

THE FOURTH WALL

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ABSTRACT

With the advent of the World Wide Web, new art forms are being created where the vehicle bringing the art form to the visitor, via a small and intimate screen can be accessed equally well from within and without the museum walls and are in fact accessed from a remote computer far beyond the fourth wall. In 1996, Udi Aloni exhibited *Re_U_Man* at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem. "*Re_U_Man*", an interactive digital presentation that had been conceptually devised for a web-site: <http://www.re-u-man.com> With virtual exhibitions on-line, original digital art flowing into our personal computers at the click of a mouse and now entire installations becoming available beyond the fourth wall, why does the visitor need to even come into the real museum?

These and similar questions are already being faced by curators who have the responsibility of presenting similar works to the museum public, but what is being challenged here is not the validity of these new art forms or the vehicle imperative to their presentation but the gallery space of the museum, as defined by the curator - real or virtual.

KEYWORDS

Re_U_Man; Kabbalah; Udi_Aloni; Zohar; Post-Modernism; Sphiro; Fourth Wall; Tree_of_Life

There is nothing new about art on the Web. There must be more self proclaimed artists out there on the net than there ever have been since man first molded clay. There seem to be tens of thousands of Web sites devoted to art, and thousands of Web sites that *are* art. What is new, is the fact that art museums are coming around to recognize this phenomenon and are beginning to find ways to exhibit these original art forms.

Digital, original art should not be confused with virtual exhibitions. To clarify, I would define a virtual exhibition, as the space on a museum Web site where art, screen shots of scans of photographs of the collections are exhibited. Neither am I referring to digitally created art that is later printed out to hang on a gallery wall that becomes site specific. Rather, the digital presentation of the original art, specifically devised as a Web site and where it is not only the vehicle selected by the artist to communicate his or her work in its original format, usually a combination of digital imagery, text, animations, video clips and audio but also the essence of the work.

It is no longer unusual to find digitally created art exhibited in art museums, monitors are easily installed on the exhibition floor and the public no longer expects to find a digital catalog of the collections on screen, but the original art form itself.

This trend followed the relatively recent establishment of video as an accepted medium of original art and video art is now days popular in art museums. Video and television technologies were originally limited to television stations who had the facilities and capabilities to work in this medium. Television companies mainly focused on popular and documentary productions but as the technologies developed, and as artists gained access to portable cameras, video players etc. they began experimenting with new creative possibilities. As visitors, we are no longer surprised to meet a Bill Viola or Tony Oursler using a television or monitor in their installation and we rarely relate to the fact that there is a monitor there at all. There is a seamless-ness and transparency about the medium that doesn't distract us from the art experience.

As the Web expands as present trends show, and artists begin to understand more and more about this medium we are bound to see an explosive increase of Web sites (as the 'real' art work) appearing all over the world. When these sites are deemed appropriate to show at an art museum, the curator will have to find ways to exhibit the art on suitable monitors in the gallery.

What if access to these Web sites from within the gallery floor is identical to these same sites accessed

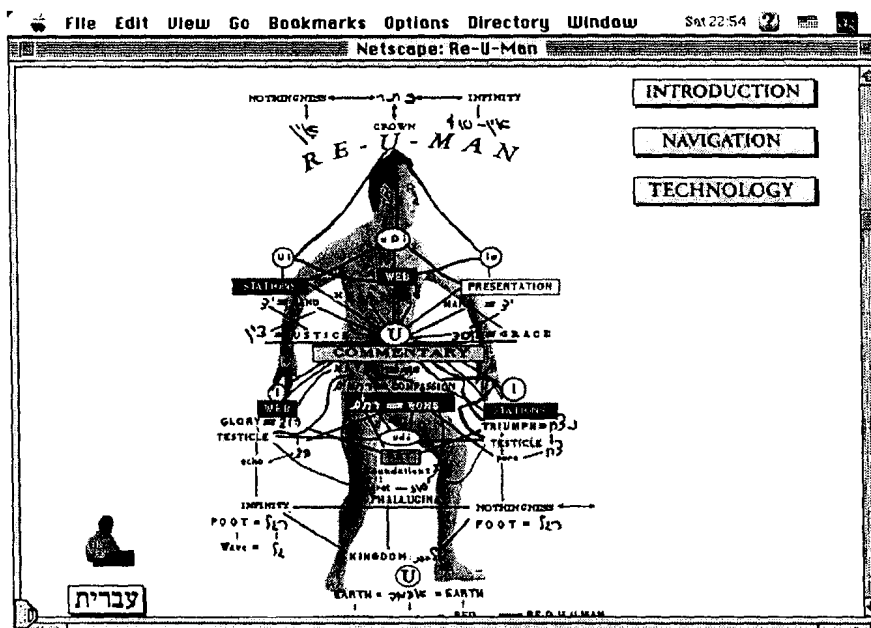


Figure 1. RE-U-Man, Web site, screen shot, digital image by Udi Aloni

from beyond the museum, what will entice the visitor into the museum to see the 'collections' at all? Would the visitor bother to come to the museum to witness a television broadcast while he could equally well enjoy it from the comfort of his own home?

In the short space of this paper, I am afraid that I will only be able to pose these questions but not necessarily answer them. New digital art works are appearing all over the world and it has become clear not only that they are already having an impact on how we perceive of the art museum and the containing space that the four walls traditionally enclose but also the way curators produce their collections, be them real or virtual.

With virtual exhibitions on-line, original digital art flowing into our home computers at the click of a mouse and now entire original art collections becoming available beyond the fourth wall, why does the visitor need to even come into the real museum?

In November, 1996, Udi Aloni exhibited an interactive digital work at an installation at the Photography Gallery, of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, "Re-U-Man", which had been previously inaugurated at a presentation, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, June 21, 1996. (Figure 1)

"And the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man is become as one of us,

to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and

take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:'

Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to

till the ground from whence he was taken.

So he drove out the man; and he placed at the East of the garden

of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way, to

keep the way of the tree of life."

Genesis 3:23-25

The 'Tree of Life' does not look particularly like a tree at all but a series of rosettes, arranged and constructed in a symmetrical pattern which, according to Jewish tradition, is a divine structure, a

model of man. According to Genesis 1:27, man is created in the image of God. (Figure 2)

These rosettes, or 'Sefhirot', (spheres) are the divine representation of that image and as primordial Adam, they are the Jewish mythical ideal of man, our archetypal nature. This metaphoric model of man, is largely based on the physiology and can be found in Jewish mystical and esoteric knowledge, known mainly as the Kaballah, literally meaning "Reception".

By combining visual midrashes, (Talmudic commentary), with political, cultural and theological commentaries, and woven into the all-incorporating Kabbalistic Web of the 'Tree of Life', Aloni has created a digital vessel for his ambitious and prolific art.

"I found it quite fascinating, the similarity of the Dionysus myth and the Jehovah myth. In both, the divine body is torn to pieces and spread all over the world. One of the main Sisyphean projects of the Jewish people, according to the Lurianic Kabala, is to re- collect the pieces of the divine body, or the sparks, try to separate them from the dirt that had merged with them, and reassemble the pieces into the original whole. Even though they never succeed in creating the original God they manufacture mutations of God. Some are funny, some monsters, but all fascinating.

The Re-U-Man structure is an attempt to build a protocol that will help me merge the scattered pieces of the "I", the "I" that is torn by late Capitalism, by the old Marxism, by the sham of Modernism, and by the vagueness of Post- Modernism".

Udi Aloni, 1996

Aloni's canons of the secular and non-secular, combined with his powerful erotic imagery creates a compelling protocol that flows in virtual space and requires several hours of the visitor's time to travel, retrieve and combine.

In post-modern tradition, Aloni eclectically incorporates text; Gnostic writings, the New Testament

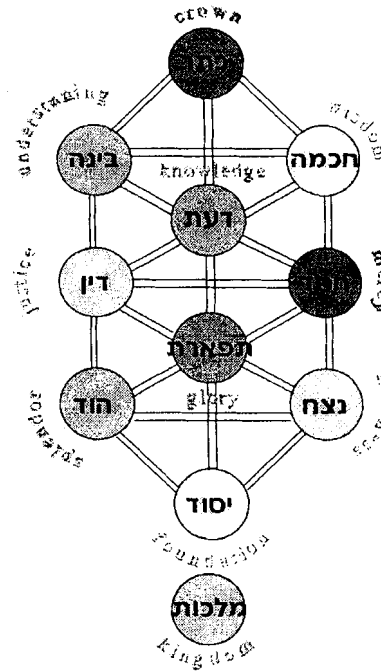


Figure 2. The Tree of Life diagram, artistic interpretation by the author

and the Bible, combines and blurs sexual identity, and calls on personal and collective mythology. Through this manipulation of digital information, imagery, and audio narrative, Aloni has found an efficient vehicle to help him/us merge the scattered pieces, a self-appointed task that he has set for himself, in a bid to recreate the new human, Re-U-Man.

The 'Tree of Life' motif is logical visual and conceptual framework for his re-assemblance of the divine sparks, but not a motif that is often found in Jewish iconography. This is due to the fact that traditionally, the Kabbalistic esoteric knowledge, found in the Book called the 'Zohar', should not be read carelessly. The 'Zohar', the 'Book of Splendour' appeared in Catalonia, Spain, in the 13rd century and throughout the centuries, these sources have not been readily available to all, but had been concealed and protected by Kabbalistic scholars. The 'Zohar' is purported to contain such powerful knowledge that the unworthy may well endanger themselves if not properly equipped to receive it. Traditionally, the 'Talmud' stipulated that only men over 40 years



Figure 3. 'Sign', detail from Mordechai Ardon's "At the Gates of Jerusalem", Israel Museum collection

of age, married, and steeped in the wisdom of the Talmud could attempt to study the 'Zohar'. The implication was that one should be mature, stable and anchored in Jewish tradition.

Rarely have Jewish artists selected the 'Tree of Life' motif for their art. There is a Jewish taboo of representation of God's image in any visual form and throughout the centuries very few exceptions have been found. A rare exception is evident in a Jewish marriage certificate, ('Ketubah') from Mantua, dated 1689, from the collection of the New York Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America where there are several winged creatures in vignettes on the borders which appear to be anthropomorphic representations of God.

On the rare occasions we find visual references to God, we find this depicted as a hand appearing behind a cloud, as noted above the altar on the sacrifice of Isaac on the mural in the Dura Europus Synagogue, Syria, from the third century CE and in the wall painting at the Beit Alpha Synagogue, in Israel, sixth century CE.

Kabbalistic iconography has similarly been taboo for Jewish artists and craftsman and very few exceptions of secular art depict the 'The Tree of Life' or other Kabbalistic iconography.

An exception is Mordechi Ardon who has included the 'Ten Spheres' in a number of his works. As a student at the Bauhaus, he remained unaffected by the spiritual Christian influences of his contemporaries at the time, yet included Jewish motifs such as Hebrew letters and the 'Tree of Life' motif in his works after his arrival in Israel in 1933. Ardon's primary motivation was to meet the challenge presented by the fathers of the young Jewish State through the creation of a new Israeli art, anchored in the present but with roots firmly tied to the past.

The 'Tree of Life' motif appears in a number of his triptychs, notably in his 'At the Gates of Jerusalem', 1967, from the collection of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Here the 'Tree of Life' is called 'Sign' and appears on the right hand panel as a floating, mystical icon. (Figure 3)



Figure 4. 'Sham', screen shot, digital image by Udi Aloni

Aloni has not only incorporated the 'Tree of Life' allegory, in itself an provocative choice of focus, but has inter-woven within this theme, both the secular and non-secular in his journey to re-make man. This motif does however make for an impressive cartographical anchor, mapping out branches and nodes both thematically and technologically, an ideal metaphor for a Kabbalistic Web site. Aloni questions gender, tradition and politics by juxtaposing his commentaries, such as the Dionysus passage, and his reference to the Jehovah myth with secular and other political commentaries in his self-appointed Sisyphean efforts to recreate a whole.

He has well benefited from his experience as gallery owner, the Bograshov Gallery in Tel Aviv, where his experience both as a curator/exhibitor has provided him with more than one perspective. It is this sense of the overview that makes the Web site so effective, where not only has Aloni created the individual artistic elements, but has in fact created the whole, an impressive accomplishment for an individual artist.

The Kabbalah refers to letters and numbers as being the building blocks of the universe where mysteries in the universe were encrypted into names,

phrases and existing passages of scripture and that even the earth was created by the use of these powerful words. In recent years we are witness to a renewed interest of these ancient esoteric scripts and the appearance of them in popular culture through surprisingly extensive exposure via electronic and traditional media .

A Kabballa scholar believes that through visualization and contemplation of holy letters and names, divine realizations become apparent and while to some, such practices would be considered magical superstition, it seems that others, such as Aloni are interested in testing out their relevance for our post-modern culture.

"Wandering in different power fields—cultural, political, economic, and theological—kept me unable to speak, unable to change and unable to produce. It put my voice, my text, my visualization, my laugh, in a trap of tautological sounds. Therefore I created Re-U-Man, a structure that helps me send my fragmented "I" to you (plural) and re-collect your commentary, for me to speak again in a way that might surprise me.

Udi Aloni

The ten spheres are known as 'Sephiroth', the plural of 'Sephira', meaning a number and are connected in prescribed ways, each identified with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. There are several definitions and interpretations of the tree of Life from their Hebrew original, one being:

- * Keter, the Divine Crown
- * Hokhmah, Wisdom
- * Binah, Understanding
- * Da'at, Knowledge, Grace
- * Hesed, Mercy
- * Din, Justice
- * Rachamim, Compassion
- * Nezah, Firmness, Triumph

- * Hod, Splendour, Glory
- * Yesod, Foundation
- * Malchut, Kingdom

The first nine 'Sephiraot' were grouped in threes, each triad including a masculine element, a feminine element, and a combining element. The first three 'Sephiraot' represented the world of thought; the second, the world of emotions and morals; the third, the world of nature. The tenth and separate sephira, 'Malchut', existed alone as the harmony of the other nine.

In the Aloni digital version of this diagram, we can follow the traditional placements and connections of the ten spheres super-imposed on Aloni's naked body, pierced by numerous stigmata, self-inflicted by digital means. Each part leads us with the click of a mouse to a separate element of the commentary, combining his seemingly incongruous elements into a fascinating whole.

In "Updating Sisyphus" the Sisyphusian motif is evoked to include references to what Aloni calls the Jehovah myth and its similarity to the Dionysus myth where both deal with the divine body, torn to pieces and spread all over the world. His commentaries appear here, as in all parts of his Web site both in textual and audio narration.

"When the new Sisyphus shatters, he begins to reassemble himself at once. Unlike the old, who uses the same path, the same self and a continuous memory to carry the boulder up the hill, the new one has no choice but to recreate himself differently each time. A process that contains an element of game without a continuous personal history—disconnected fragments of memory. Moreover, while constructing himself, he is creating an imagined model of the original, which he is being constructed accordingly. For the memory of the original had been faded out. This Sisyphus seeks to create his own self, without hope, without rest, but with a very strong sense of self. Re-U-Man diagram we refer to the first Sisyphus with a

capital "I" and to the second with a lower case "i".

Udi Aloni

When we begin to examine what Aloni has included to his left and his right, where reference to the right and left sides of man of the anthropomorphic model, would traditionally correspond with the left and right sides of God we find his three visual 'Midrash' (commentaries), tales of the secular, poetic and profane and his demons:

In Visual Midrash I, in his passages called 'the Twin' he quotes Ecclesiastes:

"Each and every one has two parts, one in heaven, one in hell"

His texts are superimposed on an image of a naked female model, similarly pierced with stigmata and seemingly pinned to the digital page as a butterfly would be pinned to its box. Although frozen in their stylized and inhuman poses, both the Aloni thumbnail image and his female counterpart dance from side to side in a grotesque bid to break free.

In "Sham" Visual Midrash II, (Figure 4) we are taken through lengthy narratives about such characters as Helen, a hermaphrodites hooker from Tel Aviv and Ezekiel/Simon, a kiosk owner in Ben-Yehuda Street who sells American ice cream to passersby. These narratives are presented side by side with sacred texts, often creating bizarre connections and associations. Aloni sometimes provides us with the associations, at other times we are forced to conclude them for ourselves. In reference to Hanna, we are provided with a reference to Talmudic passages:

"In the Talmud, Tractate Hagiga, Page 4, profound discussion of hermaphrodites, a discussion aimed at removing all those who are not complete males from ceremonies of looking at the face of God: "Three times a year shall all thy males see the face of thy God...and they shall not see the face of the Lord empty"

(Deuteronomy, 16:16)

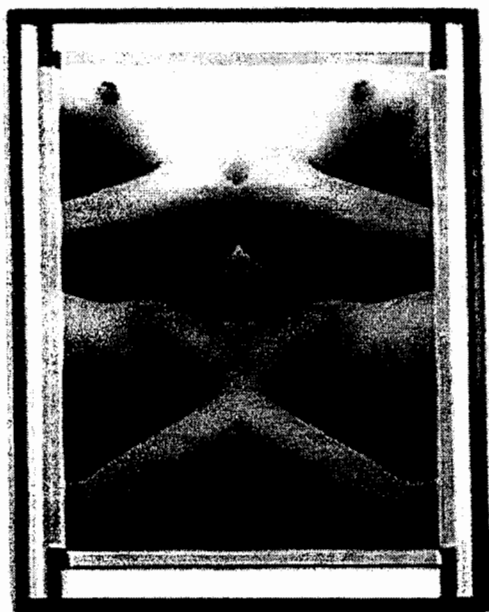


Figure 5. "Kadish" screen shot, digital image by Udi Aloni

Visual Midrash III deals with Kadish, a series of pictorial, digitally devised remakes of the human form. (Figure 5) Female and male figures are blended and navels and stigmata appear in unusual places. This is where Aloni has decided to include a demon of his own, with the explanation:

Demons are creatures who live in the place in which the absolute truth, the idea, cannot exist. The idea and later its curious transmigration to the indifferent, abstract and perfect god of Aristo are the base to the one, true and abstract god that influenced, among others, Greenberg's view of art. Against the genderless, bodiless, abstract god that's at the base of the Aristotelian, Maimonidean, Jewish conception, Christianity erected a tortured lad as its object of love, an object that is supposed to be the sublimation of all the objects of desire in the entire universe.

Udi Aloni

We are reminded of demons inhabiting Jewish literature and art for hundreds of years, and their con-

nection to numbers and letters (Figure 6) as in Singer's, *The Last Demon*, where we are told that:

"When the last letter is gone,
The last of the demons is done".

Isaac Bashevis Singer

Under 'Malchut', Kingdom, Aloni has attempted to re-examine the political "I" with the "left"-A Movie" a reference to modern day politics including a statement by Azmi Bishara, "Political rally, and the question: why would an Arab citizen ever vote for the Zionist Labor Party? (Figure 7)

"There was an era, an era of emancipation from the historical progress of the subject. The ideologies of the preceding era that put the subject at the center of progress had weighed heavily on us. Messianic ideology, human engineering and global plans to save the world (the most egregious of these being Stalinism and Kampuchia, were part of the world enlightenment. There was a necessity to deconstruct this progress of the subject and to understand its dialectic".

Azmi Bishara

While it takes a leap of faith on the readers part to integrate these political statements into the more traditional and sacred tracts, Aloni does add his own explanation:

"LEFT does not propose to offer solutions. Its tries to understand which kinds of discourse we should develop in order to make Israel a State for all it's citizens. How can we re-invent our history, rife with meanings, mythologies and meta-mythologies, in order to offer a better future".

Udi Aloni

I have included here only a very small part of Re-U-Man. In order to fully comprehend the length and breadth of Aloni's work, I would suggest that the Web site be accessed and time taken to hear Aloni's narratives in "Real Audio", both in Hebrew and in English. While Aloni's work was shown on two computers in his installation at the Israel Museum



Figure 6. 'Demons' screen shot, digital image by Udi Aloni

last year, amidst large wall print-outs of his images, in an area reminiscent of a study corner, the compelling content of his work is readily available on-line <www.re-u-man.com>.

It was interesting to see how well the Aloni work was received by the public at the Museum which was actually locally installed on the computers and not on-line. Visitors often spend more than an hour at the monitor, even while the Web site was simultaneously on-line and well promoted in the traditional print and electronic media. A link from the Israel Museum Web site was created and there was clearly enough information for our visitors to be able to find the Web site from home. We had no way of knowing if our visitors had access to the Internet at home or at work or simply preferred to travel the Re-U-Man Web site from within the context of the museum gallery.

What was clear that the visitors welcomed the opportunity to travel the Web site within the context of the museum gallery. Had they come across this media for the first time or perhaps were they concerned that they wouldn't be able to find Re-U-Man if they tried to access from their computers at home.

Were the more savvy surfers aware that from home it would be much more time consuming to download the numerous graphic heavy pages and quick-times, or was it deemed more appropriate to view such a work within the atmosphere and ambiance of an art museum?

Presuming that conditions of access are identical at home and from the museum, (not strictly true with the re-U-Man site), would our visitors still invest their time in an activity within the museum walls that could be readily accomplished at home? How can curators plan in the future for exhibitions that include Web sites while maintaining a discreet space for exhibiting original art works?

Over the last decade, we have witnessed the birth and development of Web related projects. Some are site and time specific-others take advantage of the timelessness and spacelessness of the Web, in order to exploit the full fluidity of this medium.

In 1984, 'The Electronic Cafe International' was created, (founded in the Orwellian year of 1984) as part of the Los Angeles Olympic Arts Festival. Cafes and restaurants were linked together throughout

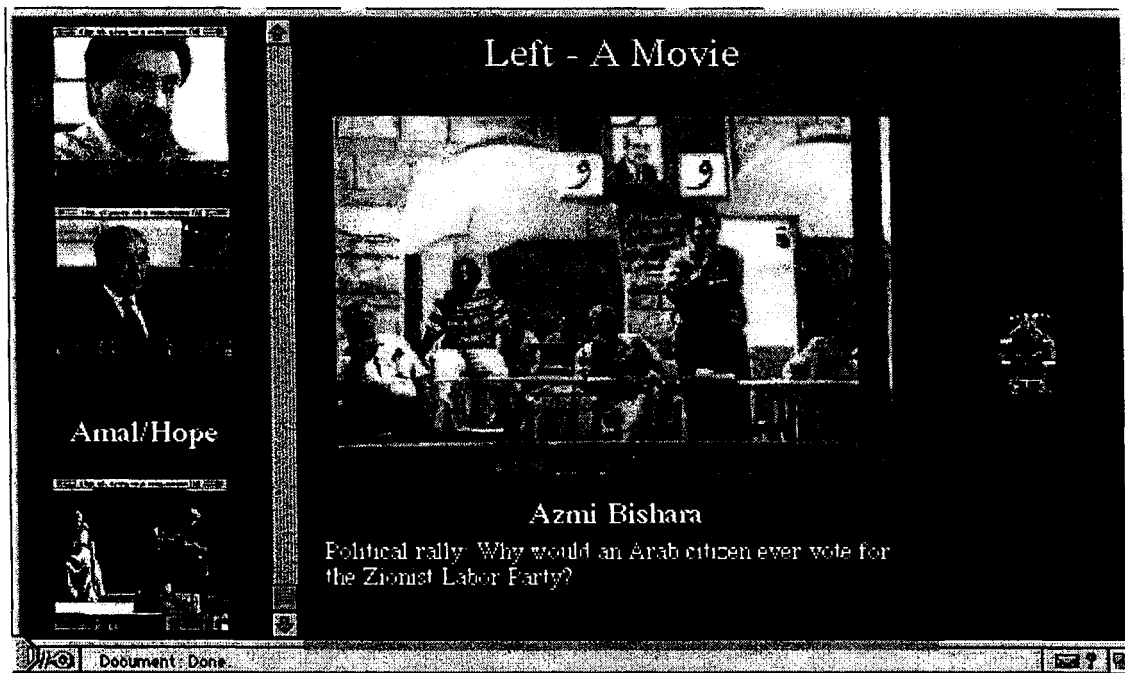


Figure 7. 'Left-A Movie', screen shot, digital image by Udi Aloni

the city and activities took place in several languages via a computer network. During seven weeks, visitors could conference over the network in video and audio and collaboratively share their simple artwork in a real-time shared-screen environment, contributing freely to a line drawing archive.

"Actually, ECI could be considered the mother of all cybercafes".

Electronic Cafe International Japan TM and ASCII CORPORATION.

This was an impressive futuristic project for a community in 1984 while the net was still in its infancy and set a precedent for later electronic cafe projects, cybercafes, and other digital community based activities. As was seen in the development of video art, this too was a technology plucked out of the laboratories and put into the hands of artists, even though, at this early stage was heavily dependent on the technologists to make it all happen. In recent years, artists have been freed of the dependency on intense technical expertise and by using off the shelf applications, have brought digital art into the public and popular arena.

Today, electronic cafes of one form or another can be found most major cities in Europe and the U.S.A and often are the only place in the community that offer public access to Internet. Most cafes offer e-mail access, browsing and some kind of conferencing, chat, video-conferencing etc. and are often the only public places where original digital art work may be viewed for a person who does not have a computer at home. Where are the museums in this scheme of things? Should art museums offer access to other protocols on the net other than viewing art work on a browser from within the museum?

In 1992, Axel Wirths, Founder and Director of media 235 MEDIA in Cologne, and founder of the first 'Mobile Electronic Cafe des Artistes' built the 'Casino Container', an experimental solution for public spaces in the media age by, what he claimed to be a redefined and extended virtual area, and purported to promote electronic nomadism as an up-coming way of life.

This was a further effort to combine the real and virtual by "offering hospitality to electronic travelers" this time by networking cities. About 80

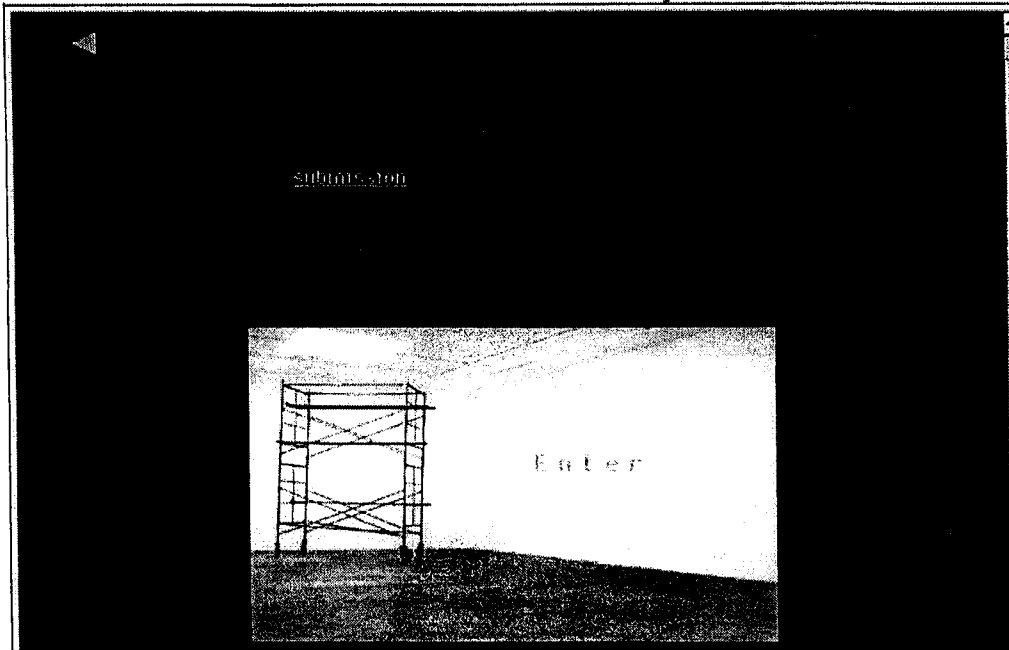


Figure 8. Screen shot from the Williamson Gallery, Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, The Virtual Wing

projects were developed in cooperation with network partners in Los Angeles, Toronto, Paris, Lyon, Helsinki, Aarhus, Cologne, Graz, Sydney, Fukui, Tokyo, and others.

“ In times of a global information society with its growing tyranny of privacy in barriers of fear against the alien into a real travelogue was more evident than ever before. The possibilities and experiences of artistic electronic networking can be presented by making clear what is possible and what is mere media mysticism, what is interesting for public and what should have happened better inside an institutional media lab, and of course what could be the future for an international cooperation in art-networking”.

Axel Wirths, Café des Artists the Casino Container

In recent months, a number of galleries and art museums have responded in different ways to the renewed proliferation of art Web projects. At the Dia Center for the Arts's, New York, there have been

many projects over 1996/97, mostly presented in conjunction with exhibitions: including such artists as Cheryl Donegan, Molissa Fenley, Juan Muñoz, Susan Hiller, Komar & Melamid and Jessica Stockholder.

The First Site-Specific Web Project, “Fantastic Prayers”, a collaboration of writer Constance DeJong, artist Tony Oursler, and musician Stephen Vitiello, was presented in May 1997. The work included text, sound, and images describing a place called Arcadia and its young residents living in a kind of idyllic Arcadian suspension.

“Fantastic Prayers slid perfectly onto the electronic field of the Web because, perhaps like the amorphous body of fragments on the Web, the piece itself is conceived as fragments rather than a whole. And, although structured as a narrative, it has little of a beginning, middle, or end—like the experience of the Web. Instead, it moves around ideas and encounters, suggesting not only the content of the artists' intentions, but also an extraordinary approach to making an artwork that sheds

the boundaries of time and space, exists in real and digital environments, and shifts with every new circumstance”.

Michael Govan, Director

For those who have spent time surfing the net, you may agree that one of the pleasures of this kind of activity is precisely this amorphous travel that allows us, at a click of a mouse, to arrange and rearrange information and images at our own pace, by comparing elements that may not in non-virtual space be connected together and to combine these elements and in a new way that has meaning for us. It is precisely this non-linear experience that Aloni had skillfully utilized in his Web site and has allowed us to make our own connections.

A further aspect of the Internet, and perhaps the more compelling is the opportunity to interact with the activity that we are watching, hearing or reading.

As technologies become more fluid, new protocols will allow user interaction in ways only dreamed of today and will reinforce the sense of community that were sort after both in *The Electronic Cafe International* and *Mobile Electronic Cafe des Artistes, Casino Container*'.

Exploiting this interactive capacity of the net, MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA, PORT: *Navigating Digital Culture* presented 'An Investigation into Performance on the Internet' a thematic exhibition organized by the New York-based collaborative 'ArtnetWeb', and held at the List Visual Arts Center January 25-March 29, 1997, where the work of artists who use the Internet as their medium were presented. This ambitious project including artists, G.H. Hovagimyan, Adrienne Wortzel, Heather Wagner, Jeff Gompertz, Bruno Ricard, Emily Hartzell, Nina Sobell, Hal Eager, Marah Rosenberg.

The principal organizers of PORT, were Remo Campopiano, Robbin Murphy, Marek Walczak, G.H. Hovagimyan, Adrienne Wortzel and Ebon Fisher.

Visitors were invited to participate or observe in the events, either in the LVAC galleries, or from their own computer terminals outfitted with the necessary hardware and software. In the actual gallery, computer terminals and the necessary technologies

to participate were available for use and performances were projected onto large screens.

One of their stated goals and of primary and unifying concern to the artists who participated was the interactive potentiality of the Internet and its functions as creative catalyst, network, and social space. This was supposed to be accomplished by the setting up of Listserv, and/or e-mail discussion group. The exhibition was intended to provoke questions about the identity and the role of the artist situated within a virtual terrain, and the role of an active viewer/participant, and the dematerialized work of art.

Artists were given two hours per week to work at the three performance environments, The MIT List Center Gallery, the point of production, (the studio), and the home computer. The Center was the optimum point for the visitor to view the works, having a (T3) connection and perfectly tuned software and hardware configurations. This was the main advantage over viewing the works from the home computer and the justification for the visitors to come into the space.

Site specific Web site exhibitions, such as the MIT project, provides an opportunity for the public, both local and remote, not only to view the art but to interact with it. An exciting place for new art forms to evolve and an exciting space for the visitor to feel a part of the creative process.

We are all familiar with the concept of an art museum and recognize them as 'containers' of original art works, an open environment where complementary or contrasting expressions of culture are placed side by side in the gallery at the whim or wisdom of the curator. We look to the curator to create refreshing and new juxtapositions of these works to provide us with further insights to our own cultural heritage and of other cultures and return again and again to renew this experience.

Where once the museum gallery appeared to us rather like a room or series of rooms, or salon, with the fourth wall left invitingly open for us to venture inside where we could enter this space and mingle with the originals and experience the beautiful, the awesome, the religious, and the profane with our own eyes we are now often visitors to another, new kind of art museum.

With museums and galleries, constantly redefining themselves, our expectations constantly change as curators seek new ways to keep up with these expectations.

In March 1997, the Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, Los Angeles exhibited "Common Sense". This was a bid to introduce 'alien' elements into the museum, a rodeo, drawing classes with live models, art-making activities by "community groups" including street and maintenance workers, live theater productions on a real bus, meetings to plan a community center in Watts, and an installation revealing an artistic collaboration with the prime-time TV show *Melrose Place*.

In all these performances, the visitor was an active participant in the installation, and without the visitor interaction, the installation became invalid. While art galleries and museums include alien artifacts inside the galleries and digital original art forms that exist outside the museum and piped in, both curators and visitors are going to have to deal with the changing pace and space of art museums in the near future, whether they be, real or virtual.

How are curators dealing with art that is sitting on a server beyond the fourth wall of the gallery?

A creative and inventive way of including remote art work in a real gallery has been developed recently by Stephen Nowlin of the Williamson Gallery, Art Center College of Design, Pasadena. (Figure 8) The virtual wing here features links to works of art created exclusively for the Internet and was at the time of writing featuring the project by the fascinating Spanish artists, Joan Heemskerk and Dirk Paesmans and can be found at <www.jodi.org/>.

The inviting comment at the virtual portal reads:

"Please bookmark this page before entering—you may be gone for awhile".

"I became aware of the site as a "space" rather than as being like a printed page, and realized that I experienced the same proprietary feelings for the Web that I had always felt as curator in the physical space. Having arrived at that perception, the Virtual Wing was a natural step to take".

*Stephen Nowlin, Vice President, Director,
Williamson Gallery*

For Nowlin to include such a project at the Williamson Gallery Virtual Wing, he is exercising his curatorial expertise in exactly the same way as he would at the real gallery: in his responsibility to select and present the art work, in the preservation of the creative integrity of the art and in providing optimal access for the visitor.

Some museums are now taking on a leading role in selecting and exhibiting Web sites on line and others are sure to follow suit. The Whitney Museum of American Art is actively sponsoring artists' Web projects. In addition, on this site, they provide links to artists' projects, maintained either by the artists themselves, various other institutions, or private concerns, around the world. Artist included at the Whitney site include: Laurie Anderson, Shu Lea Chang, Lowell Darling & Jim Newman, Douglas Davis, Constance DeJong, Tony Oursler and Stephen Vitiello, Felix Stephan Huber and Philip Pocock, Nam June Paik and Paul Garrin, Komar & Melamid, Tim Maul and Ben Neill, Antonio Muntadas, Andrei Roiter Julia Scher. This list does not include geographic references to where the Web sites are accessed from and we can but wonder if this is at all relevant in the global nature of the Internet.

While museum Web sites are blossoming all across the world and developed by numerous staff members at the museum, it is imperative that for these virtual wings that promote original art be the responsibility of the curator and should be perceived as extensions of the museum or gallery. While developing the virtual wing outside of the fourth wall, effort should be made to preserve the integrity, authenticity and curatorial context of the art, in much the same way as exhibitions from within the museum walls.

These developments are taking place at such incredible speeds at the moment, it is imperative to pause and re-value and redefine the museum space, be it real or virtual.

Aloni's *Re-U-Man*, while clearly appropriate for viewing within the museum walls in 1996, only hints at the type of questions that will be raised by curators and the challenges that they will be meeting in redefining the art museum in the years to come.

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