

NET ART

David Ross, director of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Arts defines Net Art in 21 distinct qualities. Here, I will list and comment each of them (the 7th quality is split in two):

- 1. The ability to move and assemble audiences.** I would say it's hard to assemble an audience on the internet at any given moment. People tend to come and go as they please. It's true that the audience can easily move though. It takes a millisecond to change gallery on the web, as going to a different gallery in "real life" perhaps takes too much energy.
- 2. Authority shifts between reader and writer.** The internet allows an unprecedented level of collaboration and interactivity. An artist can create the tools for another to use in order to create a piece but who becomes the author?
- 3. Net.art is based on an economy of abundance.** The neutral aspect of the Internet allows anyone to own a share of it for relatively low fees. Absolutely anyone with an internet connection can setup his own (although crappy if free...) space. On the opposite, what steps do I have to follow if I want to setup my channel on cable?
- 4. The net allows for the production of epic work.** The internet allows you to store and create projects that span for an infinite amount of time if necessary. Take for example Noah Kalina (noahkalina.com) who took a picture of himself every single day since January 11, 2000. He uploads his photos on the first of each month and archives every single one of them.
- 5. Net.art is purely ephemeral.** As much as Net Art can be beautiful and telling, it all boils down to bits and bytes which can be annihilated instantly.
- 6. Net.art is produced within a medium in which extraordinary digital tools are available.** In programming we trust.

- 7. Digital technology affords the possibilities of simulation and construction of truly credible images.** The numerous tools created by artists, computer scientists and engineers alike allow one to unleash incredibly lifelike imagery. An artist can also program a piece of software that outputs a masterpiece. He can then play with the parameters of his software to alter and create different pieces.
- 8. The intimacy of this medium.** I tend to agree and disagree about this point. It is true that most of the time you interact with a computer and the internet in a solo fashion but thinking that true anonymity exists over the network is ludicrous. Also, you may think interacting with this piece of dynamic art is between you, your mouse, and the digital canvas, perhaps your every click and decisions are logged and used as statistical data.
- 9. Iterative nature.** The internet allows work to be sent back and forth between collaborators in order to create a never-ending and evolving piece.
- 10. The discursive quality can be embedded into the actual work.** Ross says that the critical reception is embedded in the work and that its transformation due to its reception is all the same thing. I think of this as comments submitted for a particular work and iterations and new versions of this work. (accompanied by the possibility to go back and time and retrieved archived version of the piece)
- 11. The collapse of the distinction between critical dialogue and generative dialogue.** I would love to hear more of this from Ross. Does he mean everyone has his input in the creative process?
- 12. Small-scale surfaces.** I don't think Net Art (and digital art) is confined to small areas. Even if a screen is 19 inches wide, the instant ability to resize and navigate through a piece makes it theoretically infinite in maximum size.
- 13. The ability to choose not only the transformation of the audience, but the exact size of the audience.** The internet offers really good ways of categorizing work through the use of tags and descriptions. As Ross states, passwords can also be used in order to create a more intimate set of spectators.

- 14. It's transactional.** The internet sure is a nice platform of commerce and money transaction...
- 15. The net is not directly commodifiable.** The idea of the net may not be commodifiable, but in its description, Ross says that unlike videotapes, Net Art can't be sold or bootlegged which I think is false. The internet opens a total new way of making money off others back!
- 16. Net.art is anarchic and dangerous.** I wouldn't go as far as to say it's dangerous, but the internet as surely brought a great deal of freedom, which is almost unlimited once you possess the adequate hardware. (you could setup your own web server, plug it in and have absolute control on how it will be used and what content it provides). Recent debates about Net Neutrality however show us how this quality of the internet medium may be in jeopardy.
- 17. Three "nots": it's not cinema, drawing, sculpture.** It's Net Art.
- 18. The morphing of images and texts is unique in net.art.** I find this quality more related to digital art in general due to new authoring tools than Net Art.
- 19. It's inherently global.** Although all other mediums can be of concern to the whole world, the distribution of the work will never reach the level of accessibility of Net Art. Internet allows you to instantly distribute your work to whom it may interest.
- 20. It inspires the creation of a corporate entity.** The internet allows people to gather in groups under a common flag more easily than ever. Artists from around the world can gather their work in collectives (such as depthcore.com) or even offer their services as an interactive design firm.