

N°18

GALLERY@CALIT2
EXHIBITION CATALOG

BODY PRACTICES

NOVEMBER 5, 2014-
JANUARY 9, 2015

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C2
GALLERY @ CALIT2



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CHAPTER I

CURATOR'S MESSAGE

BODY PRACTICES

BY TRISH STONE*

***TRISH STONE** IS A NEW MEDIA ARTIST, WHOSE CONCEPTUAL ART PROJECTS DEAL WITH ISSUES OF SURVEILLANCE AND INTIMACY. HER PROJECT, THINGS I NEVER SAY, IN WHICH SHE USED PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE WEBCAMS IN SAN DIEGO AS A PLATFORM FOR PERFORMANCE, WAS EXHIBITED IN 2011 AT ART PRODUCE GALLERY, ALONG WITH AN OUTDOOR VIDEO SCREENING OF VIDEOS CURATED ALONG THE THEME OF PUBLIC SPACE. SELECTED EXHIBITIONS INCLUDE: OCEANSIDE MUSEUM OF ART, ANGELS GATE CULTURAL CENTER IN LOS ANGELES, WORKS SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY AT UC RIVERSIDE, 21 GRAND IN OAKLAND, AND SOUTHERN EXPOSURE IN SAN FRANCISCO, CA. TRISH STONE HOLDS AN MFA (2003) FROM THE CALIFORNIA COLLEGE OF ARTS AND CRAFTS. SHE CONTINUES HER INTERACTIVE, INTERRUPTIVE, INTERVENTIONIST ART PRACTICE IN SAN DIEGO, WHERE SHE SERVES AS TOUR DIRECTOR AND GALLERY COORDINATOR FOR CALIT2'S QUALCOMM INSTITUTE AT UC SAN DIEGO. SHE ALSO TEACHES FOR THE UC SAN DIEGO VISUAL ARTS DEPARTMENT AS A VISITING LECTURER.

For its Fall 2014 exhibition, the gallery@calit2 explored notions of virtual and physical presence through Body Practices. To curate the show, Trish Stone worked with members of the gallery committee to select artists and artworks for the exhibition. As a theme, Body Practices resonates in different ways across the disciplines of art, music, theater, media and design. It includes both live performance and remote broadcasting. Bodies are understood as able to be copied, downloaded, projected onto and manipulated. They move through space both real and virtual. Bodies change with time and are encoded with multiple layers of identity.

Body Practices runs Nov. 5, 2014 through Jan. 9, 2015. Artists include Electronic Disturbance Theater/b.a.n.g. lab, Ursula Damm, Desirée Holman, Tara Knight, Alex McLean, Bryce Clayton Newell, and Victoria Vesna. Electronic Disturbance Theater/b.a.n.g. lab present the *Transborder Immigrant Tool (TBT) - EDT 2.0*. TBT repurposes used mobile phones with software that aspires to guide tired and dehydrated citizens to water safety sites along the border. Bryce Clayton Newell presents *The Tinaja Trail and the Transborder Immigrant Tool*, a documentary about the TBT project.

uses generative video algorithms and body sensors in her videos on display, *Transits* and *I Am a Sensor*. Desirée Holman explores space, aliens and astrology in her *Sophont* series, from which two paintings are on show in the gallery: *Aura, Buckminster Fuller*, and *Aura, Annie Besant*. On view from Tara Knight is *Mikumumentary 2*, a series of short films about the Hatsune Miku phenomenon. Alex McLean provides videos of *Live Coding*, the use of programming languages in improvised musical performance. Victoria Vesna displays prints from *Bodies© INCorporated*, an online site created 20 years ago, where members could participate in an institutionalized bureaucracy of virtual identity construction.

The opening event on November 5, 2014 was free and open to the public, including a panel featuring Ursula Damm, TBT's Ricardo Dominguez and Brett Stalbaum, UCSD music professor Katharina Rosenberger (with an essay on the work of Victoria Vesna), and myself. Subsequently, on November 14, we hosted artist Desirée Holman, who talked about her *Sophont* works on display in the Body Practices exhibition.







ABOVE: PANORAMIC IMAGE OF BODY PRACTICES IN GALLERY@CALIT2: PHOTO BY TRISH STONE WITH KELSEA BERGH AND LAWRENCE CHIT

CHAPTER II

TRANSITS

BY URSULA DAMM*

WITH MARTIN SCHNEIDER (INFORMATICS)

AND MAX NETTER (SOUND)

***URSULA DAMM** STUDIED AT THE ART ACADEMY IN DÜSSELDORF, FOLLOWED BY POSTGRADUATE STUDIES AT THE ACADEMY OF MEDIA ARTS IN COLOGNE UNDER VALIE EXPORT. HER WORKS HAVE BEEN PRESENTED INTERNATIONALLY IN VARIOUS SOLO AND GROUP EXHIBITIONS. CURRENTLY SHE WORKS ON AN INTERACTIVE INSTALLATION AT THE METRO-STATION SCHADOWSTRASSE IN DÜSSELDORF/GERMANY. SINCE 2008 SHE IS PROFESSOR FOR MEDIA ENVIRONMENTS AT THE BAUHAUS UNIVERSITY IN WEIMAR, WHERE SHE IS ALSO INVOLVED IN ESTABLISHING THE DIGITAL BAUHAUS LAB.



Transits is a 60-minute video installation based on video footage of the Aeschenplatz in Basel, Switzerland, during a 24-hour period. Every day, thousands of cars, pedestrians and trams pass Basel's most important traffic junction. *Transits* captures and alienates the recorded stream of motion with an intelligent algorithm that was developed by the artist and her team: It evaluates the audiovisual data and categorizes the patterns of movement and the color schemes. Based on the human memory structure and the visual system, the artificial neuronal network integrated in the software – where every pixel corresponds to one neuron – computes the visual flow. Various Layers are stacked on top of each other for perceptual image processing to generate an intriguing visual language in which stationary picture elements compete against the color scene. This begins at night and leads via dawn and noon to dusk; at the same time it is pervaded by arbitrary passers-by, by cars, trams and people in the streets. The generative video interprets movements as atmospheres and eventually throws the viewer back to an individual perception of the city.

Questions

How do we perceive the city?

How do we process the multitude of impressions, the variety of different paces and velocities that sync and cross each other at public places and gatherings?

How much complexity can our senses endure?

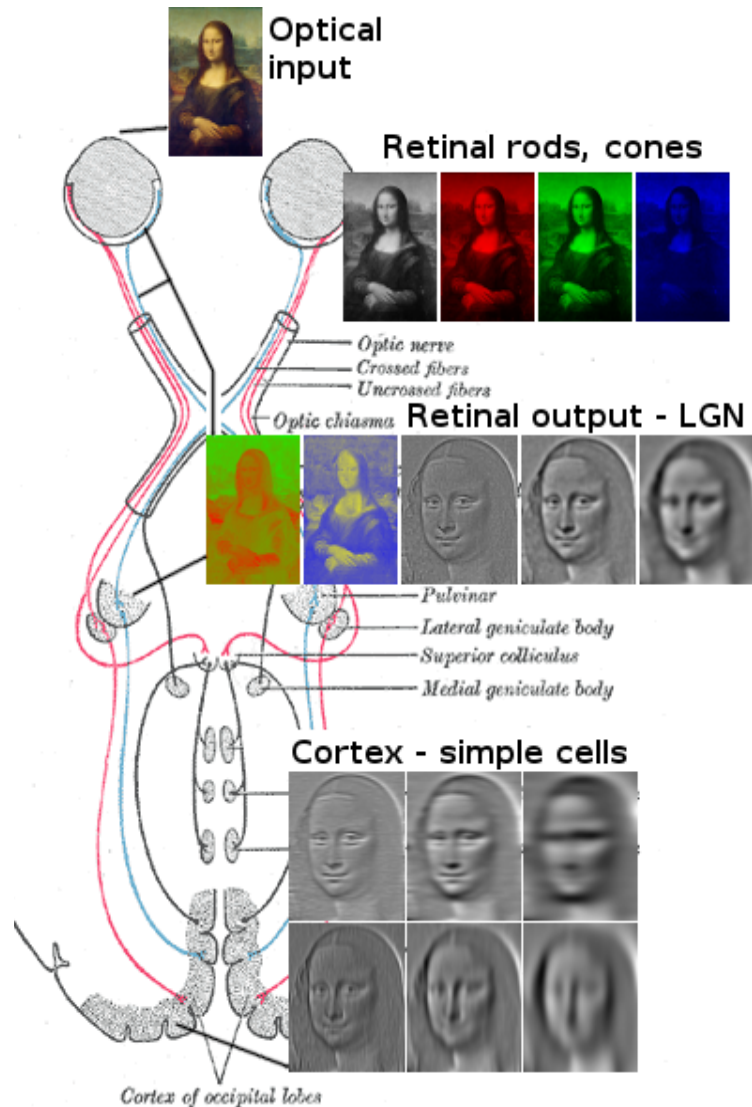
Or rather, how could we make endurable what we see and hear?

NeuroVision

Transits is a rendering of video footage by a custom-made software program called NeuroVision. NeuroVision is a GPU-based video processing tool for generative video processing based on neural networks. The software is based on ThreeJS and runs inside the browser. Data from the instruments is captured via keyboard events and the video stream is accessed using the `getUserMedia` API. The neural network used for video processing is implemented by a stack of WebGL shaders, and the output layer of the neural network is displayed on a monitor or video wall.

Inside NeuroVision, optical flow and color information of the scene are processed. The software was inspired by parallel information processing in the visual system of the human brain. Visual information processing inside the brain is a complex process involving various processing stages. The visual pathway includes the retina, the Lateral Geniculate Nucleus (LGN), and the visual cortex.

However low-level visual processing is already active at the various layers of the retina. The interconnection of neurons between retina layers and the ability to retain information using storage or delayed feedback allows for filtering the visual image in the space and time domain. Both image filters and motion detection can easily be achieved by accumulating input in a massively parallel way from neurons in a local neighborhood. The NeuroVision App uses this approach to cluster colors and to compute the visual flow (or retina flow) from a video source. The resulting attraction vectors and flow vectors are used to transform the memory retained in the memory layer. The visual output of the



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visual_system#mediaviewer/File:Lisa_analysis.png

system directly corresponds to the state of the output layer. The neural layers of the Neurovision App are connected to form a feedback loop. This gives rise to a kind of homeostatic system that is structurally coupled to the visual input, yet it develops its own dynamics over time. (The original video processed through the NeuroVision software was displayed initially in 2012 at the House of Electronic Arts in Basel.)

Layers

The flow of information is arranged into multiple processing layers. To realize memory, each processing layer is in turn implemented as stack of one or more memory layers. This allows us to access the state of a neuron at a previous point in time. Example: The video layer is made up of two layers, so the system can access the state of any input neuron at the current point in time, and its state in the previous cycle.

The **Ghost** layer represents a haunting image from the past. It implements the long-term memory that interferes and interacts with the current visual input. It does not change over time, and is provided as additional input to the Flow layer.

The **Video** layer contains the input neurons. Each neuron corresponds to a pixel of the video source. The Video layer provides the input for the Flow layer.



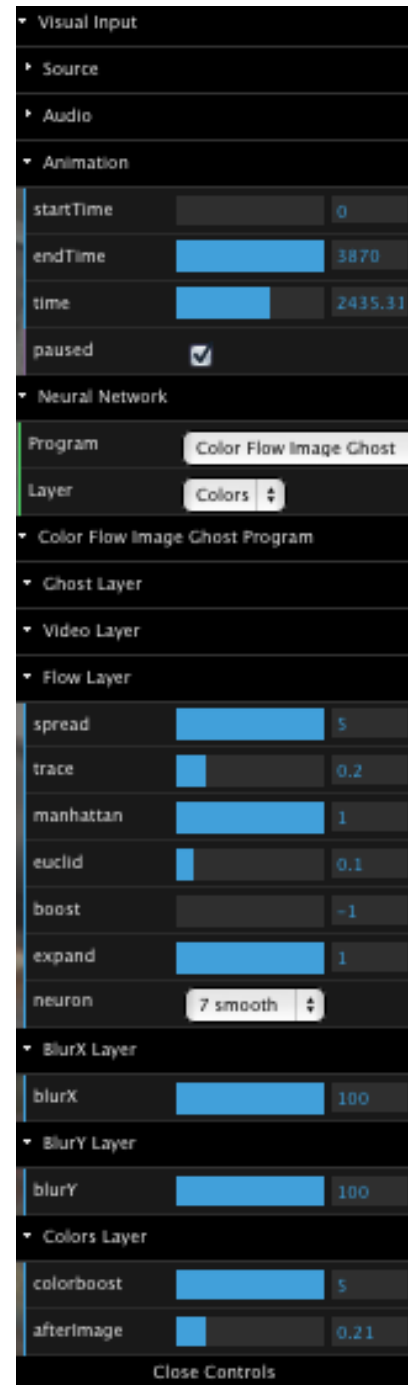
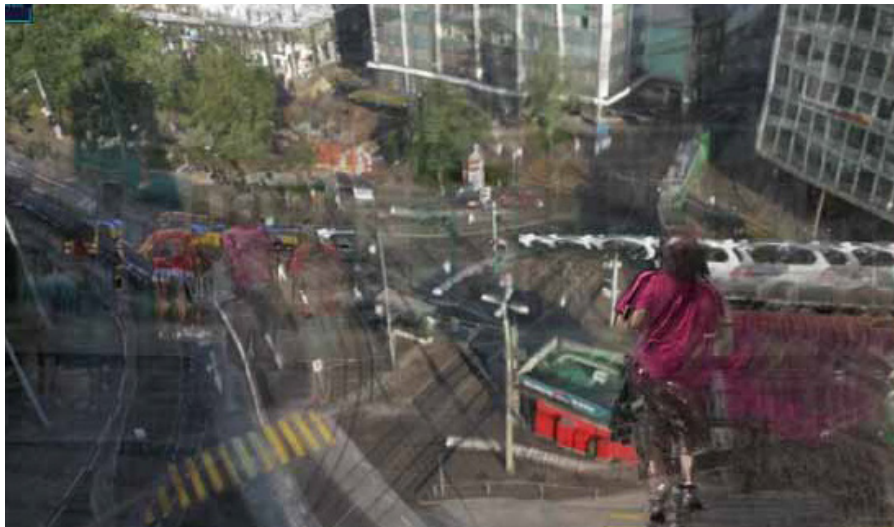
ABOVE: TRAM PASSES THROUGH AESCHENPLATZ IN BASEL, SWITZERLAND, AS CAPTURED AND PAINTED BY URSULA DAMM

The **Flow** layer accumulates the input from the Video layer and the Ghost layer. Each Neuron aggregates input from its neighborhood in the Video Layer at times (t) and (t-1). The computed two-dimensional vector is directly encoded into the state of the neuron, creating a flow map.

The **BlurX** and **BlurY** layers are used to blur the flow map. While the computation of visual flow is restricted to a very small neighborhood, the blur layer is needed to spread the flow information to a larger region, since flow can only be detected on the edge of motion. For efficiency reasons, the blur function is split into two layers, performing a vertical and a horizontal blur, respectively.

Neuron Processing: The state of each neuron corresponds to an RGB color triplet. Every neuron of the Flow layer gets input from corresponding neurons inside a local neighborhood of the input layers. Each of those input samples corresponds to a single synapse. The vector from the center of the neuron towards the input neuron is referred to as the synapse vector.

Color Attraction: To achieve some kind of color dynamics, colors that are close in color space are supposed to attract each other. The distance between synapse input and the neuron state in RGB color-space serves as a weight, which is used to scale the synapse vector. The sum of scaled synapse vectors results in a single color-attraction vector.





Color Flow: While color attraction is the result of color similarities or differences in space, color flow is the result of color changes over time. Rather than calculating the distance of the neuron state to a single synapse input, its temporal derivative is calculated by using input from a neuron and its corresponding memory neuron. This time the sum of scaled synapse vectors results in a flow vector.

Encoding: Both color flow and color attraction vectors are added up and their components are encoded in the flow layer.

Parameters: Here are various parameters in each layer controlling the amount and direction of color attraction, color flow, the metrics used for calculating color distances, the neuron neighborhood, etc.

Implementation: All neural computation is performed on the GPU using OpenGL and GLSL shaders. This is the mapping from neural metaphors to OpenGL implementation:

Memory layers -> Texture-Buffers
Processing Layers -> GLSL shaders
Parameters -> GLSL uniforms

In our implementation, both color flow and color attraction are integrated into a single-level flow map. While this generates interesting local interactions, there is little organization on a global level. (Work on Multilevel Turing Patterns, as popularized by Jonathan McCabe, shows that it is possible to obtain complex and visually interesting self-organizing patterns without any kind of video input.)

Our future research will combine several layers of flow maps, each operating on a different level of detail. Additional directions include alternate color spaces and distance metrics. In the current model, input values are mixed and blurred, resulting in a loss of information over time. We have also been experimenting with entropy-conserving models and are planning to further investigate this direction.

Related Links


Project Website <http://ursuladamm.de/transits-2012>
Transits Generative Video Installation
<http://vimeo.com/49061561>
House of Electronic Arts, Basel
<http://youtu.be/ymBMcJ1UGZo>
Software <http://www.perceptify.com/neurovision>

CHAPTER III

MIKUMENTARY 2

BY TARA KNIGHT*

***TARA KNIGHT** IS A FILMMAKER, ANIMATOR, AND PROJECTION DESIGNER FOR THEATRE AND DANCE. SHE IS CURRENTLY DIRECTING MIKUMENTARY, A SERIES OF SHORT FILMS ABOUT THE WORLDWIDE HATSUNE MIKU PHENOMENON. KNIGHT RECEIVED A BA IN FILM THEORY AND PRODUCTION FROM HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE, AND AN MFA IN VISUAL ARTS FROM UC SAN DIEGO. SHE WORKED FOR THREE YEARS AS THE ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR CULTURE, ART AND TECHNOLOGY AT UC SAN DIEGO'S SIXTH COLLEGE, AND RECENTLY JOINED THE FACULTY TEACHING DIGITAL MEDIA IN THE THEATRE AND DANCE DEPARTMENT.



Mikumumentary Episode 2 : Ephemeral / hologram / weird is one episode from an ongoing series of short, experimental documentary films about the singing, dancing, collaboratively-constructed virtual idol, Hatsune Miku.

In this concert video, Miku's voice and likeness are rendered under the direction of Crypton Future Media and SEGA in an official live concert. A pirated video excerpt including this song, "World is Mine" by supercell, went viral in 2010 with over 20 million views baffling viewers and journalists around the globe. In this Mikumentary episode, abstracting layers of video and a stream of unidentified voices intertwine comments from fans, musicians, and CEOs to explore what captured the imagination of YouTube viewers. What happens to live

performance without a "live human body" with its aura of originality at center stage? What happens when an artist is seen as both a singular, fixed body in front of you, and simultaneously hundreds of thousands of bodies online? Or when when a performer is seen as both one individual artistic contribution while also the collaborative force of hundreds of thousands of people?

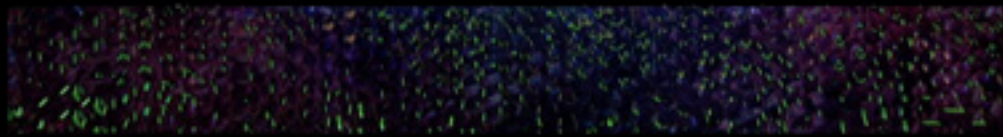
Like many Westerners, my first exposure to Hatsune Miku was through this "World is Mine" video on YouTube, which ostensibly is the least radical part of Miku: the proscenium framing of a rock concert reinforces her status as a singular idol physically, and hierarchically, above the audience. Yet Miku embodies through this virtual performing body the works of thousands and arguably

millions of people opening up questions about the ephemerality of live performance, the perceived permanence of digital works, desires for physical embodiment, and tensions between individual work and collective production.

Mikumumentary Episode 2 is the culmination of hundreds of interviews with people in the Miku and larger Vocaloid community, and culled from conversations online and in person; at conventions and in bars; in Facebook groups and private chatrooms; at concerts in Japan; and on tour with Miku in the U.S. In many ways, Miku already *is* her own document. The hundreds of thousands of songs and videos, the millions of images and photographs, the commentaries on Japanese sites like NicoNico Douga and Pixiv or on YouTube and deviantART, already are the document that forms her digital trace. I conceive of my films as both documents of certain aspects of the Miku phenomenon while also my artistic participation in this phenomenon; they are my contribution to the complexity and plurality of artistic works that form the corpus of Miku. I release these films in the same form as my subject matter: short form, online, for free, under creative commons copyright. I also openly promote the “bootleg” versions others have created.

Mikumumentary Episode 2 has been ripped and re-uploaded with new subtitles into multiple languages, been transformed into ringtones, and been quoted in other fan-produced documentaries about Miku online. Hatsune Miku, with her software voice and her ever-evolving likeness, is an embodiment and invitation for collective collaboration.





CHAPTER IV

SOPHONT

BY DESIRÉE HOLMAN*

***DESIRÉE HOLMAN** IS AN ARTIST BASED IN OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA. HOLMAN HOLDS A MASTER'S DEGREE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY. EARNING CRITICAL ACCLAIM FOR HER WORK, HOLMAN WAS AWARDED A SAN FRANCISCO MODERN MUSEUM OF ART SECA AWARD IN 2008 AND IN 2007 THE ARTADIA: THE FUND FOR ART AND DIALOGUE AWARD. SOLO EXHIBITIONS OF HER WORK INCLUDE THE HAMMER MUSEUM IN LOS ANGELES, AND THE BERKELEY ART MUSEUM'S MATRIX PROGRAM. INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS OF HOLMAN'S WORK INCLUDE THE SÃO PAULO MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, HESSEL MUSEUM, YERBA BUENA CENTER FOR THE ARTS, MILAN'S BND, AND TORONTO'S YYZ. REVIEWS OF HOLMAN'S WORK HAVE APPEARED IN NUMEROUS PUBLICATIONS, INCLUDING ARTFORUM, LOS ANGELES TIMES, NY ARTS, ARTILLERY, SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE AND ARTWEEK.

In *Sophont*, the newest project in Desirée Holman's ongoing exploration, she is interested in everything spacey, including astrology, aliens, auras, harmonic convergence, mysticism, occultism, animal magnetism and a myriad of other spiritual pseudo-sciences. She is obsessed with the leaps of faith we choose and refuse to make every day. In this new body of work, Holman explores the iconography and aesthetics associated with these realms, treating fringe fantasies as if they were fact. The sensuous works, which consist of gouache and airbrush paint on paper, seem to float above the page. Art historically, they channel Francesco Goya's monstrous *Saturn*, Mark Rothko's mystical color fields and Vija Celmins' starscapes. Holman moves swiftly and easily between figure and abstraction, terrestrial and extraterrestrial, new and old ages.

"I see myself as an artist-come-armchair anthropologist, spending a significant amount of my time researching and engaging with ideas in fields in which I have no formal background or training," Holman noted in her artist's talk in the gallery@calit2 on November 14, 2014. "This research time seeds my work and though the work is heavily driven by ideas, I also want to acknowledge that it's in equal parts driven by a discovery that is not based in language or even in rationality. Instead that aspect of the work unfolds in the creative process through immersion and contact with the work, through visuality and through imagination. I'm a project-based artist, investigating topics across multiple mediums, usually spending two to three years on each project. Through the lens of fantasy, my work reveals an in-depth inquiry into the ways that individuals identify themselves within larger cultural constructs. The projects are approached through research in a variety of fields, resulting in a rich expansiveness of thought and method-

ologies. This process evokes query and plurality rather than inert opinion or belief. While each project is a world unto itself, it's also a unique chapter in a larger, interconnected oeuvre that is ongoing. Today I'm focusing on one particular project, *Sophont*."

Science-fiction author Paul Anderson coined the term *sophont* to describe intelligent beings with extraordinary emotional and reasoning capacities. It also relates to the term *sentient*, as in *sentient being*, a technical term in Buddhist discourse that denotes any being with the ability to feel, perceive or express subjectivity.

Holman began production on *Sophont* in 2012 and it currently consists of paintings, a soundtrack created by Los Angeles artist Angel Deradoorian, sculptures, costumes for a number of past performances, and Holman is currently working on a video with a live performance component to it. Inspired by New Age culture, science fiction and technology culture, *Sophont* explores these movements by treating fringe fantasy as reality.

In *Body Practices*, Holman exhibits two paintings of Annie Besant and Buckminster Fuller, respectively. They depict "aura photographs" (a pseudo-scientific process that reflects the colors representative of chakras) of their deceased subjects. The supposition is that both individuals' auras were channeled in the creation of the portraiture.

"Annie Besant is one of my favorite historical figures in the New Age occult canon because she practiced a new-age spirituality but was also on the ground, working for human rights," said Holman. "Besant was a women's rights activist, and a supporter of Irish and Indian self-rule, which was not that common among other New Age folks." Holman was also drawn to the work of Bucky Fuller, as a figure head embraced by

the 1960s counter cultural movement and back-to-the-landers.

“My aesthetic investigations into topics such as aliens, mystics and the possibility of higher consciousnesses sit squarely in fantasy for some, and in reality for others,” explained Holman. “This particular gray area is precisely the place where my investigations take root.”

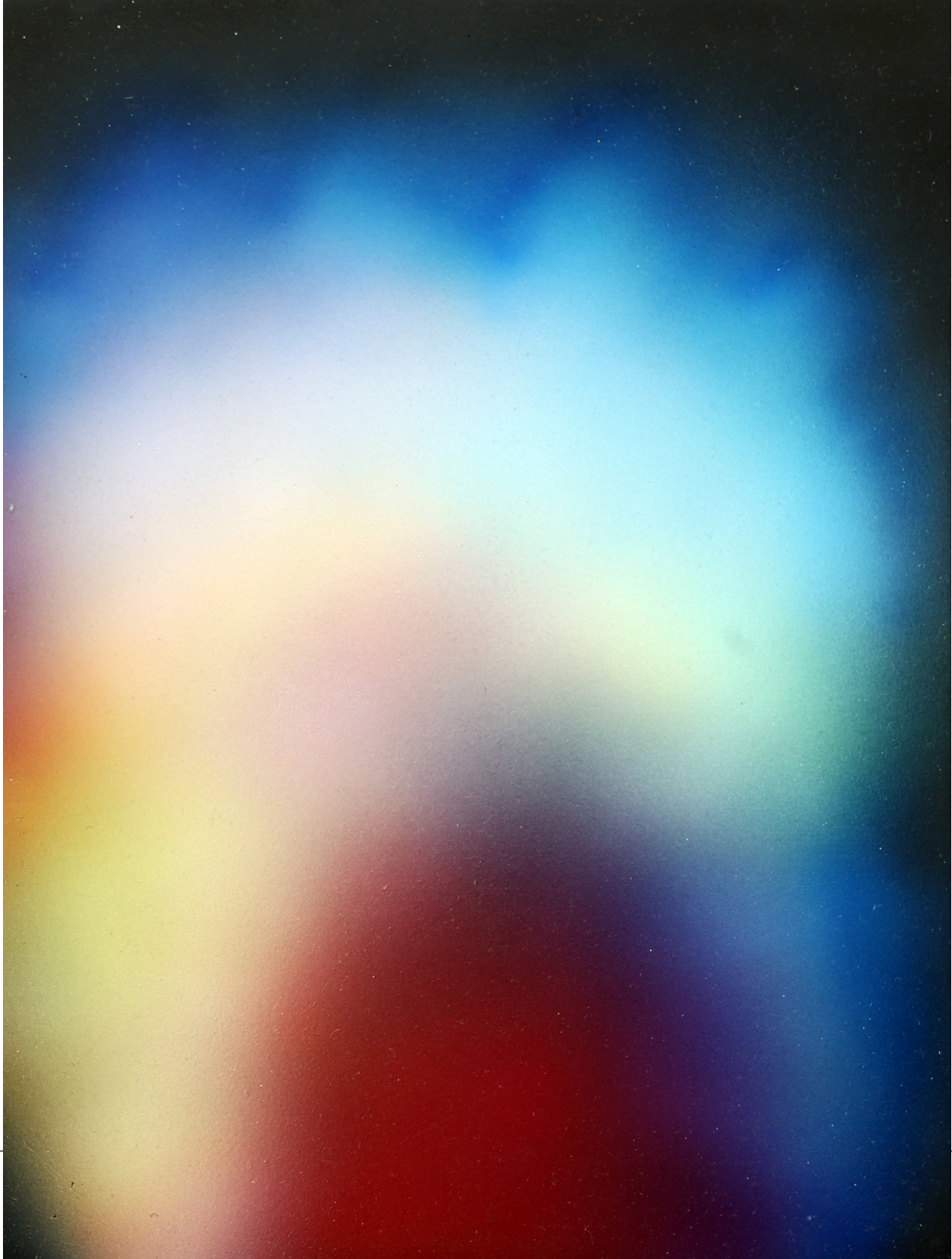
“I have two contradictory impulses: one is that I’m really interested in the idea and the end, the other is that I really think with my hands, and so I think through materials, and I’m most comfortable starting to think about the ideas I’ve read about and transcribed in books, and continue thinking through it by doing it,” explains Holman.

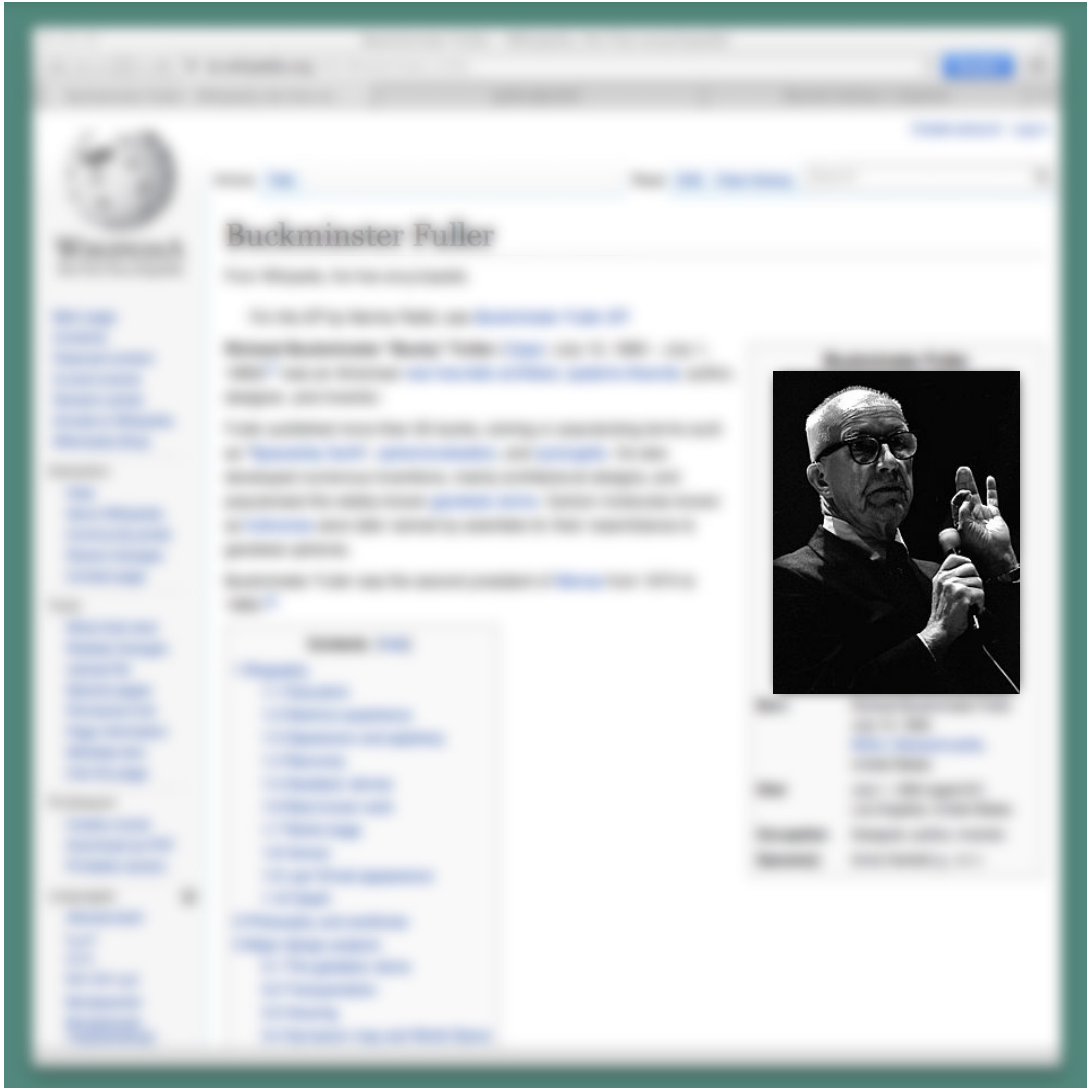
Watch the full video of Desiree Holman’s talk at UC San Diego: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kh-RAHdDXS4&feature=youtu.be>



ABOVE: ANNIE BESANT BIO
FROM WIKIPEDIA

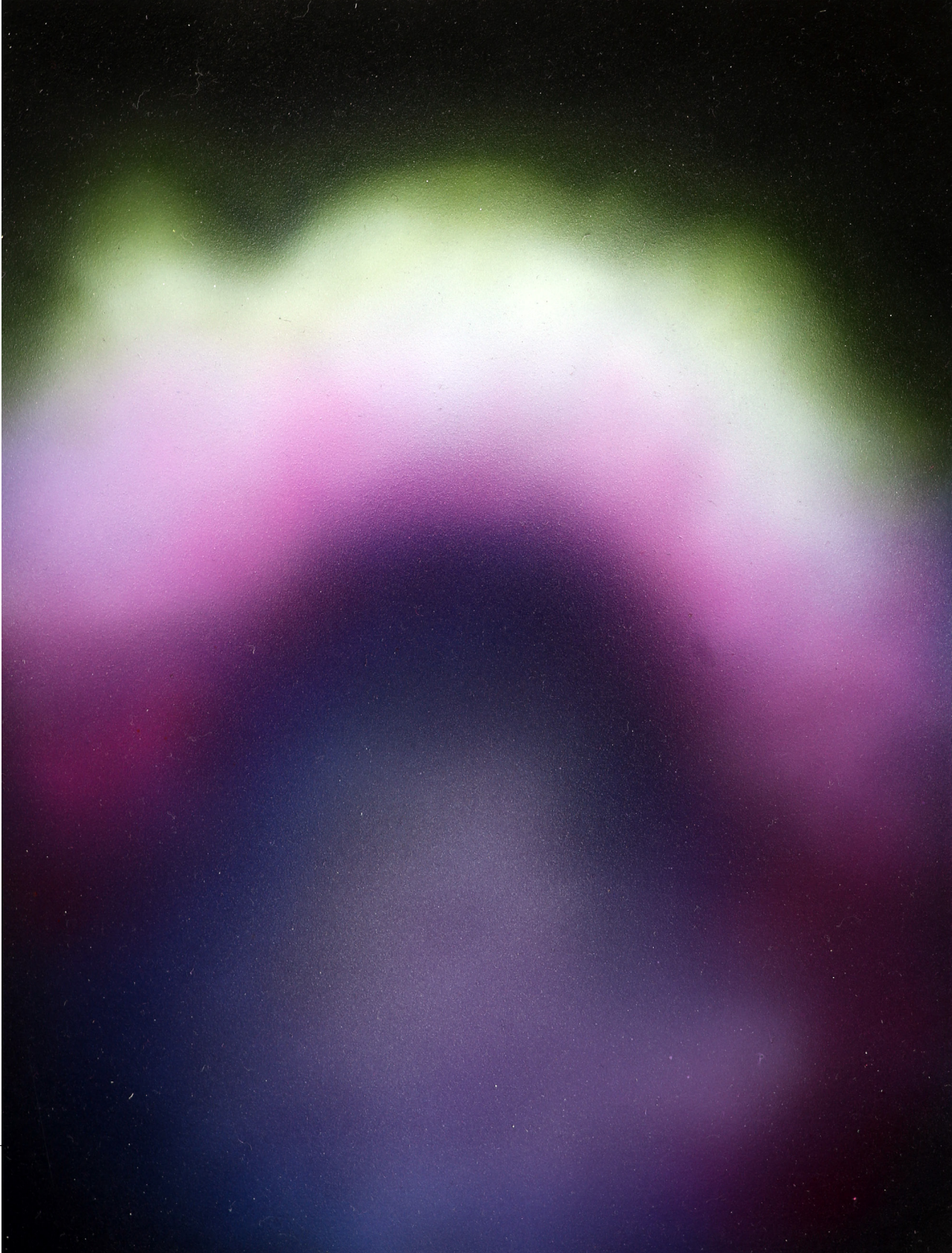
RIGHT: AURA, ANNIE BESANT,
BY DESIRÉE HOLMAN





ABOVE: BUCKMINSTER FULLER BIO
FROM WIKIPEDIA

RIGHT: AURA, BUCKMINSTEER FULLER,
BY DESIRÉE HOLMAN



CHAPTER V

BORDER ART RESEARCH: VISIBLE BORDERS, INVISIBLE PEOPLE, AND THE TRANSBORDER IMMIGRANT TOOL

BY ELECTRONIC DISTURBANCE THEATER 2.0/B.A.N.G. LAB*

***ELECTRONIC DISTURBANCE THEATER/B.A.N.G. LAB** ARTISTS INVOLVED WITH THE TRANSBORDER IMMIGRANT TOOL PROJECT INCLUDE: MICHA CÁRDENAS, AMY SARA CARROLL, RICARDO DOMINGUEZ, ELLE MEHRMAND AND BRETT STALBAUM. IT WAS STARTED IN 2007 WITH SUPPORT FROM CALIT2, THE DEPARTMENT OF VISUAL ARTS UC SAN DIEGO, PROGRAM IN AMERICAN CULTURE, LATINA/O STUDIES, AND THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT AT UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, ANN ARBOR. ADDITIONAL COLLABORATORS ON THE TRANSBORDER IMMIGRANT TOOL INCLUDE: JASON NAJARRO , DIANA LE, PETRA KUPPERS, YANOULA ALTHANASSAKIS, FELIPE ZÚÑIGA, JENNY DONOVAN, GABIRELA TORRES, LILI HSIEH, ZONA YI-PING TSOU, TATIANA SIZONENKO, BRETT STALBAUM, OLIVER TING, AND STEVE WILLARD.

In 1995 the Border Research and Technology Center (BRTC) was opened; it is located in San Diego, Calif., and operated by Sandia National Laboratories. BRTC works with Homeland Security, the U.S. Customs Service and Border Patrol, the U.S. Attorney offices, and law enforcement agencies to strengthen technology capabilities and awareness on U.S. borders. BRTC also works on joint ventures to identify technologies that will stop the flow of undocumented people crossing the Mexico–U.S. border, and it is currently participating in a project to detect heartbeats of people concealed in vehicles or other containers. Nine years later (2004) b.a.n.g. lab (which stands for bits, atoms, neurons, and genes), in collaboration with Electronic Disturbance Theater 2.0 (EDT), started developing a border art and technology research center in the UCSD division of the California Institute for Telecommunications and Information Technology (Calit2), that would develop a counter-aesthetic and critical technology to disturb the border technologies that programs like BRTC were developing.

In 2007 EDT 2.0/b.a.n.g. lab started developing a mobile-phone technology entitled the Transborder Immigrant Tool (TBT), which provides GPS coordinates and survival poetry to immigrants crossing the U.S.–Mexico border while leading them to water caches in the Southern California desert. In 2010, the project caused a firestorm of controversy on the American political scene. The artists of EDT 2.0/b.a.n.g. lab (Ricardo Dominguez, cofounder of EDT 1.0/2.0 with new media artist Brett Stalbaum,

and new members, artist and theorist Micha Cárdenas, poet and border studies scholar Amy Sara Carroll at University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and mixed-reality artist Elle Mehrmand) were investigated by three Republican Congressmen, the FBI Office of Cybercrimes, and UCSD itself.

TBT began with the basic question: What ubiquitous technology would allow us to create an inexpensive tool to support the finding of water caches left in the Southern California desert by NGOs? Our answer was a cheap iMotorola phone series which could be made useful for emergency navigation. The early generation of the platform we targeted can be made reasonably useful in a better-than-nothing scenario. Meanwhile, later phone generations (that don't yet cross our price barrier, but are getting closer everyday) are already fully useful as practical aids

without even a SIM card installed or an available network service. With proper use, the GPS performance of newer phones equals any GPS designed for desert navigation, and their used prices are falling. Moreover, GPS itself does not require service and has free global coverage, courtesy of the United States government. In an emergency scenario, we trust these later mobiles to direct a lost person to a nearby safety site. The TBT's code is also available online to download at walkingtools.net, sans water cache locations, for any individual or community to use for their GPS investigations.

Part of the history of the Electronic Disturbance Theater 1.0/2.0 and b.a.n.g. lab has been to develop



works that can create a performative matrix that activate and take a measure of the current conditions and intensities of power/s, communities, and their anxieties or resistances. So for us, the U.S. Department of Defense launching “info-weapons” at us for a virtual sit-in on September 9, 1998 or the current confluence of “viral reportage” and the affective contagion of hate about TBT, are all part of the performance. Of course, we would much rather the hate-mail never occurred – dominant media is bad enough to deal with. The aesthetics of working in the zones of post-contemporary “artist” gestures cannot really escape these types of encounters; it is part and parcel of the patina of our work. But we also feel that the hate-mail or the general fear of losing national purity is coequal in importance with the poetry that they were attacking. In fact, Glenn Beck, an extreme right-wing pundit on the Fox News Channel, attacked not only TBT’s use of poetry, but that the poetry itself had the power to “dissolve” the nation. The performative matrix of TBT allows viral reportage, hate-mail, GPS, poetry, the Mexico–U.S. border, and immigrants to encounter one another in a state of frisson – a frisson that seeks to ask what is sustenance under the sign of globalization-is-borderization and its aesthetics.

Electronic Disturbance Theater 1.0/2.0 has always been invested in experimental poetry as part of its gestures – from the found poetry of the “404 file not found” of our ECD performances in the 1990s to the border hack actions with the

Zapatista Tribal Port Scan in 2000 on U.S. Border Patrol servers, where we would scan and upload Zapatista poems that we had written into their servers. When we started to develop TBT it became important once again to have a core impulse of the gesture. In 2008 I spoke with Amy Sara Carroll, an experimental poet and scholar at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, whose areas of research includes art and the Mexican–U.S. border. She thought that TBT becoming a geo-poetic-system (gps) could expand the frame of experimental poetry and “activism.” She then began to work with us and established two geo-poetic tracks – one conceptual and the other an echoing of desert survival manuals in multiple languages, which speaks to the multiple borders that are crisscrossing the planet and the multiple languages that are crossing the Mexican–U.S. border via immigrants.

Here is Amy Sara Carroll speaking about TBT:

“[...] my collaboration with Electronic Disturbance Theater (EDT) on the Transborder Immigrant Tool [...] [is] imagined as a global project under development; my own involvement in that ongoing process is linked to the question of what constitutes sustenance in the quotidian of the conceptual, on the varied musical scales of the micro- and macro-. For, often – rightly enough – conversations about crossing the Mexico–U.S. border refer to disorientation, sun exposure, lack of water. The Transborder Immigrant Tool attempts to address those vicissitudes, but also to remember that the aesthetic – freighted with the unbearable weight of ‘love’ – too, sustains. A poetic gesture from its inception, the Transborder Immigrant Tool functions, via the aspirations of such a dislocative medium, as dislocative media, seeking to realize the possibilities of G.P.S. as both a ‘global positioning system,’ and, what in another context Laura Borràs Castanyer and Juan B. Gutiérrez have termed a ‘global poetic system.’ The Transborder Immigrant Tool includes poems for psychic consultation, spoken words of encouragement and welcome, which I am writing and codesigning in the mindset of Audre Lorde’s

pronouncement that 'poetry is not a luxury.' [...] speaks to the Transborder Immigrant Tool's overarching commitment to global citizenship. For the excerpt, itself infused with the 'transversal logic' of the poetic, acts as one of the Transborder Immigrant Tool's internal compasses, clarifying the ways and means by which I and my collaborators approach this project as ethically inflected, as transcending the local of (bi-)national politics, of borders and their policing."



TBT is also a response to the securitization of not only the US–Mexico border, but a critical response to the borderization politics that we are seeing everywhere around the planet. A borderization project that allows the death of hundreds in order to profit from the cheap and necessary labor that is needed to keep the global economies flowing. And since September 11th, 2001, the rapid deployment of bordering, not only at the edges of the nation-state but inside of the nation-states, has been characterized by an increasing biogovernance protocols which

systematically connect atavistic emotions of fear and anxiety with technologies of surveillance, where imaginary notions of The Other (immigrants) are targeted as the reason for the global economic and social collapse we find ourselves in. Instead of really seeing that the very conditions of securitization by entities such as the National Security Agency, or the open-market flows of undocumented, border-crossing mega-banks and Wall Street types across the world are at the core of the austerity shocks shuddering across the world. <http://bang.transreal.org/>

CHAPTER VI

THE TINAJA TRAIL AND THE TRANSBORDER IMMIGRANT TOOL

BY BRYCE CLAYTON NEWELL*

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Illegal Immigration.
Politics.
Humanitarian Response.
Art.
Technology.
Poetry.

“The Tinaja Trail and the Transborder Immigrant Tool” is a documentary film that tells a story at the intersection of undocumented migration, humanitarian service, and border activism. It is told from the perspectives of undocumented immigrants, two of the primary members of the Transborder Immigrant Tool project (Electronic Disturbance Theater 2.0/b.a.n.g. lab), and Samaritan

volunteers who place water, food, and first-aid supplies along migratory trails in attempts to save the lives of some of the hundreds of migrants who die every year crossing into the United States from Mexico.

Natural water sources in the American Southwest are extremely rare and, where they do exist, they are often extremely hard to reach. (Think: bottom of the Grand Canyon, for instance.) For centuries, survival in this unforgiving land has hinged on one’s ability to locate



ABOVE: MORE THAN 100 RECENTLY DEPORTED INDIVIDUALS AT A MIGRANT SHELTER IN NOGALES, SONORA, MEXICO

natural cavities, or wind-carved cisterns in rocks, called tinajas (tee-NAH-hahs). Capturing rain during the rare desert storm, and shaded from the sun, these catch-basins—often only inches across, centimeters deep, and teeming with insects and their larvae—are precious, life-saving treasures to desert-dwelling animals... and desert-traversing humans. It seems reproachfully paradoxical, then, that this region would today host the primary trail of hope for thousands of people seeking gainful work, physical security, and the promise of a future free of fear. It's a desperate journey—one that has cost the lives, and ended the hopes, of an estimated 600 people per year since 1995.

It is likewise a politically supercharged arena: a legal, moral and political maelstrom poised like a flame near a tinderbox of sentiment.

For years, individuals and organizations have dropped water containers along popular routes of migration (and been arrested for “littering,” or for trespassing on federal land). They have searched the desert for dying immigrants, and provided other forms of life-saving aid, including supplying the occasional transport to emergency medical facilities (where they have been arrested for assisting another's illegal entry into the country).

But the latest tool in this humanitarian effort is clearly the most unusual – a technological tinaja in the form of modified cell phones running encrypted,

GPS-enabled trail hiking software. Being developed as “a Mexico/ U.S. Border Disturbance Art Project” by Electronic Disturbance Theater 2.0/b.a.n.g. lab, a group of researchers at the University of California, San Diego and the University of Michigan, the Transborder Immigrant Tool's shape-shifting transmissions will guide desert-crossing immigrants to water stations and the safest route through the desert while reciting inspirational poetry for aural stimulation.

To some, these are selfless and inspirational efforts that give new and poignant context to the phrase “the art of survival.” To others, such action irresponsibly induces illegal border crossing, tantamount to aiding and abetting unlawful conduct. From the perspectives of both the undocumented migrants and the aid-givers, the film provides a compelling tale of life and death, and compassionate service, along the Tinaja Trail. The film is also part of a larger, hour-long documentary that examines the broader social, legal and humanitarian aspects wrapped up in this difficult





topic. It tells the stories of immigrants crossing the border and of the volunteers attempting to save their lives, all while seeking to discover where true “humanitarian service” ends and where irresponsible conduct begins. The project was produced over four years, from 2010 until the film’s completion in early 2014.

Credits:

Directed, edited, and co-produced by Bryce Newell

Produced and written by Coke Newell

Produced by Cindy Newell

Music composed by Donald Meyer

Score performed by Macedonian Radio Symphonic Orchestra - F.A.M.E.'S. Project - Skopje

Additional cinematography by Aubrey Newell

Associate/assistant producers: Christopher Pellegrini, Ann Bacon, and Brian Kaylor

Filmed in association with the Center for Independent Documentary

<http://www.humanitarianfilm.org>

CHAPTER VII

BODIES© INCORPORATED

BY VICTORIA VESNA*

VICTORIA VESNA, PH.D., IS A MEDIA ARTIST AND PROFESSOR AT THE UCLA DEPARTMENT OF DESIGN | MEDIA ARTS AND DIRECTOR OF THE ART|SCI CENTER AT THE SCHOOL OF THE ARTS AND CALIFORNIA NANOSYSTEMS INSTITUTE (CNSI). SHE WAS A SENIOR RESEARCHER AT THE INSTITUT MÉDITERRANÉEN DE RECHERCHES AVANCÉES (IMÉRA) IN MARSEILLE, FRANCE (2011-2013). VESNA'S WORK CAN BE DEFINED AS EXPERIMENTAL CREATIVE RESEARCH THAT RESIDES BETWEEN DISCIPLINES AND TECHNOLOGIES. SHE HAS EXHIBITED HER WORK IN OVER 20 SOLO EXHIBITIONS, MORE THAN 70 GROUP SHOWS, HAS BEEN PUBLISHED IN EXCESS OF 20 PAPERS AND GAVE 100+ INVITED TALKS IN THE LAST DECADE.

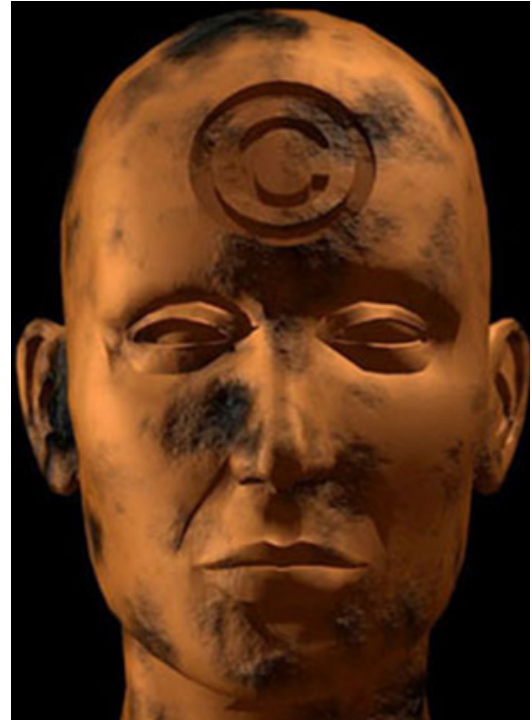
Bodies© INCorporated was conceived as a response to the need of the *Virtual Concrete*¹ online audience to “see” their bodies and it was informed by my research of MOOs, multi-user worlds, cyborgs and avatars. I did not want to simply send back what was demanded, but answer in a way that would prompt the audience to consider their relationship to the Internet and the meaning of online representation.

When I uploaded the questionnaire in *Virtual Concrete* asking the audience to “order” their imaginary body, it never crossed my mind to take it much further from the conceptual realm. But I was intrigued by the need to be represented graphically and further to have these bodies somehow enact a life of their own.² As discussed in Chapter 4, this fantasy is one that could easily be manipulated into a convenient way to gather personal data for other purposes. As we become incorporated into this seemingly democratic space, we also enter a collective state that could mean loss of identity. It is a marketplace; it is an imaginary space.

Body Construction

The title *Bodies© INCorporated* is a play on words. “Bodies” is accompanied by a

copyright symbol and “INCorporated” draws on the Latin root, *corpus*, while alluding to a corporation—bodies are incorporated into the Internet and their information is copyrighted. The logo



of the project is a bronze head with a copyright sign on its third eye, signifying the inherent contradiction of efforts to control information flow with New Age idealism of interconnectedness.

¹Virtual Concrete was an installation piece that consisted of a path made up of 9ft. of concrete with two bodies superimposed – people were invited to walk on it and read the small text taken from various chat rooms online. The project was viewed remotely via a CU-See Me camera and people had an opportunity to “order” their body online. This was purely conceptual but surprisingly the expectation was to actually receive a graphical body.

²The project I envisioned was complex and I needed help to develop and produce it. Robert Nideffer, worked with me on framing the spaces I imagined and Nathan Freitas, a musician and programmer created all the CGI scripts and VRML spaces. Ken Fields, a Ph.D. music student, composed all the sounds.

Once the participants enter the project, they click through a series of legal notifications. My goal was to create a controlling space where the signing of legal documents and inputting of personal data becomes an emotional experience. These legal announcements were taken from the Disney website and edited to become non-sensical when read carefully. The assumption is that no one is reading these documents, despite the fact that they take away all rights—a tactic designed to alert participants about the legal issues attached to their navigation through information space. Upon entering the main site, participants are invited to create their own bodies and become “members.” They have a choice of twelve textures with attached meanings, which are a combination of alchemical properties and marketing strategies.

The body parts are female, male, and infantile, left and right leg and arms, torso and head. The body themselves are wire frames that were donated by Viewpoint Datalabs. They are three-dimensional scans that are used for medical imaging.

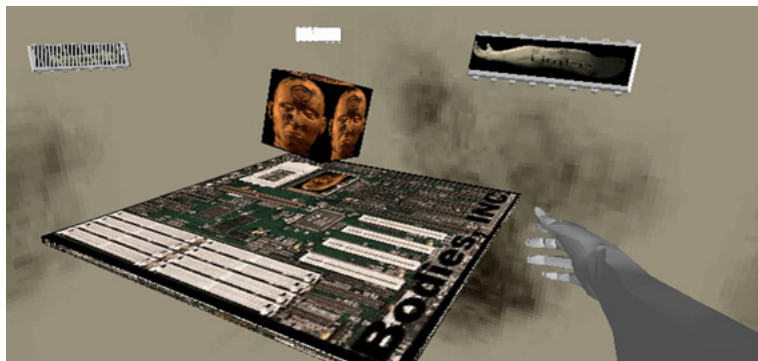
There are also twelve sounds to be attached to the body that can be viewed as an image as well. The participant names his/her body

and chooses handling directions and comments. When submitted to the system, the information is incorporated into the database and a message is automatically sent to the member via their e-mail address.



Architecture

Once they have created their body, participants may move through four different spaces: Home, Limbo, Necropolis and Showplace. I created Limbo as a way to deal with the thousands of bodies in *Virtual Concrete*. We had to move them to the new project, but because of the standards problem, their information could not be moved in an active form. Their information was dormant, in Limbo. In order to activate it, people would have to log on to *Bodies@INcorporated* and reinvent themselves using the newly-established parameters. To alert the previous participants, we sent an email message to each *Virtual Concrete* “body” notifying them of the “corporate takeover” of Virtual



Concrete and inviting them to become members of *Bodies© INCorporated*. As an incentive, we promised “50 shares” of the new project. Later, the idea of Limbo was expanded to denote a space where bodies that do not follow the strict rules and regulations are reduced to text files.

Next, I took this a step further and gave the participants that were sent to *Limbo* an option to move out in 40 days by responding to a series of “legal” e-mail messages (a spam) that needed their signatures.

Home is represented by a large computer “motherboard” with rules and regulations drawn from Irvine, California, a tightly ordered, planned community.³

Necropolis was devised for the deletion of bodies. This space was not originally part of my plan, but emerged out of the many requests from people who wanted their bodies deleted. Initially I would respond with a short e-mail:

Dear (Body name),
Bodies© INCorporated received your request for body deletion on (date). Unfortunately, once you have committed yourself, it is not possible to delete your body. Thank you very much for using our services.

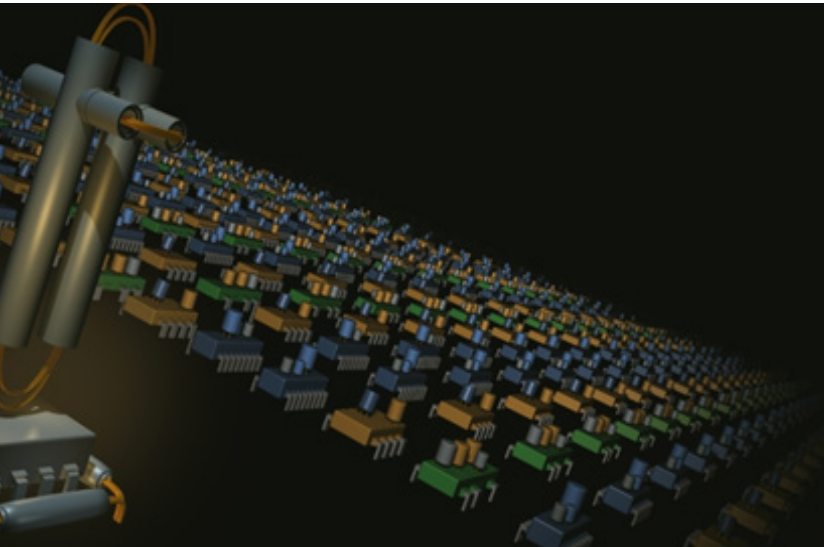
³ In 1993, I completed a three-year project called “Another Day in Paradise” that dealt with the city of Irvine, California, one of the most elaborately planned communities in the United States. I drew from this research when designing “home”. See: Vesna, V. “Another Day in Paradise and Virtual Concrete: Preserved Palms, Concrete and Telepresence.” *Leonardo* 31, No. 1, pp. 13-19. MIT Press.

Though occasionally I would manually delete a body because I felt badly for people who were embarrassed by the sexuality of their imaginary body, or who expressed fear that their boss might discover it, for the most part I remained strict about refusing deletions. There were repeated requests however, and even an incident when one person contacted the University and threatened legal action. To resolve what had become an uncomfortable position, I decided that we should create a space that made deletion very difficult, thus making a point about how posting personal information, even if it is fantasy, can affect our lives.

During this time I was collaborating with an artist and colleague from UC Irvine, Connie Samaras, on a book/CD-ROM entitled *Terminals*. This was part of a larger exhibition that we organized in 1995 that included museums of four UC campuses and included physical exhibitions and websites from each site. Artists and theorists were invited to contribute work that explored the idea of the cultural construction of death and, in particular, death in relation to technology.⁴ As a result, various materials dealing with meanings of death surrounded me. Also, I found a now-defunct website called *The Crime Archives*, where graphic descriptions of murders were detailed and sites were located describing cancer and other diseases. From these gruesome resources I compiled a list of “methods of

⁴ See: <http://vv.arts.ucla.edu/terminals>





death” that those who chose to delete their bodies had to select from in order to “die.” I also mixed in some simple deaths, such as “died in sleep” (though the participant had to look very hard to find that one). In order to complete the deletion of a body, the participants had to not only choose a method of “death,” but also write an obituary and construct a grave.

Exhibition in Physical Spaces

I soon received invitations to exhibit the project from people who noticed it via the Web, and not through the usual art world channels. But my problem was to discover ways in which a project designed to exist on the Net could be exhibited in a gallery space and not be compromised.

I arrived at a solution for this problem during an early installation of Bodies© INCorporated at the Santa Barbara Museum,⁵ when I invited local people who had previously created “bodies” to the opening and projected them on the museum ceiling. To my delight, they treated this as a special event, bringing their friends and families to see “their” body exhibited in a privileged cultural space. Thus the audience was moved out of the background and became part of the exhibition. I realised that this could be a new form of portraiture and decided to further develop this approach.

For the exhibition at the San Francisco Art Institute in 1997, I searched for e-mails with domains based in San Francisco to identify people in the

⁵ Bodies© INCorporated was part of a large exhibition surveying historical artists’ representations of bodies entitled, “Figuratively Speaking,” at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, California, November 1996.

**...where you can be
textually engaged or
engaging...**

NTRY

...or so the body says...

city who had created bodies and notified them of their participation in this event. I output the selected bodies onto slides and projected them on the walls and columns of the gallery and also projected the website on the main wall. These bodies were privileged by their location and given more shares in the project as a reward.

This strategy proved successful and I decided to take it a step further while in residence at the Art House in Dublin the following year. I asked the curator to set up appointments with people he found important in his professional life and then met with these people in the gallery and helped them build a “body.” At the end of my stay, these bodies were output to slides and projected on the outside of the building during the opening. Though I was not able to be present for this event, I heard later that it was successful. This approach became at once performative and participatory while localising a medium that is inherently about distance and globality.

Showplace was devised to address exhibition not only online but in privileged physical spaces such as galleries and museums. I asked Peter Weibel, who curated the net condition exhibition at the ZKM, to compose a list of people that he considered important to his immediate environment. I came to Karlsruhe to meet with everyone in person, and helped each one build a body.

But what is particularly important about this group is that these people are closely linked in “real” life and very busy—and these bodies will be used as the first step in building a series of databases of interconnected people for my future project, Community of People with No Time. ZKM Bodies was on exhibit as part of the net condition show





and, at the time of the submission of this thesis, is part of the exhibit *Anagrammatic Bodies*, also at the ZKM, and curated by Peter Weibel.

In addition to the four spaces, a chat was added as well as a newly emerging “Marketplace.” The chat was never meant to have people communicate with each other, but rather, has a simple bot that responded to all queries with random quotes from dead philosophers. Whatever a participant typed, he received an automatic response.

The Marketplace is a space that takes the idea of exchanging data and marketing “products” such as t-shirts and caps emblazoned with a copyright logo. Here participants have the illusion of gathering more shares in the project by participating:

- Every time you logon as a member, you receive 1 share.
- Every time you create a body that receives the approval of the *Bodies© INCorporated* Board of Directors and Advisory boards, you receive a minimum of 10 shares.
- Every time you submit a ‘dead philosopher quote’, that receives the approval of the *Bodies© INCorporated* Board of Directors and Advisory boards, you receive a minimum of 10 shares.
- Every time you submit an idea that is used in the project, you receive 10 shares.
- If your body is chosen to be exhibited in Showplace, you will receive a generous compensation of shares. (Value dependent on the institutional prestige).
- When you acquire 500 shares you are promoted from a *Bodies© INCorporated* member to the status of an Adept; you will gain building permissions (proposals are submitted to the Board of Director Architexts for review.)
- When you have acquired 1,000 shares, you are promoted from a *Bodies© INCorporated* Adept to an Avatar, which allows direct communication with the Board of Directors.

CHAPTER VIII

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The gallery@calit2 gratefully acknowledges that this exhibition would not have been possible without the support of the Qualcomm Institute, the gallery committee, and the efforts of the technical staff and student workers. Our thanks go to each and every one of them.



gallery@calit2 reflects the nexus of innovation implicit in Calit2's vision, and aims to advance our understanding and appreciation of the dynamic interplay among art, science and technology.



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<http://gallery.calit2.net>

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C2
GALLERY @ CALIT2