck	Edward Shenk
Body by Body (Cameron	Ross Iannatti	Pascual Sieto
Soren & Melissa Sachs)	Parker Ilo	Travis Smalley
Juliette Bonneviol	Devin Kenny	Kate Steciw
Mark Brown	Martin Kohout	Jordan Tale
Lauren Christensen	Barney Kulok	Daniel Temkin
Jesse Darling	Guthrie Lonergan	Artie Vierkant
N Dash	Andrea Longacre-white	Hannah Whitaker
Jake Davidson	Benjamin Lohan	Andrew Norman Wilcox
Nick DeMarco	Catharine Maloney	Helga Wretman
Dillon DeWaters	Gene McHugh	Nillem Yelah
Harm van den Dorpel	Haley Mellin	Joe Yory
Dora + Maja (Dora Budor	Hanne Muugaas	Damon Zucconi
& Maja Cule)	Kalja Novitskova	
Daniel Everett	Marisa Olson	
Brendan Fowler	Jaakko Pallasvuo	
Derek Frech	Alex Perweller	
Matt Goerzen	Jon Rafman	
Aaron Graham	Sean Raspet	

Fig. 7. Artie Vierkant and Higher Pictures, *Brand Innovations for Ubiquitous Authorship*, 2012.

HIGHER PICTURES
Carroll/Fletcher

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PRESS RELEASE

Exhibition: [Brand Innovations for Ubiquitous Authorship.*](#)

Date: July 20 – August 17, 2013 [23 April - 11 May, 2013](#)

Opening reception: Thursday 18 July 2013, 6-8pm [Monday 22 April, 6:30 - 8pm](#)

Higher Pictures, Carroll/Fletcher and Artie Vierkant, Eva and Franco Mattes present Brand Innovations for Ubiquitous Authorship, a group show of more than fifty artists whose works frequently challenge traditional notions of object production and material constraint.

For this exhibition each artist was asked to produce an object using a custom printing or fabrication service. These services, such as CafePress and Zazzle, exist to provide users a cost-effective way of producing fully customized products, from t-shirts to iPhone cases, and a host of other objects—custom 3D printing from companies like Shapeways, full printed books from companies like Lulu, &c.

These services have arisen as the result of increasing consumer demands toward customization and print-on-demand objects, offering a venue for traditional "self expression" to be imprinted onto commonplace goods. As the tools for image creation and dissemination have become increasingly democratized, these services attempt to expand this domain into the realm of objects. They are used here to transform images from a plethora of authors into a mass of commodities.

Higher Pictures, Carroll/Fletcher has not seen a single piece in this show as of the writing of this news release. We expect this backwards approach to be filled with highs, lows, and hopefully more than a few transcendent successes. The result will be a gallery of art, artifact and artifice.

For further information contact Kim Bourne at 212.249.6100, [+44 \(0\)20 7323 6111](#)

Participating artists and websites include:

[Annabelle Arola](#)
[Andreas Banderas](#)
[Aram Bartholl](#)
[Body by Body](#)
[Chris Coy](#)
[Christopher DeGruy](#)
[Nick DeMarco](#)
[Constant Dullaart](#)
[Andreas Eryik](#)
[Matt Gerten](#)
[Aaron Graham](#)
[Toby Huddleston](#)
[Parker Ito](#)
[Justin Kemp](#)

[Brian Khek](#)
[Martin Kohout](#)
[Bryan Krueger](#)
[Lindsey Lawson](#)
[Jaakko Pallasvuo](#)
[Jon Raffman](#)
[Sean Raspet](#)
[Rafael Rozendaal](#)
[Borna Sammak](#)
[Oliver Sutherland](#)
[Daniel Temkin](#)
[Brad Troemel](#)
[Artie Vierkant](#)
[Andrew Norman Wilson](#)

* Exhibition concept stolen from Artie Vierkant's show by the same title.

Fig. 8. Eva and Franco Mattes and Carroll/Fletcher, *Brand Innovations for Ubiquitous Authorship*, 2013.



Fig. 9. Carroll/Fletcher, installation view of *Brand Innovations for Ubiquitous Authorship*, 2013.



Fig. 10. Rafaël Rozendaal, *RR Merchandising*, 2013.



Fig. 11. Daniel Temkin, *Dither Study #1 Flip Flops* (top), 2012; *Dither Study #40 Flip Flops* (bottom), 2013.



Fig. 12. Thomson & Craighead, video still of *Several Interruptions*, 2009.



Fig. 13. Dennis Knopf, video still of *BOOTY!*, from *Bootyclipse*, 2007.



Fig. 14. Dennis Knopf, video still of *indian booty dance*, from *Bootyclipse*, 2007.



Fig. 15. Natalie Bookchin, video still of *Mass Ornament*, 2009.



Fig. 16. Eva and Franco Mattes, video still of *No Fun*, 2010.

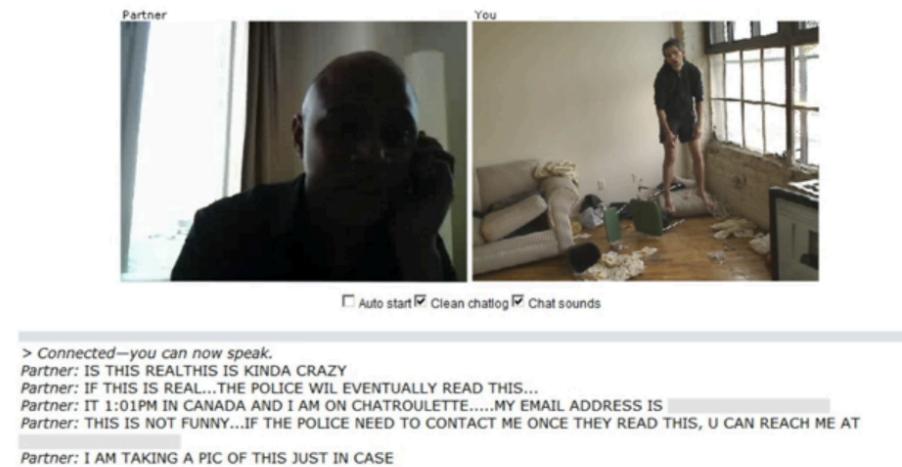


Fig. 17. Eva and Franco Mattes, video still of *No Fun*, 2010.