EDUCATING ARTISTS BEYOND DIGITAL:
UNDERSTANDING NETWORK ART AND RELATIONAL LEARNING
AS CONTEMPORARY PEDAGOGY

by

Heidi Marie May

Hon. B.A., Art & Art History, University of Toronto, 1998
Dip., Art & Art History, Sheridan College, 1998
M.F.A., University of British Columbia, 2000

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
(Curriculum Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Vancouver)

September 2013

© Heidi Marie May, 2013
Abstract

This dissertation is offered at a time when there is renewed interest in the conceptual overlaps between contemporary art and discussions about pedagogy, along with a desire to provide alternative ways of learning through different forms of pedagogy. Understanding art today often requires a shift away from the art object to the encounter with the work. For example, this research study aligns itself with the notion that network art is a type of art not based on objects, nor digital instruments alone, but on the relationships and processes that occur between the multiple components and individuals that contribute to the work.

Artists today work in relational and networked ways in which digital media exists as one part of a larger complex process. Art educators have called for an approach to the post-secondary pedagogical model that responds more to the multidisciplinary practices of contemporary artists and current cultural production. I suggest that a network understanding of both art and learning, drawn from the practices of contemporary artists and complexity thinking, can lead to new ways of rearticulating and understanding pedagogical practices.

In this research study I examine the practices of seven contemporary network artists who teach in post-secondary art programs. Through a reflexive methodology of active interviews and narrative inquiry, I inquire into the ways that these multidisciplinary and network artists make art and approach pedagogy. I am interested in how these modes of art production might impact ways of teaching and learning. Based on data collected during interviews, online correspondence, and examination of artworks, I observed three main thematic connections between the participants’ art and teaching practices: dialogical, collaborative, and performative. I suggest that these characteristics are related to notions of network within art and learning. I argue that network art, when looked at through the lens of pedagogy, can potentially be understood as relational learning, or performative learning. I end by suggesting further research into the idea of knowledge being something that becomes performative within our situational experiences.
Preface

This dissertation required the approval of the University of British Columbia’s Behavioral Research Ethics Board. The interview research discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 was covered by UBC Ethics Certificate #H11-01118, for the project titled “In-Between Art and Learning: Expanding Understandings of Networking Art Practices and Disrupting Media-Specific Disciplines in Art School Education.” Ethics approval was renewed each year that this dissertation was in progress.

Chapter 2. The discussion of the artwork *glisten)HIVE was modified from an article I authored:

May, H. (2011). Processing: Understanding art as encountering ongoing narrative. *Journal of International Digital Media Arts Association, 8*(2), 12-23. © International Digital Media & Arts Association. (Used with permission. Produced in the United States. All rights reserved. For permission to reprint please contact iDMAa.)

Chapter 3. This chapter is a slightly revised version of an article I authored:


Chapters 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. All figures are used with permission.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ....................................................................................................................... ii  
Preface ....................................................................................................................... iii  
Table of Contents ...................................................................................................... iv  
List of Figures ............................................................................................................ vii  
Acknowledgements ................................................................................................... viii  

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION ................................................................................ 1  
Statement of Problem ................................................................................................. 3  
Context and Rationale ................................................................................................. 6  
Background ................................................................................................................. 8  
  New Media and the Current Art World ................................................................. 8  
  Postmedium and Postmedia ................................................................................. 9  
  Remediation ......................................................................................................... 10  
  Beyond Object, Media and Digital ..................................................................... 11  
In-Between Art, Learning, Teaching ....................................................................... 13  
Overview of Chapters ............................................................................................... 13  

CHAPTER 2 – NETWORKS AND ART: RELATIONSHIPS AND PROCESSES BEYOND DIGITAL .................................................................................................... 17  
Being-with Networks ................................................................................................. 17  
Defining Network Art ............................................................................................... 21  
The Relevance of Fluxus .......................................................................................... 25  
Network as Assembling ........................................................................................... 27  
  Mail Art ............................................................................................................... 27  
  Sociopoetic Assemblings ................................................................................... 30  
Network as Situation ............................................................................................... 36  
  Participatory and Performative Creations ........................................................... 36  
  Relational Exchange ........................................................................................ 40  
Summary .................................................................................................................. 43  

CHAPTER 3 – COMPLEXITY THINKING: DECENTRALIZATION AND EMERGENT LEARNING ...................................................................................................... 44  
Complexity Thinking In Education .......................................................................... 45  
Network as Exchange .............................................................................................. 47  
  Disrupting the Teacher-Student Hierarchy ......................................................... 47  
  Relinquishing Control: Power-With vs. Power-Over .......................................... 48  
Network as Emergent .............................................................................................. 51  
  Decentralized and Rhizomatic Spaces for Learning ........................................... 51  
  Learning With/In Emergent Processes ................................................................. 52  
  From Spiral to Lattice to Networks ................................................................... 54
CHAPTER 4 – REFLECTIVE INTERVIEWING FOR REFLEXIVE RESEARCH

Dialogical Experience in the Active Interview
Temporal Ways Of Knowing
Being Reflective and Reflexive
Hermeneutic Co-Inquiry
Limitations of Reflexive Research
Research Participants
Nathaniel Stern
Jon Thomson
Alison Craighead
M. Simon Levin
Jessica Westbrook
Adam Trowbridge
Mark Amerika

Data Collection and Procedures
Interviews, Blogs, and Email
Reflective Fieldnotes

Data Analysis
Summary

CHAPTER 5 – DIALOGICAL FEEDBACK BETWEEN ART AND PEDAGOGY

Nathaniel
My Practice is Pretty Messy
“my practice has become increasingly engaged in the exploration of relationships”
“cultivating interdisciplinarity and collaboration”

Jon & Alison
Generating Feedback
“the work we make is more like participation in an ongoing conversation”
“I don’t really like to say students. They might be younger but, they’re still artists”

Instigating Difference
“I think it really helps you understand what you do as an artist”

CHAPTER 6 – COLLABORATING WITH THE UNKNOWN IN ART AND PEDAGOGY

Simon
Outside One’s Comfort Zone
“I’m not interested in the resolved form… I’m more interested in a formation”
“you want them to discover something”

Jessica & Adam
Life and Art Blurred
“Collaboration… More and more it is just a state of being for us”

Learning How To Negotiate
“As educators we are co-authors, with our students, of the experience of interpreting and learning”..........................124

CHAPTER 7 – PERFORMING ARTIST-MEDIUM THROUGH ART AND PEDAGOGY .........................................................129

Mark ........................................................................................................................................130

Performative Creations ........................................................................................................134
Post-Studio ..........................................................................................................................135
“It doesn’t really feel like a ‘studio’ environment anymore” ..................................................135
“I didn’t aspire to become something specific.” ....................................................................137
“[Authorship] is being reconfigured into a more fluid, often collaborative networking experience.” ........................................................................................................................................139

The Artist is the Medium .....................................................................................................142
“this all-over sense of being in perpetual postproduction” ....................................................144

Pedagogy as Performative Remix ........................................................................................146
“In the classroom I refer to it as ‘inter-subjective jamming’” ..................................................146
“I don’t embrace the studio critique process: studio critique should be SOCIAL critique”150

CHAPTER 8 – TOWARDS A NETWORK ART PEDAGOGY .................................................................153

Reflecting on the Research Question ................................................................................153
Connections Between Network Art and Pedagogy ............................................................155
Dialogical .............................................................................................................................156
Collaborative .......................................................................................................................159
Performative .........................................................................................................................163

Becoming the Medium .......................................................................................................166
Rhizomatic Potential .........................................................................................................167

CHAPTER 9 – CONCLUSION ..................................................................................................172

Summary of Significance ......................................................................................................174
Personal Impact: Becoming Network(ing) ........................................................................177
Suggestions for Future Research .........................................................................................184

References ..........................................................................................................................187

Appendix: Mailing List Correspondence .............................................................................204
# List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.1</td>
<td>Sally Mericle, <em>Mail Art My Ass: Looks Like Junk to Me</em>, 1989 (Welch, 1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.2</td>
<td>Crackerjack Kid a.k.a Chuck Welch, <em>Boycott Exxon</em>, 1989 (Welch, 1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.3</td>
<td>John P. Jacob, <em>Who’s Who of the Happy Young People</em>, 1982 (Welch, 1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.4</td>
<td>Lucy Kimbell, <em>Audit</em>, 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.5</td>
<td>Julie Andreyev, *glisten)<em>HIVE</em>, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.6</td>
<td>Harrell Fletcher &amp; Jon Rubin, <em>Pictures Collected from Museum Visitors’ Wallets</em>, 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.7</td>
<td>Jochen Gerz, <em>The Gift</em>, 2000 / 2008-09 / 2012-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.1</td>
<td>Illustrations of centralized and decentralized networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.2</td>
<td>Illustration of a rhizome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.3</td>
<td>Illustration of a rhizomean curricular landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.4</td>
<td>Illustration of Efland’s spiral lattice model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.1</td>
<td>Screenshot of personal research blog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.1</td>
<td>Nathaniel Stern, <em>Doin’ my part to lighten the load</em>, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.2</td>
<td>Nathaniel Stern, <em>Floating Worlds</em>, from <em>Distill Life</em> series, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.3</td>
<td>Nathaniel Stern, <em>Mediation</em>, from <em>Dynamic Stasis</em> series, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.4</td>
<td>Nathaniel Stern, <em>Detail</em>, <em>Mediation</em>, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.5</td>
<td>Thomson &amp; Craighead, <em>Google Tea-Towels</em>, 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.6</td>
<td>Thomson &amp; Craighead, <em>London Wall</em>, 2010 and ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.7</td>
<td>Thomson &amp; Craighead, <em>Short Films about Flying</em>, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5.8</td>
<td>Thomson &amp; Craighead, <em>Horizon</em>, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6.1</td>
<td>M. Simon Levin, Installation image for Glocal, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6.2</td>
<td>M. Simon Levin, Installation image for Glocal, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6.3</td>
<td>M. Simon Levin, Composite image for Glocal, 2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6.4</td>
<td>Code.lab, Image of performance piece, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6.5</td>
<td>Code.lab, Image of site-specific installation, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6.6</td>
<td>Code.lab, Projection-based installation image, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6.7</td>
<td>Code.lab, Projection-based installation image, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6.8</td>
<td>M. Simon Levin, <em>That Space In Between</em>, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6.9</td>
<td>Screenshot of Channel TWo home page, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6.10</td>
<td>Screenshot of ChannelTWo about page, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.1</td>
<td>Screenshot of Mark Amerika, GRAMMATRON, originated 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.2</td>
<td>Screenshot of Mark Amerika, GRAMMATRON, originated 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.3</td>
<td>Mark Amerika, Video still, <em>Immobilité</em>, 2007-2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.4</td>
<td>Screenshot of Mark Amerika, FILMTEXT, originated 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.5</td>
<td>Screenshot of Mark Amerika, FILMTEXT, originated 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7.6</td>
<td>Screenshot of Mark Amerika, FILMTEXT, originated 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8.1</td>
<td>Illustration of a random rhizomatic moment of network art/pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.1</td>
<td>QR_U (an open school): Questions, Responses &amp; Unofficial Conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.2</td>
<td>QR_U, Participant scanning QR code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.3</td>
<td>QR_U, Timetable and guest computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.4</td>
<td>QR_U, Screenshots from social media sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.5</td>
<td>QR_U, Reading Aloud event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.6</td>
<td>QR_U, Screenshot of video page on QR_U website</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to Dr. Rita Irwin, my research supervisor, for her ongoing encouragement and amazing mentorship. Thank you for being so generous with your time and for believing in me. I also wish to thank my committee members Dr. Donal O’Donoghue and Dr. Teresa Dobson, for their insightful questions and constant support.

I extend my sincere thanks to the participants in this study: Mark Amerika, Alison Craighead, M. Simon Levin, Nathaniel Stern, Jon Thomson, Adam Trowbridge, and Jessica Westbrook. Thank you for taking the time out of your busy lives to participate in and contribute to this research. I feel very honoured to have had the opportunity to inquire into my questions with you.

I offer thanks to my ‘PhD friends’ who were always there to listen and understand the struggle, and to Rainy for keeping me company while writing at home. Finally, I want to acknowledge my husband Chris Kelly for his patience and words of encouragement over the years, and for keeping me fed with food and love.
CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

As an artist and an educator in a university art department, I am constantly questioning what and how we are teaching in post-secondary art programs. I reflect upon what a university art education is and what it should be in today’s network culture. Contemporary artists are working in relational and networked ways in which digital technologies are employed through a wide range of practices. Often times the art emerges through the interactions and situations, with the media being only one part of the production and dissemination process. Regardless of their intentions, the artists provide opportunities for learning in relational and complex ways. In this way, the art itself can be thought of as a potential pedagogical form that, when engaged by participants, may instigate a process of both teaching and learning. Complexity thinking embraces a multilinear understanding of learning in which teaching and learning is described as moving away from the concept of one individual passing established knowledge on to another, to the concept of collectives elaborating emergent knowledge (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2008). In thinking about the future of art in education, I argue that we as artists and educators need to better understand i) how complexity thinking can be applied to instigate emergent knowledge through collective processes of learning, and ii) to what extent is this already happening. This dissertation inquires into the intersections between network art practices, learning, and teaching, in order to determine an approach to art pedagogy that is reflective of an evolving complex society.

The term relational is defined here as the ways in which people, ideas, media and experiences are connected. The relational aspects of a network – the assemblings and links between its multiple components and the process of making connections – receive less than adequate attention in our contemporary society. The label ‘network art’ or ‘networked art’ is often used to describe computer-generated works; however, artists and critics have argued for an understanding of network art1 that does not point to digital technology as a defining characteristic. This research

---

1 My choice of ‘network art’ over ‘networked art’ is explained on p. 21 and elaborated further from p. 21-25.
2 I use the words ‘relational’ and ‘aesthetics’ when discussing network art since these are significant aspects of the kinds of art, pedagogy, and learning in this research. When using these words, I am
proposes an understanding of network art that is not based on objects, nor digital instruments alone, but on the relationships and processes that occur between the multiple components and individuals that contribute to the work (Bazzichelli, 2008; Corby, 2006; Saper, 2001). In many cases, the production and dissemination processes become the artwork itself. Through this expanded understanding of network art, there is a potential to explore the pedagogical possibilities and learning with/in emergent relations and situations.

My proposal for an expanded understanding of network art is influenced by theoretical writings that explore a relational experience of art, including Situational Aesthetics (Burgin, 1969), Hermeneutical Aesthetics (Davey, 1994, 1999, 2005, 2007), and Relational Aesthetics (Bourriaud, 1998/2002). In the field of art education research and practice, relational aesthetics has been referred to in writings that explore art as an encounter and an experience. Bourriaud describes it as a “theory of form” (p. 19) in which the human relations and social context of the types of art practices constitute the actual aesthetics of the work. The main similarity between network art and relational aesthetics is the interest in a formation rather than a form or object; art that consists of an assembling of different components to be encountered in a participatory framework. One of the main distinctions between the two is that network art, as defined in this dissertation, is produced by artists that are critically engaged with ideas and experiences connected to media and network culture, and practices that sometimes directly acknowledge its Fluxus roots (an art idea/movement originating in the 1960s, defined later in this dissertation).

Bourriaud’s relational aesthetics limits discussion of new media and technology to the work being “at best… just symptom or gadget, or, worse still, the representation of a symbolic alienation from the computer medium” (p. 68). In his later publication, Postproduction (2007), however, the author gives much more creative agency to contemporary artists using computer and networked technologies.

Another main distinction between network art and relational aesthetics is the kinds of relations produced and the reasons for exploring these relations. Bishop (2004) recognized Bourriaud’s book as important in identifying relational art of the 1990s, but questions “what types of relations are produced, for whom, and why?” (p.
Network art, particularly that of the research participants in this study, consists of relations between humans and between humans and technology that are often reflective of how technology affects our daily lives. Because of the focus of this study, the network art discussed in this dissertation consists of performative and relational aspects that can arguably lead to moments of learning and new ways of thinking about pedagogy. The networked intersections of art and pedagogy explored in this research can perhaps be understood as a “prosthetic space of creative production” (p. 9) wherein ideas and experiences “are brought together in a contiguous relationship for a lingering on their juxtapositions” (Garoian, 2013, p. 9, p. 18). One might say that the understandings that emerge through this process help to create the liminal in-between spaces that inform the network practices of the research participants.

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the practices of a selection of network artists who teach in post-secondary art programs, whose work spans a range of multidisciplinary practices and approaches to digital media, and who also demonstrate interests in pedagogy. This research addresses notions of network and pedagogy in art and education, using a theoretical framework that stems from complexity thinking. It is an inquiry into the intersections between network art practices and approaches to pedagogy in university art programs.

**Statement of Problem**

Fouquet (2007) questioned the established curriculum of art school education and the conditions that prevent us from “imagining a more fluid concept of pedagogy that takes as core value the connectedness of teaching, learning and curriculum to...”

---

2 I use the words ‘relational’ and ‘aesthetics’ when discussing network art since these are significant aspects of the kinds of art, pedagogy, and learning in this research. When using these words, I am referring to the larger range of art practices influenced by Conceptual Art that emerged in the 1960s and beyond; art that was less interested in the aura of an object or image and more interested in social practices. Thus when I use these words I am not necessarily making reference to Bourriaud’s theories of Relational Aesthetics.

3 In his book *The Prosthetic Pedagogy of Art: Embodied Research and Practice*, Garoian (2013) writes about artists creating and opening up “spaces into which existing knowledge can extend, interrelate, coexist and where new ideas and relationships can emerge prosthetically” (p. 6).
art in its multiple forms and to the broader social and cultural context” (p. 1). In her dissertation, ‘Contemporary Art/Contemporary Pedagogy: Interrupting Mastery as Paradigm for Art School Education,’ Fouquet argues that the contemporary art world is incongruous to the traditional practices being taught in post-secondary art programs: “(T)he overall art school pedagogical model is thus intimately linked to the segregation of studio disciplines and to the production of objects, images, performances and other artifacts” (2007, p. 197). Although the interdisciplinary artists she researched demonstrated a commitment to craftsmanship with their objects, images and performances, they did not place the development of craft skills at the core of their work either as artists or educators. Instead, Fouquet suggested that these artists, who also teach, presented perspectives that challenge the pedagogical structures of most art programs revolved around acquiring and refining skills and ideas within segregated studio disciplines. Of particular interest to my own research, Fouquet writes: “each of them (the artists) see curriculum as a process of engagement may very well mean that for them, there are no divisions between teaching, learning, curriculum, pedagogy and their own practice” (p. 200).

Furthermore, Fouquet concludes her dissertation with an appeal for art school education to be reimagined through theories of complexity: “I believe that in re-rethinking the purposes of art school education within theories of complexity, we have the opportunity to engage in a constant interrogation of teaching and learning, avoiding the propensity to replace one grand narrative with another” (p. 201).

Fouquet (2007) described the post-secondary art school pedagogical model as “intimately linked to the segregation of studio disciplines” and too narrow, instead arguing for a way of learning and teaching that aligns with the interdisciplinary practices of contemporary artists and current cultural production. With the current range of art production situated in “recombinant media chaos” (Hertz, 2010), art educators located all around the world are reconsidering how to educate future artists and designers (Alexenberg, 2008; Madoff, 2009). Art educator Baldacchino (2008) presents the controversial argument that art and education cannot exist together unless art’s practices are seen as open-ended and not predetermined:
Art’s relationship with education is often characterized by paradox. Yet art is often reified within an education system that refuses to see the pedagogical strengths of paradox...So, the idea of art and education as shared practices within schooling remains somewhat dubious unless art’s practices are recognized in parts perceived as wholes and where conclusions are marked by open-endedness. No possibilities for art or learning could ever emerge unless a radically different set of conditions give way to a state of affairs where knowledge is a matter to be discovered but never determined, and where a fixed ground is transformed into a wide horizon...A philosophy of art in education must start from the notion of education as a human activity that cannot be pinned down to a finite concept. (p. 241-242, italics in original)

Baldacchino asserts that we need to view education as a construct rather than a system of learning in order to get closer to a de-schooled art education. Although this is quite a radical statement, he raises an extremely important problem that is not only limited to the teaching and learning of art but, as indicated in the last sentence, to education as a whole. This connects back to the narrow disciplinary structure that Fouquet (2007) observes students transgressing and to which she asks, “While they (the students) may be successful at getting what they want, they/we may never know what they/we lack” (p. 46), further stating, “What is at stake in maintaining disciplinary boundaries under the pretense of preserving the disciplines?” (p. 47).

Extending on Fouquet’s research, I question how post-secondary art education can better reflect and respond to living with/in a complex and networked society.4

In an effort to gain a better understanding of these complex questions and to perhaps further investigate and articulate the current relationship between contemporary art practices and post-secondary art pedagogy, I have engaged in interviews with seven network artists and post-secondary art educators (referred to

---

4 Fouquet (2007) ends her paper by arguing for a “re-rethinking” of the purposes of art school education through theories of complexity in order to avoid replacing a mastery model with another grand narrative. She suggests that we continue to question why mastery has endured for so long with curriculum and pedagogy in art schools: “(I)t is possible for students to see things, and to experience ideas, almost exclusively through the perspective of one studio discipline without ever being exposed to the notion that diverse interpretations or debates around similar ideas in a range of mediums, by bumping into each other, may potentially lead to new ideas or new forms of production in response to contemporary experiences” (p. 197). The research in this dissertation continues where Fouquet (2007) left off, by examining art and pedagogy in relation to complexity theory, with specific attention to notions of network and emergent knowledge.
in this dissertation as artist-educators). Through qualitative research that employs a reflexive methodology (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009) of active interviews (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, 2004) and narrative inquiry, I address the following two-part research question:

What are some of the ways that multidisciplinary and network artists make art and approach pedagogy, and what challenges does this pose for the artists and the post-secondary education systems in which they teach?

I am interested in the shared practices that might exist between network artists’ art and teaching, and how these modes of (network) art production might impact the future of art education.

**Context and Rationale**

Understanding art today requires a conceptual shift away from the aura of the art *object*, to the *encounter* with the artwork and an acknowledgement of the social *relations* produced from this experience (Bishop, 2004, 2006; Bourriaud, 1998/2002; O'Donoghue, 2011). Contemporary art practices also share conceptual overlaps with current discussions about pedagogy, particularly those that encourage collaborative and shared processes of teaching and learning. During the last decade, artists and curators have initiated pedagogical projects as artworks. These include the exhibition *Documenta 12* (2007) and symposiums such as *Transpedagogy: Contemporary Art and the Vehicles of Education* (2009) and the *Deschooling Society Conference* (2010) – to name just a few. In an article that was published in 1994 entitled “The Pedagogical Turn,” the author, Gerald Graff wrote, “If I were a betting person, my prediction for ‘the future of theory’ would be that over the next decade we are going to see a significant redirection of theoretical attention to issues of education and pedagogy” (p. 65). This turn to education can be understood from a number of perspectives. For example, it can be seen as a form of engaged, dematerialized and participatory art practice that is experienced as a relational and durational process.
The pedagogical turn\textsuperscript{5} in contemporary art practice is situated within an interdisciplinary environment that is committed to inquiry, dialogue, and critical self-reflection. Artists have adopted pedagogical models and education processes as the subject and object of their work and often draw upon social situations and relational acts; a practice dating back to the work of Joseph Beuys in the 1960s and Robert Filliou’s work of the 1970s, as discussed later in this dissertation. By expanding understandings of art as a potential pedagogical strategy, we may foresee new ways of creating participatory conditions in the art classroom. Networked art creative practices, sometimes described as participation art (Frieling, Pellico, & Zimbardo, 2008) and performance art (Bolter, 2001; Bolter, MacIntyre, Nitsche, & Farley, 2013), consist of multilinear connections made through generative processes, often, but not always, triggered by digital technology. The production and dissemination processes can become the artwork itself and often lead to the potential for relational learning. As I mentioned earlier, with the term ‘relational’ I am referring to the ways in which people, ideas, media, and experiences are connected. The notion of ‘relational learning’ relates specifically to any knowledge or new understandings that may emerge from or with/in these situations.

I suggest that network art is less about the objects or media and more about the relationships and processes in progress between the various components and individuals of the work (Bazzichelli, 2008; Corby, 2006; Saper, 2001). My purpose in this research is not to simply argue for a technology-neutral view of networks in art, nor to appeal for a harmonious partnership between contemporary art and digital media. Rather, by examining current network art practices, both digital and non-digital, within a broader and more complex cultural context, I hope to gain a better understanding of what and how we should teach post-secondary art students. By exploring what it means to be an artist-educator living in a network culture, I intend to address both the analogous and contiguous notions of art and learning. Following on the work of other scholars exploring the “anomalous places” (Ellsworth, 2005) of

\textsuperscript{5} My discussion of the pedagogical turn above is a condensed account taken from an article I am currently writing, as lead author, with Dr. Rita L. Irwin and Dr. Donal O’Donoghue. The article is currently titled “Performing an Intervention in the Space Between Art and Education,” and stems from a research project conducted in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia.
This research examines how knowledge emerging within multidisciplinary and networking artists' practices might impact meanings constructed within the teaching and learning of art and, in turn, how experiences of teaching and learning might impact art production.

This dissertation discusses areas of art that are conceptually influenced by Relational/Fluxus aesthetics (Bourriaud, 1998/2002; Patrick, 2010) and notions of participation/social art (Bishop, 2006; Frieling, 2008), from the theoretical perspectives of complexity in learning (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2008; Osberg & Biesta, 2008; Osberg, Biesta, & Cilliers, 2008), notions of being (Nancy, 2000) and becoming (Deleuze & Guittari, 1987), and network culture/art (Bazzichelli, 2008; Castells, 1996, 2001; Corby, 2006; Saper, 2001; Varnelis, 2008, 2009). With these theoretical underpinnings, this research explores how multidisciplinary and network artists are teaching media/postmedia practices in post-secondary art programs and how their art practices inform understandings of pedagogy and understandings of network culture. This research will examine how art reflects aspects of network culture, in terms of it being a sociocultural shift that is not limited to developments in digital technology (Varnelis, 2009).

Below I provide some background into the contemporary art terminology that this dissertation responds to, followed by an overview of the chapters that follow.

**Background**

**New Media and the Current Art World**

In his book *Media, New Media, Postmedia* (2010), art critic and curator Domenico Quaranta analyses the current positioning of “New Media Art” in the wider field of contemporary arts, positing reasons for its marginal position in recent art history. Quaranta contends that in the current art world, art is not appreciated as

---

6 The coexisting relationship of art and pedagogy has been examined by many, including research in art education by artist-educators that have explored performance art and embodied research as pedagogy (Garoian, 1984, 1999a, 2013) and pedagogy as conceptual art practice (for example, Lucero, 2011).
“creative research on a given medium, but as a powerful statement on the world we are living in,” further questioning the separate categorization of New Media. Quaranta argues against Nicholas Bourriaud’s (1998/2002) distinction between art which uses computers and art which doesn’t, yet draws heavily upon Bourriaud’s more recent ideas put forth in *The Radicant* (2009):

> The idea of *Radicant*, if interpreted correctly, not only enables us to rescue New Media Art from its position on the margins, but even translates the postmedia perspective, still bound to a century of “post” phenomena, into a valuable indication for 21st century art…it means replacing these barriers with a new, definitive dividing line between art, defined by the indeterminancy and dissemination of its source code, and media, the land of kitsch and medium-specificity. (Quaranta, 2010, The postmedia condition, ¶ 14)

Quaranta makes an appeal for “art formerly known as New Media Art” to be conversant with art history and contemporary art, and for art criticism to look more closely and with an open mind towards the technological nature or the social origin of art where it is not expected to exist.

**Postmedium and Postmedia**

The term “postmedia” began to be used in the late 1990s and although it means different things to those in the fields of art and media, many critics and scholars from both areas are familiar with Rosalind Krauss’s 2000 text *A Voyage in the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*. Renowned art critic and theorist Krauss used the term “post-medium” when describing the decline of the Greenbergian concept of medium-specificity in contemporary art, arguing that the

---

7 Bourriaud (1998/2002) provides a rather pessimistic view of art that uses computers, in which he essentially separates these practices from the relational-aesthetic artists he chooses to focus on. He argues that the “main effects of the computer revolution are visible today among artists who do not use the computer,” (p. 67) further stating that these artists are caught up in “manufacturing something that will last” (p. 68). This view disregards a history of artists using the computer to explore a range of technical and relational processes that occur between both machines and humans, such as the net artists of the 1990s.

8 The concept of medium-specificity arose in the era of modernism and is associated with art critic Clement Greenberg. Although the concept can be traced back further, Greenberg helped popularize
medium was being replaced by a “different specificity,” demonstrated through “technical supports” of artists’ changing practices (Krauss, 2006). Other writers have since argued that Krauss’s arguments are still anchored within a modernist framework and limited by an overemphasis on the obsolescence of traditional media and an exclusion of critical assessment of electronic and digital media (Kim, 2009).

Adding to these conversations, media theorist Lev Manovich discussed his frustration with the concept of “medium” in the article “Post-Media Aesthetics,” stating: “(T)he traditional concept of medium does not work in relation to post-digital, post-net culture. And yet, despite the obvious inadequacy of the concept of medium to describe contemporary cultural and artistic reality, it persists” (Manovich, 2001, p. 4). Manovich instead argues for a language to replace the notion of medium, a language that relates more to the computer and net culture, with concepts that could be used both literally and metaphorically.

A few years later, Peter Weibel presented a slightly different understanding when he curated an exhibition in 2006 entitled *Postmedia Condition*, in which he described postmedia art as art that comes after the assertion of the media: “Hence in art there is no longer anything beyond the media. No-one can escape from the media. There is no longer any painting outside and beyond the media experience. There is no longer any sculpture outside and beyond the media experience” (Weibel, 2006, VII The post-media condition, ¶ 6). Weibel describes how the postmedia condition came to arrive in two stages: 1) all media achieving equivalent status as artistic media, and 2) various media intermingling, losing their separate identities and “living off one another” (Quaranta, 2010, ¶ 7).

**Remediation**

The notion of media informing the identities of other media is on par with Bolter and Grusin’s (2000) theory of mediation for our digital age termed ‘remediation’: “We offer this simple definition: a medium is that which remediates. It the term by arguing for a form of art that is made by the characteristic and distinct qualities of the raw material, and not influenced by other media. Much art in the postmodern era does not promote medium specificity in this purist understanding.
is that which appropriates the techniques, forms, and social significance of other media and attempts to rival or refashion them in the name of the real" (Bolter & Grusin, 2000, p. 65). The authors argue that “new” media borrows and refashions media from the past, therefore, the “old” medium is incorporated rather than eradicated. In an online conversation I had with Simon Biggs, Research Professor in Art at Edinburgh College of Art, Biggs acknowledged remediation as an important tool in our understanding of this postmedia debate, stating:

A key part of Bolter’s argument is that an emergent medium appropriates the mature medium due to the social conventions that have evolved around it, allowing the new medium to appropriate the conventions of legibility...This is considered a dynamic process with things, constantly changing, media evolving and shifting. In this context, Krauss’s arguments seem dated. (Biggs, 2010)

In other words, whether a specific medium or media is used or not, the social practices of that media may still exist (for example, cinema has remained cinema but the film has changed); considering all dimensions of a social practice, both past and present, can lead to a deeper understanding of an artwork.

**Beyond Object, Media and Digital**

The debates about how to define certain kinds of art may not appear on first glance to be all that significant to how art is made or how art is taught, however, words inform how we perceive and experience the potential possibilities of what is produced by artists. If, as Quaranta states, art today\(^9\) consists of statements about the world we are living in, then I argue that the understanding of art must exceed materiality and objectness – in a way that does not exclude material analysis, but rather considers social and other dimensions of media. Influenced by cultural

---

\(^9\) In a 2010 article based on a talk given in 2006, Jean-Luc Nancy uses the phrase ‘art today’ over ‘contemporary art’ describing the latter as a fixed phrase that “belongs in its way to art history,” further stating, “contemporary art is also a strange historical category since it is a category whose borders are shifting, but which generally don’t go back to much more than 20 or 30 years ago, and hence are continually moving” (2010, p. 91). For the remainder of this dissertation I will be using the word ‘today’ or ‘current’ as opposed to ‘contemporary’ whenever I am describing my own ideas, observations, and theories of art and artists’ practices.
theorist’s Mieke Bal’s (2003) argument against visual essentialism, this research addresses the rhetoric that produces the effect of an authority of materiality in visual culture\(^\text{10}\). I propose that Bal’s argument against a visual (and material) essentialism be extended to media and digital technologies as well.

As mentioned earlier, the aura of the object or medium has shifted to the *encounter* with the artwork and the *relations* produced from this experience. When Nicolas Bourriaud (1998/2002) published his theory of Relational Aesthetics from the 1990s, he described the human relations and social context of these types of art practices as the actual aesthetics; in other words, the viewer-participants’ actions constituted the aesthetics of relational art. That said, with relational and participatory artworks that incorporate digital technologies, there is often a particular aesthetic experience that is informed by the processes of the media that should not be overlooked. Encounters with these artworks can sometimes lead to a self-reflective awareness about our cultural relationships with digital media, thus allowing the digital to perhaps be perceived as something more than media. Munster (2001) argued that the notion of the aesthetic in digital art should be rethought of as an “arena of sensation,” rather than dependent upon style or object qualities of a particular artwork. In this sense, the aesthetic might be understood as that which emerges from the interaction or event that happens when one is with/in the work. She argued that although the content and ideas expressed through new media or digital art should be addressed over and above the technology that supports them, an “approximate aesthetics of the digital” can indeed be found within the production, dissemination, and reception of these art practices:

Despite the fact that the notion of digitality to promote, describe or identify a still emerging aesthetic seems already jaded, I want to argue that there is nevertheless something specific about digital art. This specificity is in part a

\(^\text{10}\) Drawing upon Roland Barthes’ theory of rhetoric that produces an effect of the ‘real’, Bal (2003) argues against a rhetoric that produces the effect of materiality..."On the one hand, meeting the material object can be a breathtaking experience: for students of objects, such experiences are still indispensable to counter the effect of endless classes where slide shows instill the notion that all objects are of equal size. Yet there can be no direct link between matter and interpretation. The belief that there is, which underlies this pedagogy, resorts to the authority of materiality...” (p. 9)
result of the mode of producing, consuming and participating with those machines that are the condition of possibility for digital art practice...I want to suggest that there is increasingly a sense in which it is possible to aesthetically locate the digital. (Munster, 2001, ¶ 2)

Several years later after Munster’s writing of the digital aesthetic, how has the arena of sensation of digital art changed or evolved? How have the developments within digital culture influenced our perception of art that uses “new” and digital media, namely art that does not fit easily into traditionally defined categories? By examining network art practices in which digital media is one component in relation to many other components, I intend to offer a unique perspective to research exploring the intersections of art, technology and culture.

**In-Between Art, Learning, Teaching**

Throughout this dissertation, the notion of network is examined from a few different viewpoints: 1) how it has been addressed in contemporary art and art today (Chapter 2), 2) how it has been addressed in teaching and learning (Chapter 3), and then, as a result of the research conducted with my participants, 3) how it exists in and between practices of art, learning, and teaching (Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8). The primary network of interest in this research is that which exists in and between the multiple practices of each of the individuals I am researching. This will undoubtedly take into account other networks that influence their work, however, my focus is on the processes and characteristics that make up this particular relational network of art/learning/teaching. Although I am interested in also analyzing the network as an artistic practice (and do discuss this to a certain extent in Chapter 2) as well as the network of the art world itself (Alloway, 1966; 1972; Danto, 1964), it is not the focus of this research.

**Overview of Chapters**

I have provided a background of concerns and ideas related to current art discourse and post-secondary art education in order to orient the inquiry of this
dissertation. The following is an outline and offered as a guide for the reader of this dissertation.

In Chapter 2, “Networks and Art: Relationships and Processes Beyond Digital,” I describe philosophical aspects of network and the notion of network in art today. Referring to the writings of Jean-Luc Nancy and Ted Aoki, I argue for an expanded understanding of the relational and existential aspects of a network and living with/in a networked society. From here I discuss some of the limitations of language when describing network art today. I then trace the relational aspects of network art to the Fluxus art movement of the 1960s and 70s, looking specifically at notions of network as assembling and at notions of network as situation, including current examples of network art.

In Chapter 3, “Complexity Thinking: Decentralization and Emergent Learning,” I begin by suggesting that art educators use the interactions and characteristics of digital media and online social networks to inform their pedagogy as opposed to limiting projects to the acquiring of skills pertaining to particular technologies and computer programs. I argue that this kind of pedagogical approach is more in line with the overall philosophy of network art practices as well as an understanding of learning based on complexity thinking. From here I present a short overview of complexity thinking as it has been addressed in education, focusing on the notion of decentralized networks in contemporary curriculum and pedagogy. Within this discussion of decentralized networks, I look at notions of network as exchange and notions of network as emergent. Complexity thinking, in particular emergent knowledge, not only provides a way for building connections between network art practices and pedagogy, but it also serves as the theoretical framework for this research’s methodology.

Although my discussion of notions of network has been limited in both Chapters 2 and 3 by aligning ‘assembling’ and ‘situation’ to art (Chapter 2) and ‘exchange’ and ‘emergent’ to education (Chapter 3), it is my intention that each of these understandings of network be applied to both art and education.

In Chapter 4, “Reflective Interviewing for Reflexive Research,” I elaborate on the concept of a temporal epistemology that allows for emergent knowledge. I
describe how this theoretical framework aligns with the reflexive methodology of this research. Specifically, I state why I chose a methodology that combines reflective co-inquiry within active interviews. From here I describe the research process, the participants of this study and how the data was analysed. The remaining chapters present the main understandings of this research study. Chapter 5, 6, and 7 each focus on one of the main thematic connections – dialogical, collaborative, performative – discovered between the ways in which the participants make art and the ways in which they teach. Each chapter includes descriptions and images of artworks made by the participants in order for the reader to understand the complex range of practices. The artworks discussed have been carefully chosen for their particular use, or non-use, of digital media and relational and network qualities. These three chapters first provide an introduction to what the participants’ artwork consists of, the ways in which they make their artwork, followed by the ways in which they approach pedagogy. Because I do not have the space in this dissertation to describe in detail the dialogical, collaborative, and performative aspect of each of the seven artist participants, I have chosen to focus each chapter on one or two of the artists.

Chapter 5, “Dialogical Feedback Between Art and Pedagogy,” examines the **dialogical** aspects of how the participants make art and approach pedagogy. Dialogue proved to be a central component to the participants’ art and pedagogy, however, for the purposes of this study I was also interested in examining the dialogical interplay between each of these areas – between the participants’ practices as artists and their practices as educators.

Chapter 6, “Collaborating with the Unknown in Art and Pedagogy,” examines the **collaborative** aspects of how the participants make art and approach pedagogy. I had anticipated the topic of collaboration to be something that would come up in the interviews, but not to the extent that it was emphasized in the co-inquiry process of our interviews. During this research, I became more and more interested in examining how artist duos collaborate in their art practice and how having a collaborative practice might impact understandings of pedagogy.
Chapter 7, “Performing Artist-Medium Through Art and Pedagogy,” examines the performative aspects of the participants’ art and pedagogy practices. I expand on the idea that something is not performative in itself, but rather becomes performative by being experienced within a certain context or, in the interests of this research, a specific network. In some instances, the performative qualities of participants’ art practices were similar to the performative nature of their approach to pedagogy. Towards the end of the interview process, it became apparent that although some of the participants had not used the word ‘performative’ when describing the ways in which they work, each participant revealed a networked sensibility that enabled them to become the ‘medium’ of their multiple practices, moving in and between the many art and teaching components of their individual networks. Through this research I began to theorize a network and performative approach to art pedagogy.

Chapter 8, “Towards a Network Art Pedagogy,” brings together the ideas and analyses developed in the earlier chapters. I suggest that the observed connections between the participants’ art and pedagogy practices – dialogical, collaborative, performative – are related to the earlier identified notions of network in art and education – assembling, situation, exchange, emergent. These connections and processes observed within the participants’ practices exist within a rhizomatic network of art and learning. The network art practices examined in this dissertation, when looked at through the lens of pedagogy, can potentially be understood as relational learning, which I suggest can also be understood as performative learning. I argue that performative learning, as well as performative pedagogy, requires letting go of disciplinary divisions between art, teaching, and learning in order to engage in relational inquiry. I suggest further research into performative practices of art and pedagogy alongside exploration of notions of network. I conclude by considering how this research advances theories of learning and pedagogy in the fields of art and education.
CHAPTER 2 – NETWORKS AND ART: RELATIONSHIPS AND PROCESSES BEYOND DIGITAL

In this chapter I discuss philosophical aspects of a network and the notion of network in art today. Based on reflective correspondence with colleagues working in areas of art and new media, I discuss some of the limitations of language and the need for more discussion surrounding the terminology used to describe this work. Drawing upon writings by Jean-Luc Nancy and Ted Aoki, I discuss the need for an increased understanding of the relational and existential aspects of network and living with/in a networked society. I trace the relational aspects of network art to the Fluxus art movement of the 1960s and 70s, which is generally defined as the interactions of an international network of artists who merged different artistic media and disciplines, including visual art, music, literature and design. In this chapter I highlight the significant impact Fluxus has had on the current moment of art today. In the remainder of the chapter I identify examples of network art in which the characteristics making up the work can be perceived as 1) network as assembling, and 2) network as situation.

Being-with Networks

In network theory, a node’s relationship to other networks is more important than its own uniqueness. (Varnelis, 2008, ¶ 24)

Coessentiality signifies the essential sharing of essentiality, sharing in the guise of assembling, as it were. This could also be put in the following way: if Being is being-with, then it is, in its being-with, the “with” that constitutes Being; the with is not simply an addition....it is not the case that the “with” is an addition to some prior Being; instead, the “with” is at the heart of Being. (Nancy, 2000, p. 30)

Not long ago people talked a lot about the virtual, but today it’s clear that the people in flesh and blood are the destiny of the network and not just machines. (de Kerckhove, 2008, p. 11)

11 “The Fluxus movement originated in New York in the early 1960s with a group of artists and composers centred around John Cage, and developed its ‘anti-art’, anti-commercial aesthetics under the leadership of George Maciunas, first in the US and then in Europe. Fluxus staged a series of festivals in Paris, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, London and New York, with avant-garde performances often spilling out into the street. Most of the experimental artists of the period, including Joseph Beuys, Yoko Ono and Nam June Paik, took part in Fluxus events. The movement, which still continues, played an important role in the opening up of definitions of what art can be” (Nam June Paik: Section 2: Fluxus, Performance, Participation, Tate Online, n.d.).
The phrase *network society* has become widely popularized through the writings of Manuel Castells (1996, 2001), in which he focuses on electronically processed information networks, describing them as the basic units of modern society. However, for Castells, technology does not determine a networked society; rather, it enables the social and economic activities to emerge (Castells, 2001). Today the word *network* is often too readily associated with computer technology and business management, even though the electronic network is merely one network amongst many.

Network is listed in most dictionaries as both a noun\(^\text{12}\) and a verb\(^\text{13}\), but there is emphasis on it being a thing – a group of objects, machines, or people. The relational aspects of that which defines a network, the assemblings and links between its multiple components, as well as the process of making connections, receive less than adequate attention in our contemporary society. Ted Aoki, a

\(^{12}\) 1. Work (esp. manufactured work) in which threads, wires, etc. are crossed or interlaced in the fashion of a net; …
2. a. A piece of work having the form or construction of a net; an arrangement or structure with intersecting lines and interstices resembling those of a net; b. A structure of this kind forming part of animal or plant tissue; c. An extended array of atoms bonded together in a crystalline or other substance; …
3. A chain or system of interconnected immaterial things.
4. a. Any netlike or complex system or collection of interrelated things, as topographical features, lines of transportation, or telecommunications routes (esp. telephone lines); b. *Electrical Engin.* A system of cables for the distribution of electricity to consumers; esp. an interconnected system where each consumer is supplied by more than one route; (in extended use) any system of interconnected electrical conductors or components, sometimes including a voltage source, that provides more than one path for the current between any two points; *Broadcasting.* A broadcasting system consisting of a series of transmitters able to be linked together to carry the same programme; a group of radio or television stations linked by such a system; (chiefly *U.S.*) a large (esp. nationwide) broadcasting company which produces programmes to be relayed to affiliated local stations. Also (occas.): a nationwide broadcasting channel; *Computing.* A system of interconnected computers.
5. a. An interconnected group or chain of retailers, businesses, or other organizations; b. An interconnected group of people; an organization; *spec.* a group of people having certain connections…
6. a. Math. A graph, esp. a digraph, in which each edge has associated with it a non-negative number (its capacity); b. A diagrammatic representation of interconnected events, processes, etc., used in the planning of complex projects or sequences of operations.

("Network, n.,” 2013)

\(^{13}\) 1. *trans.* To cover (something) with a network.
2. *trans. Broadcasting.* To broadcast simultaneously over a network of radio or television stations.
3. *intr. orig. U.S.* To engage in social or professional ‘networking’ (see networking)
4. *trans. Computing.* To link (computers) together to allow the sharing of data, interactive operation, and efficient utilization of resources; to incorporate into a computer network.

("Network, v.,” 2013)
prominent scholar in curriculum studies, wrote that we are habituated to dwell in a noun-oriented world, stating, “this may be a sign of our Western epistemological imaginary that centers on naming things, commodity-oriented as we have become” (Aoki, 1996/2005, p. 420). Within one of Aoki’s insightful essays, “In the Midst of Slippery Theme-Words,” he reminds us that every word has possibilities of multiple meanings and there is a legitimating process that goes into our deciding which meaning to choose, whether this decision is conscious or unconscious. Aoki encourages us to examine the seemingly insignificant conjunctions (and, with, or, etc.) and the linguistic pauses ( ... / ; / , / - / etc.) between nouns and things, in order to be aware of that which exists alongside and in relation to the elements – elements that often include ourselves.

French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, cited in the introduction to this chapter, argues that we exist in the “with,” meaning it is our being with others that form who we are as humans, and it is these experiences with others that actually constitute our Being: “... the with is strictly contemporaneous with all existence, as it is with all thinking” (Nancy, 2000, p. 41). In his book Reticulations: Jean-Luc Nancy and the Networks of the Political, Philip Armstrong (2009), describes how Nancy detaches the concept of networks from various technological determinations as if to remove the mediated system and expose the “bare and ‘content’-less web” that enables the communication, further stating:

...the path that Nancy opens up here, the path that leads us toward a “bare and ‘content’-less web,” is not a return to the origin or essence of communication hidden behind the contemporary flourishing of technologies and its accompanying theories. For this web or network of communication is the enabling condition in which to think the very disposition and exposure of Being...the “with” or cum which – and in which –we “ourselves” communicate in and as a network. (p. 119)

Nancy’s writing demonstrates a deep understanding of what constitutes a network and provides insight into our experiences with/in a networked culture and the relationships we form with other beings.
Both Aoki and Nancy emphasize the relational and experiential aspects of being-with networks, the ephemeral moments of connectivity that are difficult to put into words. I align this with our encounters with certain artworks that rely less on the aura of the art object and more on the aesthetics of the relational encounters. In regards to the aesthetics of networks, Warren Sack (2007) describes “network aesthetics”\(^{14}\) as the production and reproduction of connections between people and data and their interminglings on the Internet, such as the emergence of a shared set of metaphors or definitions. Following notions of technological determinism, however, Sack suggests that by using the word “network,” the Internet itself “forces all other ideas of networks out of one’s head” (Sack, 2007, p. 204), creating a problem for talking about and understanding this abstract notion of network aesthetics.

Borrowing from Aoki’s and Nancy’s ideas, I suggest we shift our focus in order to grasp a better sense of network aesthetics – to the “with” of the encounter, the relational exchange between ourselves and the network and, ultimately, the being-with others. Instead of focusing on digital technology as the defining characteristic of a network, I suggest we focus more on the meanings and relations that emerge in and between the multiple connections, as a way of informing how we might continue to better understand the “inter” of the Internet.

Throughout this chapter, and this dissertation as a whole, I will use variations of network as noun and verb, and will be mindful of the surrounding words and punctuation that I use in describing network concepts, with the understanding that

\(^{14}\) As the amount of information and data increases in our society, artists and researchers exploring new media and digital technologies propose separate, yet somewhat related, understandings of how these digital processes exist. In addition to Sack’s writings of network aesthetics, the exploration of “database aesthetics” (Vesna, 2007) and “web aesthetics” (Campanelli in Lovink, 2007) are also noted. These aesthetic processes can be understood in direct relation to the individual ways digital information is structured and accessed in today’s society. I feel that this research in new media and design (and other areas involving digital technology) shares a common thread with certain artists dealing with technology today: the desire to know and express ephemeral aspects of the digital technologies we live with and use – the invisible processes that ultimately affect how we connect and communicate with one another.
the network is *us*.\(^{15}\) Even though *networked* belongs to the same linguistic family and can be subject to the same commercial interpretations, and in addition to implying the notion of being enmeshed and caught within the structure of a network, there is perhaps potential for *networked* to be recognized not as a single thing but a process or state of ongoing relations in flux. The closest variation to “with,” *networked* implies a working-through and a textured web of interconnections. *Networking* implies similar connotations, those being relational, ongoing and present; yet I’m still not convinced that these variations of network are completely sufficient without the necessary context and explanation – thus, I purposely focus on the root word *network* while addressing its characteristics as a verb in transition. Throughout this dissertation I intentionally incorporate variations of the term ‘network’ when it is attached to understandings of society and art; to allow the reader to perhaps come to new understandings of ‘network’ and to acknowledge *network/ed/ing* as not just a thing to be examined but also a state of being that we live with/in.

As I examine the notion of network in art, I invite you to be mindful of the interplay between the multiple ideas that shape this chapter and this dissertation as a whole. I invite you to recognize the gaps that I might not directly acknowledge in writing and to extend my theories of network in your own thoughtful responses. Taking into consideration the notion of being-with and inspired by the words of Fluxus artist Robert Filliou in his book Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts, “WHATEVER I SAY IS IRRELEVANT IF IT DOES NOT INCITE YOU TO ADD UP YOUR VOICE TO MINE” (Filliou, in Patrick, 2010, p. 52, all-caps in original).

**Defining Network Art**

The art of networking is shaped by weaving open relational dynamics that are coming into being, and, in many cases, difficult to define. Even those who produce this type of art (or have produced it) often do not define it as such, or rather prefer to not limit it with some agreed upon categorization ... it is no longer

---

\(^{15}\) Whether we understand the network as technology or as something that is more abstract and complex, we need to recognize it as an extension of ourselves. McLuhan (1964/2003) argued that by understanding media as an extension of man, we gain a sense of control over the technology.
enough to define these practices in terms of the medium used. The art of networking is transversal to the arts that are characterized by a medium of communication and realization. (Bazzichelli, 2008, p.18-19)

This art need only have one object or no object at all. There is no such thing as a singular object, a thing-on-its-own. There is always some kind of relating. There is some kind of flow, or circulation of giving and receiving. (Kimbell, 2006, p.155)

Network art consists of connections made through participatory and generative processes, often, but not always, incorporating digital technology. As the quotations above indicate, there are many ways we can describe this type of art. Some may not want to use the term “network” for reasons discussed in the previous section; however, problems will arise with any one defining word (i.e. participation, collaboration) due to the multiple approaches and conceptual nature of the work: “...it is also the most difficult type of contemporary art to define, for it is not based on objects, nor solely on digital or analogical instruments, but on the relationships and processes in progress between individuals” (Bazzichelli, 2008, p. 26). For the purposes of this research, I am examining network/networked/networking art more in terms of it being a practice of art-making which is not restricted to a specific medium and often including interdisciplinary methods.

The label ‘networked art’ is often used to describe computer-generated works made up of multiple components. However, artists and critics argue for an understanding of network or networked art that is not limited to digital technology as a defining characteristic, and not based on the use of any one type of media (Bazzichelli, 2008; Corby, 2006; Saper, 2001). Part of my reflexive research process has involved reflecting on conversations with artists, critics, writers, and educators from different areas of the fields of art, media, and education in order to determine the range of definitions and interpretations of network art and its many linguistic variations. Much to my surprise, a discussion I started on the mailing list of the Institute for Distributed Creativity (IDC) instigated a lot of critical responses. I put the following question: “What is network and/or networked art?” The detailed

16 An overview of the IDC mailing list is located at http://distributedcreativity.org/. All material is protected by a Creative Commons License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/1.0/).
correspondence that occurred can be found in the Appendix, which included
discussion of the network vs. networked vs. networking debate. Below are selected
excerpts from the Appendix:

Heidi: … if artist educators focus more on what emerges within the relations and
processes of a network, such as with Internet art, then we can perhaps gain new
understandings of network culture that reflect more the sociocultural aspects as
opposed to just the technological aspects. I refer to Fluxus practices… and the
ideas explored by Georgia Maciunas and Robert Filliou, connecting this to later
relational art and participatory art practices.
… after sitting with these ideas for a while now and being confronted with
needing to write a research proposal, I’m in the doubting phase that I think all
graduate students go through. Is it really possible to use the term “networked art”
in the way I would like to without it immediately conjuring up digital practices
alone? (even though I acknowledge this in my argument) Am I just confusing
things by saying that I am indeed interested in Internet art practices but only
aspects I have defined above, and particularly in cases of artists who are
interdisciplinary vs. strictly “digital”? Do people think about the differences
between “network art” and networked art? the same way they might have
distinguished between “net art” and “net.art”? In my past writing, I have opted to
go with “networked” over “network” because there is more emphasis on being
within a process (verb. vs. noun), but now I’m starting to regret that, thinking that
“networked” might clearly imply dependence on an electronic system whereas a
“network” might allow for more human connection. (For those who are familiar….I
am a bit torn between Craig Saper’s (2001) use of the term “networked art” and
Tom Corby’s (2006) use of the term “network art”)

Brian: I like this genealogical definition of network art very much, particularly its
roots in the work of Robert Filliou and the mail artists… At this point it is difficult
to even remind people that there was history before Facebook, so you’re right,
there’s an issue with the vocabulary. I would vote for "networking," "networking
art," "networking practices in art," and so on, with copious allusions to Filliou’s
"Eternal Network."

Marco: I agree with you and Brian, there is no way of bypassing mail art when
you tell the history of network(ed) art. Now, it is certainly true that the term
"networked art" is mostly associated with the Internet. However, there are ways
of expanding the connotative field of the term by expanding the definition of
"what is a network" beyond the Internet… All of this is to say that once we
provide an inter-generational definition of what is a network, a networked art can
be understood as an art that is handed down from node-to-node and link-to-link.
So I would personally not worry too much over how the term is generally
understood, but rather how you define your term(s) and whether you make clear
that your definition of networked art exceeds the boundaries of techno-
determinism.

Jon: … i would also vote w/Brian on "networking art" or "networking theory practices" b/c (as is obvious) this moves the description away from the problematic of a technical medium specificity.

Heidi: … I think you are on to something with the "ing" and I had been thinking about this before so I'm really glad you brought it up - aligns with other research I have done about noun/verb and being "in process"… I think why I was resistant to it at first was the same reason I am sometimes resistant to both "network" and "networked," being that they all conjure associations of business and marketing, and I'm trying to focus more on the abstract processes of the components that produce the artworks.

Aharon: …I do, like Brian, think you are researching a very very interesting subject. However reading through the posts a question came up. Can it be that the very interesting struggles/questions you are having are precisely because art you refer to resists definitions based on materiality, media, concepts, political stance, locality, etc..?

Sean: … The question about network art resonates strongly for me. But from the perspective of art education, the issue of definitions and art products can sometimes tangent away from the day-to-day work we do, and the conversations we have, with students. In my work with undergraduate and graduate students, both in art schools and in education schools, the focus on 'what something is’ gets in the way (sometimes) of 'why we care' or 'why we think we care’.

(see Appendix for the full correspondence)

My correspondence with other scholars and artists provided me with a sense of reassurance that my questions were indeed relevant to the larger field of art education. It also demonstrated to me the importance of expanding the connotative field of network art beyond the Internet. In addition, these discussions also reaffirmed that my questions emanated from a place of resistance and that much of the network art I was drawn to for this research was work that resisted material and media definitions and categorization.

In the following sections of this chapter, I trace the relational aspects of networked art to the Fluxus art movement of the 1960s and 70s, looking at notions of 1) network as assembling, and 2) network as situation. In the first section on 'network as assembling,' I address the pre-digital practices of mail art and identify connections between mail art and network art of today.
The Relevance of Fluxus

...Fluxus is the principal core of our discussion on networking, because it brings with it some assumptions that would be later encountered in much of the subsequent collective art, laying the foundations for the networking culture as we understand it today. (Bazzichelli, 2008, p. 30)

The philosophies inherent to Fluxus art have influenced a variety of current art practices, and have inspired recent writing on the topic (Bazzichelli, 2008; Klefstad, 2006; Patrick, 2010; Saper, 2001), notable retrospective exhibitions on Fluxus art (BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, 2009; Museum of Modern Art, 2009; Stendhal Gallery, 2010), as well as contemporary shows that draw attention to Fluxus practices (e.g. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, The Art of Participation, 2009). Patrick (2010) contends that Fluxus is the origin of relational aesthetics, describing relational aesthetics as a “stepchild of Fluxus,” further arguing that Fluxus, particularly Robert Filliou’s visionary approach, has become highly relevant to the current moment. Before exploring the concept of network in terms of assembling, I will first provide some background to two leading figures of Fluxus art that I feel are essential to the discussion of network/ed/ing art practices.

George Maciunas has been described as a key figure for Fluxus and the real networker of the group. Maciunas coined the term Fluxus in 1961 which, similar to the Happenings17 initiated by Allan Kaprow in New York at the end of the 1950s, operated on the border between art and non-art, intending to be more of a life-practice than an artistic movement: “You don’t do Fluxus, you simply are it” (Smith, 1998). Bazzichelli (2008) writes, “For Maciunas, Fluxus did not manifest itself simply in an attitude of thought, but was seen as a life practice and a “being” within art in an open way, total, and at the same time, free” (p. 33). It seems that Maciunas was the brains behind Fluxus. He created hyper-textual maps18 (from 1953 to 1973) of sketches and diagrams drawn by hand, identifying the Fluxus alternative attitudes to

17 “Happenings are events that, put simply, happen. Though the best of them have a decided impact - that is, we feel, ‘here is something important’ - they appear to go nowhere and do not make any particular literary point. In contrast to the arts of the past, they have no structured beginning, middle or end. Their form is open-ended and fluid...These events are essentially theatre pieces, however unconventional” (Kaprow, 1961/2009, p. 115).
18 See http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2013/chartingfluxus/#charting
art, culture and life. One example is *Fluxus (Its Historical Development and Relationship to Avant-garde Movements)*, which contains names of Fluxus artists divided into categories.\textsuperscript{19} Maciunas and original members of the Fluxus group were reacting against the art canon, creating a movement that embraced being excluded – an issue that is now critiqued in light of the resurgence of Fluxus-based practices and even the recent development of a canonical Fluxus (Klefstad, 2006).

Another Fluxus artist who has had an influence on recent networked art is Robert Filliou. Filliou was referred to by some as an artist-sociologist and is most known for developing the concept defined as “eternal network” (with George Brecht), often used to describe the mail-art networks which I will elaborate on in the next section. In describing the term “eternal network” in a 1973 article in *FILE* magazine, Filliou wrote:

> If it is true that information about and knowledge of all modern art research is more than one artist could comprehend, then the concept of the avante-garde is obsolete. With incomplete knowledge, who can say who is in front, and who ain’t...I suggest that considering each artist as part of an Eternal Network is a much more useful concept. (1973, n.p.)

Filliou (1973) suggests that each collection or assembling of art is mobile and spans across different networks of artists and poets, a temporal process that functions as a kind of relay system. However, aligned with my earlier argument of the Internet not being the *only* network, I do not wish to suggest that network art consists merely of a network of artists. I follow Bull in this thinking: “What Robert Filliou meant by the phrase, Eternal Network, is not simply that there is a network of artists, but that art itself is on a network with all sorts of other activities, like planting rice, going broke, sleeping” (Bull, 1999, ¶ 7). Filliou valued the everyday gesture and the merging of art with life. Strong arguments are being made for a reconsideration of Robert Filliou’s visionary approaches, seen by some (Bazzichelli, 2008; Patrick, 2010), as highly relevant for the current moment in the art of today. Filliou’s art practice is mentioned a bit later in this chapter, particularly his exploration of merging performative art with teaching. I shift now to Fluxus influences on assemblings in network/ed art.

\textsuperscript{19} See [http://fluxusfoundation.com/?page_id=165](http://fluxusfoundation.com/?page_id=165)
Network as Assembling

Mail Art

The togetherness of singulars is singularity "itself." It "assembles" them insofar as it spaces them; they are "linked" insofar as they are not unified. (Nancy, 2000, p. 33)

In discussing the idea of assembling in relation to network art, Saper (2001) acknowledges Walter Benjamin's insights into the importance of assemblings as collections rather than individual works, in that the collection reconfigures the objects into the self-referential context of the collection itself and destroys the context of the origin of the objects. In the case of mail art, we might think of the mailed items as the objects and the collection as that which is created through a distribution system – not that the origin of the individual mailings must be destroyed but that they should be interpreted as a part of a larger networking process.

Mail art exists as art making through the postal circuit, the practice of sending and receiving items in any desirable format, beginning in the 1950s and continuing until today. Considered as an informal network, connections are created through people that know one another (although network/ing art on the Internet is changing this), and the system operates as both one-to-one and one-to-many mailings. Generally speaking, the 'networker' proposes themed projects, with parameters of mailing directions, and sends a notice out to the people in the network for them to accept and participate. The generally agreed upon 'father of Mail Art,' was Ray Johnson of New York, who in the 1950s created a collaborative network that became known as The New York Correspondence School. This was in reference to the New York School of abstract painters, who were becoming members of the art canon at that time (Held, 1995). Although Dada artists Kurt Schwitters and Marcel Duchamp incorporated rubber stamps and postcards into their work, it wasn’t until the 1950s that the postal system itself was explored as an artwork (Saper, 2001). Influenced by Fluxus principles, the mail art network is decentralized and consists of both artists and non-artists. Multiple terms have been used to describe mail art (correspondence art, postal art, eternal network, etc.), which suggests something in common with the network/ed/ing art of today. Held (1995) writes of the unsettled definition of mail art, stating,
Although it might appear to some that the many different variations of the names and spellings of the phrase used to connote postal activity is a reflection of the confusion inherent to the medium, rather it should be inferred that the variations are a symptom of the decentralization which characterizes the medium ... there is no central leadership. (Held, 1995, p. 20)

Each participant contributes their own narrative creation, typically assembled into a collection by the networker, and participants are then given a small publication or edition of some format of the larger collection.

Included in this chapter are some samples of mail art (Figures 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3), which reveal the different understandings and conceptual approaches belonging to those working with mail art. Welch (1995) describes how the movement grew from a “correspondence art” of intimate quality exchanges to a much larger international “mail art” blitz creating a division between members, stating: “Independence, individuality, and democracy are the ideals most fiercely defended in network mailstreams, but these characteristics are often stronger than the spirit of dialogue” (Welch, 1995, p. 187). Figure 2.1 reveals one of the reactions to this debate; Figures 2.2 and 2.3 are clear examples of the kinds of social and political messages taken up in mail art, which contrast the superficial quality of the “mass media” aesthetic that many artists reacted against.

In thinking about the range of passionate personalities that existed throughout the evolution of this expanding network of artists, I am reminded of Nancy’s ideas of our belonging-with the network and being-with others. This, in turn, brings to mind Hannah Arendt’s *Human Condition* (1958), in which Arendt stresses the importance of individual uniqueness: the relations we have with others is what allows our unique distinctness to emerge. Revisiting Arendt, it is interesting to note that she also discusses the intangible quality of the “in-between,” stating, “We call this reality the “web” of human relationships, indicating by metaphor its somewhat intangible quality” (Arendt, 1958, p. 183). Here we are presented with another instance where there is a desire to express this intangible quality of human relations within a network, ironically referred to by Arendt as a web.

Figure 2.2. Crackerjack Kid a.k.a. Chuck Welch, *Boycott Exxon*, U.S.A., 1989. Artists' Stamps. (Welch, 1995, p. 203) - "The stampsheets appeared in North American newspapers such as The Toronto Star and The Washington Post. An Exxon Stockholder who acquired the stampsheets reported that he placed the stamps on his cancelled stock certificates and mailed them to Exxon. Stamps were covertly placed on Exxon products and gas pumps" (Welch, 1995, p. 203).

Figure 2.3. John P. Jacob, *Rubber Stamped Folder of Who’s Who of the Happy Young People Enterprises (HYPE)*, U.S.A., 1982.

Images courtesy of the author.
Sociopoetic Assemblings

Intimate bureaucracies seek to use the social situation as a canvas to construct new languages, new poetries, and new arts. (Saper, 2001, p. xiii)

In sociopoetic works, this inherently social process of constructing texts is expanded to the point that individual pages or poems mean less than the distribution and compilation machinery or social apparatus. (Saper, 2001, p. 11)

In his book *Networked Art*, Saper (2001) analyses the artistic process of assemblings, while proposing ways of understanding future networked practices. Referring to mail art practices, Saper describes how the work produced does not fit neatly into an art historical context because the individual works in any given assemblings may lack aesthetic sophistication, often intentionally: “The works are about process, contingencies and group interactions, not lasting truth or eternal beauty” (p. 150). Saper uses the oxymoronic phrase “intimate bureaucracies,” when comparing postal mail art and the networked practices today, stating, “An intimate bureaucracy makes poetic use of the trappings of large bureaucratic systems and procedures (e.g., logos, stamps) to create intimate aesthetic situations, including the pleasures of sharing a special knowledge or a new language among a small network of participants” (p. xii). Examples of this might include some of the works from the net.art practices\(^{20}\) of the 1990s or more recent examples like the Graffiti Research Lab\(^{21}\) (initiated by artists Evan Roth and James Powderly), which provides artists and activists open source tools to use in urban public spaces and an Internet platform for online dissemination, or even the Rhizome\(^{22}\) web resource, which was initially started as an artwork by Mark Tribe and currently functions as a place for new media artists to share and debate with one another. Another important phrase

---

\(^{20}\) Stallabrass (2003) writes, “‘Net.art’ is the term used to refer to a strain of Internet art that emerged soon after the invention and wide take-up of web-browsers in the mid 1990s;...was often collaborative, and was supported by a lively and disputatious criticism, much of it penned by the artists themselves.” The net.art movement is identified as separate from “net art” (without the period), and besides its prominent inclusion in reviews of new media and digital art, modern and contemporary art publications rarely recognize this early Internet art. Although the “net.art” strain of Internet art explored what is now referred to by some as Web 1.0 media (the Internet from 1995 to 2001), several members of this group still continue to create work online today.

\(^{21}\) See [http://graffitiresearchlab.com/](http://graffitiresearchlab.com/)

\(^{22}\) See [http://rhizome.org/](http://rhizome.org/)
Saper uses to discuss networked art is “sociopoetic,” stating, “In sociopoetic works, this inherently social process of constructing texts is expanded to the point that individual pages or poems mean less than the distribution and compilation machinery or social apparatus” (p. 11). This understanding of sociopoetic networked art can be extended to other artworks that are not necessarily produced by a network of artists per se, but which incorporate a social process of construction, utilizing and perhaps questioning the system of a social apparatus. Below I identify two examples of sociopoetic artworks that consist of assemblings and which evolve out of networked practices (some digitally networked and some not).

Lucy Kimbell’s *Audit* (2001-2002) is a conceptual project in which the artist attempts to ‘audit’ how she is perceived by others, as well as the social process of doing so. Kimbell designed and distributed a nine-page questionnaire form to 69 people that she was acquainted with on various levels and basically asked people what they thought she was worth. The questionnaire included ridiculous and sometimes intrusive questions, such as: Do you think I earn a reasonable living?, Do you think I would be a good parent?, How would you rate my contribution to the field of art? The book that was produced from this project included the artist’s selective feedback made in response to the participants’ responses. In addition, Kimbell initiated conversations with practitioners from various disciplines (an economist, a psychoanalyst, a sociologist, a cultural theorist, an estate agent, and an auditor) and included excerpts from these conversations within the book she co-designed and edited.

When discussing the actual format of this work in her essay “If networked art is the answer what is the question?,” Kimbell (2006) writes, “The project could not ever reach a conclusion – having begun as a questionnaire-doodle, it was now designed to produce a book, a thing for reading, which showed something about the spaces between me and the respondents...” (p. 159). The design aesthetics of the Audit publication (Figure 2.4) are suggestive of the Fluxus mail/correspondence art (Figures 2.1 – 2.3) and it also challenges the bureaucratic procedures inherent to questionnaires and statistic polls. Kimbell creates a sociopoetic work that challenges the ‘trappings’ of the research questionnaire through personal tension and humour.
Figure 2.4. Lucy Kimbell, *Audit*, 2002. Top: front, back covers; Bottom: example page layout. Courtesy of the artist and author.
In discussing networked art in general, Kimbell summarizes much of my own argument when she writes:

There is no such thing as a singular object, a thing-on-its-own. There is always some kind of relating ... As contemporary art staggers from visual spectacle to relational aesthetics to politics to beauty and back again, it is worth asking what the emergent category of networked art can add to what is already happening elsewhere within visual and live art practices. The foundation myths of networked art in cybernetics, systems art, art & technology, kinetic and performance art point to the importance of information and data rather than technology. In networked art, the performance of gathering, analysing, presenting and reading data can be achieved with many technologies, which may well not be electronic. The making of it is what matters. (Kimbell, 2006, p. 155)

Kimbell points out that the artist's interest is in the information and data rather than the technology, which is similar to other writers (Munster, 2008; Stallabrass, 2003) who discuss it as an art form concerned with data, and a process of reevaluating how we understand data.

On the other hand, there are networked projects in which the technology is integral to the data and makes up the subject of the work. *glisten)HIVE*\(^\text{23}\) (2010), by Julie Andreyev, consists of assemblings from electronic feeds of text excerpts transmitted through the Twitter software application\(^\text{24}\). Participants are asked to ‘tweet’ what their animal companions are thinking, feeling, or doing, with the intention of addressing animal consciousness and human relations with animals. The messages are then projected in real-time on semi-transparent screens that line the wall of a physical exhibition space (Figure 2.5). Snippets of text, restricted to the 140 character limit of the Twitter social media program, are generated into swarms of social-insect patterns, resembling the movement of bees navigating towards a hive. Participants viewing the artwork in person are given the opportunity to submit text messages using an onsite computer terminal. The participatory interaction mimics the acute form of self-reflection that can often occur on social networking websites (Thompson, 2008), such as Twitter and Facebook, but requires humans to

\(^{23}\) See video documentation of this artwork at [http://julieandreyev.com/glisten-hive/](http://julieandreyev.com/glisten-hive/)

\(^{24}\) This section on *glisten)HIVE* is modified from May (2011).
reflect on the subjective experiences of animals. Electronic sensors work to track human movement in the exhibition space, which then triggers the digital projection of tweets.

The sensory experience of Julie Andreyev’s *glisten) HIVE is heightened by a processed soundscape of bells and flute, layered with low blips and constant pulses, and the recorded voice of Tom, the artist’s dog. Except for the small amount of light emanating from the projected animation, the room is pitch-black. As the swarm of
tweets become slower in pace and reduced in size, the volume of the sound lessens, and it feels like a quiet summer night. As new visitors approach the screens, digital sensors are retriggered and a feedback loop instigates the projection once again. Andreyev’s installation consists of a digital aesthetic or, using Munster’s words, ‘an arena of sensation’ that emanates from within the networked relations that make up the work—physical, technological, psychological, and social—rather than focusing purely on formal qualities alone. The rhythmic and visual movement of the text in *glisten)HIVE clearly contrasts the usual grid-like structure in which we receive messages in Twitter, and ultimately interrupts any sense of a sequential story. The flowing text could be interpreted as an abstract representation of an aerial view of the communications that span social networks like Twitter, perhaps resembling the reduced form of ASCII art from the 1990s.

*glisten)HIVE contains a similar structure to traditional mail art practices: Andreyev functions as the networker who puts forth the parameters and instructions for submissions from participants, and also works with non-artists (Simon Overstall and Maria Lantin) to determine the technical configuration of a projected audio-visual installation. This piece suggests a potential for intimate bureaucracies to be formed through social media practices, in an effort to disrupt the flow of corporate text messages that stream through our daily encounters with/in/on the Internet.

Many current networked art practices evolve out of an experience related to some aspect of social, cultural and economic impact – assemblings and interpretations of data. In describing artists involved with intimate bureaucracies in the creation of sociopoetic works, Saper (2001) states, “[they] seek to use the social situation as a canvas to construct new languages, new poetries, and new arts” (p. xiii). In order to gain a better understanding of this work and the Fluxus practices that led up to it, I will now discuss the notion of network as situation.

---

25 ASCII is an abbreviation of American Standard Code for Information Interchange. Manovich (1999) describes how the code was originally developed for teleprinters and was only later adopted for computers in the 1960s. Towards the end of the 1980s, it was commonplace to make printouts of images on dot matrix printers by converting the images into ASCII code.
Network as Situation

Participatory and Performative Creations

Instead of using the word ‘art’ most of the time in trying to invent new concepts I have thought of our activity as one that involves Permanent Creation. (Filliou, 1984, cited in Patrick, 2010, p. 52)

Unlike all the other arts, including film and literature, this new art, intensified by access to the Internet, is not defined by any medium’s form. It is not a thing like a painting, printed poem, or film. It is a situation: networked art. (Saper, 2001, p. ix)

Nam June Paik’s 
*Magnet TV*26 (1965) is an early example of experimental tactics made towards media objects, in which the artist transformed the usual function of the television into an entirely new and creative form. The piece employed neither videotape nor broadcast images but instead was created by moving a large magnet across the surface of a television set in order to produce a moving abstract pattern. Paik’s intermedia practice was positioned within the Fluxus movement, and included sculptural installations of electronic objects as well as works that were performance based and open to audience interaction. Many of his works advanced the notion of participation in/with an artwork. *Participation TV*27 (1963) allows the audience to interact with the television: “By speaking into the integrated microphone of *Participation TV*, the viewer creates a voice-generated television image – unpredictable explosions of lines – as acoustic signals feed through an amplifier and into the monitor” (Frieling, R., Pellico, M. & Zimbardo, T., 2008, p. 99). With this artwork the original encounter with *Magnet TV* is now expanded to include the ‘arena of sensation’ surrounding the work, consisting of relayed effects produced from the participants’ interactions. Another significant participatory work by Paik is *Random Access*28 (1963), where participants actually perform the work by running the sound head from a tape recorder over numerous strips of audio tape. In both *Participation TV* and *Random Access*, the artist has set up a situation for the audience to participate in/with.

---

Although the artworks described above ‘perform’ when one interacts with them, this work is generally referred to as participation art and described as interactive rather than performative. When we think of the word performance, we usually associate it with ‘performance art’ that involves theatre or dance, usually with the understanding that the artist is the one doing the performing, not the artwork or the audience. Filliou suggested that the word “performance” not be limited to a discrete category of the arts, but rather be considered as a performative aspect of creation; he preferred to describe art production as “permanent creation” over “art-making” (Patrick, 2010).

In the past I have discussed what can be described as behavioural aspects of new media and relational artworks. Thinking about art from both a behavioural and a performative perspective might allow us to move away from an object-oriented mode of thinking, allowing us to perhaps focus more on the temporal and experiential processes involved. Regardless of whether digital technologies are used or not, forming a new language that extends networking aspects of previous art movements seems necessary for current art practices that centre around relational aesthetics or, more specific to this dissertation, practices that enable networked processes of art production that consist of teaching and learning. Perhaps with a renewed interest in Filliou, the word “performative” might be used by artists and writers even more than it currently is, as something that emerges from the collective situation as opposed to the artist’s individual actions: “Performative refers to the operative and systematical aspect of something as an occurrence: something is not performative in itself, but rather becomes performative by being enacted and experienced within a specific framework” (Networked_Performance, n.d.). In the paragraphs that follow, I discuss networked practices in which the performative situation is what leads to the production of the art.

In 1998 artists Harrell Fletcher and Jon Rubin created *Pictures Collected from*

---

29 In previous unpublished writings leading up to this research project, I argued for an expanded understanding of relational art that attends more to the behavioral aspects (Variable Media Network, 2004) of contemporary digital art and network practices. Drawing on three of Roy Ascott’s behavioural tendencies of modern art (Ascott 1966/2003), I extended these tendencies to behavioural situations that can be triggered by relational artworks incorporating digital technology.
*Museum Visitors’ Wallets* (or *Wallet Pictures*), an example of a participatory project created through networked processes. However, examining this piece many years later, it might also be considered social media without the Internet. Fletcher and Rubin have each been influential in the development of art as social practice, instigating collective projects with different communities and engaging non-art audiences (Frieling et al., 2008). In this piece, the artists utilized the *situation* of the art museum experience in order to address the expectations of the viewing public. Fletcher and Rubin set up a stand in the lobby of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and then proceeded to ask if they could photograph snapshots from visitors’ wallets. They then enlarged and framed the images, leaving untouched the folded corners and other signs of wear, in an effort to address the preciousness of objects that people expect to see when they go to a museum. Looking at this piece from the vantage point of today’s Internet culture, the installation of photos (Figure 2.6) suggests an assembling of profile pictures collected from current social media websites, such as Facebook. Arranged in a simple line on a white wall, I am reminded of the act of scrolling through a Facebook friend’s timeline of photos or the option of viewing all Facebook friends at once on the same screen. It is interesting to observe the range of types of people and the various visual characteristics of the photos and, when displayed in one unified horizontal line, the viewer can imagine relationships amongst the characters as opposed to being told how to interpret the series of photos. In this piece, the author/creator shifts to the participants and the audience, with the artists playing the role of networker.

Fletcher increases the level of audience collaboration with a later work that he produced with Miranda July called *Learning to Love You More* (2002-2009). Using the networking and dissemination capabilities of the Internet, the pair developed a website on which they routinely posted “assignments” with simple instructions for participants to complete and submit online. The assignments were always theme-based and open to any media. At the time of 2008, more than five thousand submissions were posted from all over the world and some were selected to be

---

shown in physical exhibitions and other public presentations (Frieling et al., 2008). The results were often quite endearing and reminiscent of Maciunas’ desire for Fluxus “amusements”. The project ended on May 1st, 2009, but the artwork/website continues to exist as an archive, inspiring some people to start up their own LTLYM blogs31. Fletcher is a good example of someone who maintains a networked practice of art and teaching; he is the founder of the Art and Social Practice MFA program at Portland State University in the United States. The content of his work is about social practices, some of which utilize digital media and many that do not.

If we consider art as a situation to collaboratively perform and experience, as “permanent creation,” we are able to see a strong relationship to pedagogy and practices of learning. With some interactive digital artworks, the participative element can be as little as pushing a button to activate movement and, in these particular cases, the relational and generative aspects have not been emphasized in the same manner as with network/ed art. In Learning to Love You More, the platform of a

31 See for example http://loveyoumores.blogspot.com/
website was used to create an alternative, and perhaps a new form, of what we now know as social media networks. This collaborative project that demonstrates critical and reflective inquiry into everyday experiences through a mixed-media format, was established before MySpace and Facebook, and much earlier than Twitter.

Relational Exchange

*The Gift (2000 / 2008-09 / 2012-13)* (Figure 2.7), by artist Jochen Gerz, could be considered an artwork that resembles the transactions that occur with social media, but produced without. In 2000, *The Gift* occurred as a performative photography project in which local residents in Tourcoing, France, were invited to have black-and-white portraits taken by young artists and photography students over the duration of one weekend. Each participant was then given a portrait of one of the other individuals in return and was asked to display it in their home, enabling those who might not otherwise own contemporary art to display a piece that was part of a larger network of portraits. Gerz communicated with local newspapers to publicize the work and publish the pictures. A year later the project was realized again for an exhibition in Germany, this time with the photography studio and production process on display, along with the framed portraits. *The Gift* “breaks down the traditional divide between viewer and art object, putting the viewer literally into the work of art… Ultimately, the work questions traditional ideas of authorship, but also traditional ideas of ownership through its final component” (Jochen Gerz: The Gift: Lansing, MI, 2012)\(^{32}\) as the works are “on permanent loan” from the museum to the participants.

In 2008, at “The Art of Participation” exhibit in San Francisco, *The Gift* occurred again – framed photos were installed and participants were invited to receive the portrait of another visitor at the closing reception. Those who participated with the project at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art have since continued to contribute pictures and commentary online\(^{33}\) to demonstrate how they exhibit the photos in their homes. Another version of *The Gift* took place at the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University from 2012 to 2013. Similar to the

---

\(^{32}\) See [http://broadmuseum.msu.edu/exhibitions/gift-lansing-michigan](http://broadmuseum.msu.edu/exhibitions/gift-lansing-michigan)

\(^{33}\) See [http://blog.sfmoma.org/tag/the-gift/](http://blog.sfmoma.org/tag/the-gift/)
exchange that takes place at the end of *The Gift* – with participants receiving a portrait for their involvement in the project – a key aspect of Gerz’s concept is that he trains a group of students and others to actually produce the portraits for the duration of the exhibition. As well, the production of the work is made visible to the public as part of the exhibit, which questions the typical museum experience of the work being created beforehand. With these aspects in mind, the network situation that leads to the production of *The Gift* can be considered pedagogical, yet the artist creates a situation in which he is not seen as the main instigator or teacher, instead providing an opportunity for potential learning to occur through the participants’ relations with one another.

As discussed in Chapter 1, artists working today often adopt pedagogical models and education processes as the subject and object of their work. That being said, education as a form of art is not a new concept, in fact it appears in Fluxus artists’ practices beginning in the 1970s. Along with mail art practices being introduced in art education (Held, 1995; Welch, 1995), there are countless examples where Fluxus artist Joseph Beuys presented educational lectures as performances, which were subsequently documented in a series of photographs and blackboard drawings. Beuys intended these series of lectures, which addressed a wide range of topics, to prompt further discussions. According to Beuys this form of artmaking and art engagement was Social Sculpture—“art that involved human activity and the viewer’s ability to co-create meaning alongside the artist.” (cited by Podevsa, 2007).

Along with his charts and diagrams, Maciunas planned for the organization of an experimental school, for which he laid out a list (somewhat of a manifesto) of ideas to adhere to, much of which based around the purging of forms of social organization (Saper, 2001; Scholz, 2005). Robert Filliou published a book in 1970 called *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, in which he launched an attack on what he perceives as the limitations of contemporary art (Patrick, 2010). The format of the book is like a workbook, with spaces for the reader to contribute. On both the front and back covers34, Filliou makes it clear that the book is a process (a “first

34 See [http://www.leftmatrix.com/teachingandlearning.html](http://www.leftmatrix.com/teachingandlearning.html)
draft”) intended for collaboration: “It is a Multi-book. The space provided for the reader’s use is nearly the same as the author’s own” (back cover). Filliou’s book attempts to decentralize the authoritative voice of the author, who we might also understand to be the teacher, and even goes to the extent of including the reader “if he wishes” as an author (front cover). The book later evolved into video pieces made in response to the book, an ongoing performance of sorts (Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts, Part 2, Video University, 197935).

Summary

Throughout my discussion of Fluxus art and more contemporary networked art practices, I have examined the notion of network as processes of assemblings and the notion of network as performative situations. Referring to a selection of artworks, I have identified an emphasis on process and relational exchange. In the next chapter I examine the notion of network in education and in relation to curriculum and pedagogy, centering around the idea of a decentralized network of learning and teaching at the post-secondary level. I will look specifically at the notion of network as exchange and as emergent. I describe how through complexity thinking in the field of education there has been a movement towards an equal exchange of knowledge between the teacher and the learner and a desire for nonhierarchical spaces for learning. With/in a network that is decentralized, learning occurs on par with teaching, and for this reason I have chosen to switch the usual word placement we often use when discussing the two together – instead of teaching and learning, learning and teaching will be used.

35 See https://vimeo.com/39459314
CHAPTER 3 – COMPLEXITY THINKING: DECENTRALIZATION AND EMERGENT LEARNING

If the properties of complex systems were to be compared with the practices of contemporary artists, might art educators have a better understanding of developing forms of creation, distribution, and collaboration currently in practice? If art educators were to then structure pedagogical approaches accordingly, what might these forms of networked art education look like? (Sweeny, 2008, p. 89)

The four artworks described in the previous chapter could all be used as inspiration in the art classroom, either for the creation of art projects or to analyse and discuss the organizational elements of networks and of social media. Regardless of the kind of media available to teachers and students, projects can be produced that look at the relational exchanges occurring on the Internet by transforming the communicative actions we observe with social media into non-digital forms, with the intent of gaining new perspectives of our daily interactions. For example, Facebook provides the option of giving an invisible ‘gift’ to a friend, which sends the friend a digital and often cartoonish memento. Interactions such as these could be discussed in relation to Jochen Gerz’s *The Gift* and other art that addresses these sorts of social practices. By looking at the act of giving and receiving, as opposed to basing the project around acquiring the skills of one particular media or computer program, the pedagogical approach remains more aligned with the overall philosophy of network art practices.

Sweeny (2008) questions how an understanding of complex systems might inform the work of art educators as they look to the practices of contemporary artists when designing art curricula and pedagogies. The properties of a complex system are very much present in all of the artworks and art practices I discussed in Chapter 2 and are significant to the understanding of network art. Many of the epistemological positions of interobjectivity and the relational qualities of new media are also a part of complexity thinking (Castro, 2009): “(The dynamic structures of complex systems) are important for understanding the dynamics of learning in a collective of individuals inquiring through art” (Castro, 2009, p. 34). The focus of this chapter is to articulate an understanding of complexity thinking and how it exists in
the field of education and art education in order to determine appropriate approaches to pedagogy.

In this chapter I begin by briefly examining complexity thinking in education, focusing on how the notion of a decentralized network, and a decentralized approach to pedagogy, has been addressed in contemporary curriculum and pedagogy. In Chapter 2 I discussed the notion of network as 1) assemblings, and 2) situations. In this chapter I discuss the notion of a decentralized network as 3) exchange, and 4) emergent. This is followed by a review of curriculum theory and art education research that examines the significance of dialogical exchange between teacher and students, the concept of emergent knowledge, and the noted desire for flexible curricular models in art education that respond to the current cultural networked experience.

**Complexity Thinking In Education**

Complexity thinking stems from a tradition of complexity science and theory. Complexity thinking in education embraces a collaborative and multilinear experience of learning, rejecting the use of linear, machine-based metaphors (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2008). Teaching and learning is described as moving away from the concept of one individual passing established knowledge on to another, to the concept of collectives elaborating emergent knowledge (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2008). In this view, learning is not a cause and effect relationship between a teacher and student but rather one part of a complex system that is dependent on many other parts. Figure 3.1 illustrates the difference between the traditional

---

36 Portions of the remainder of this chapter have been slightly revised from May (2010).
37 In “Complexity and Education: Inquiries into Learning, Teaching, and Research” (Davis & Sumara, 2006) the authors describe how the term ‘complexity thinking’ extends from the terms ‘complexity science’ and ‘complexity theory.’ Their decision to use ‘complexity thinking’ instead of the words science or theory is “motivated by a pervasive suspicion of the physical sciences among educators and educational researchers” (2006, p. 17) and a resistance against research organized around “the standard of proof through replication” (2006, p. 17). Davis & Sumara state that the term complexity thinking “helps us actually take on the work of trying to understand things while we are part of the things we are trying to understand” (2006, p. 16). By embracing the language of complexity thinking over complexity science or theory, this research remains focused on the temporal and adaptive processes of networks and how this might inform understandings of art and pedagogy.
classroom experience with the teacher at the center (centralized network) and that of a teaching and learning experience that encompasses a complexivist approach (decentralized network).

![Centralized Network vs Decentralized Network](image)

**Figure 3.1.** A centralized network and a decentralized network. Illustrations by Heidi May. [Note: Although they reference illustrations from Davis, Sumara, and Luce-Kapler (2008), these are generic representations that can be easily found by an online search.]

Learning is about discovering what motivates us to a set of ideas; a traditional classroom environment, often based on a power relationship between teacher and student, does not always facilitate an open communication process for discovering these motivations (Burnett, 1999). A decentralized approach to teaching and learning does not necessarily mean that the teacher neglects to create a lesson plan, instead it requires the teacher to create a structure that allows for certain ideas to trigger other ideas and for knowledge to be discovered *within* this circular process. Complex and decentralized approaches to teaching are most appropriate for learning situations in which there exists more than one response to a topic. There must be more than one interpretive possibility to begin with and structures need to be in place for ideas to stumble across one another – this being more important than the way the physical system is organized (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2008, p. 199). In a decentralized approach to learning and teaching, a collaborative process of relational exchange is more important than the physical structure, sharing similarities with Fluxus and network art. Below I review research regarding dialogue and power as it pertains to the concept of decentralized networks and the notion of network as exchange.
Network as Exchange

Disrupting the Teacher-Student Hierarchy

When it is told, it is, to the one to whom it is told, another given fact, not an idea. The communication may stimulate the other person to realize the question for himself and to think out a like idea, or it may smother his intellectual interest and suppress his dawning effort at thought. But what he directly gets cannot be an idea. Only by wrestling with the conditions of the problem at first hand, seeking and finding his own way out, does he think. In such shared activity, the teacher is a learner, and the learner is, without knowing it, a teacher -- and upon the whole, the less consciousness there is, on either side, of either giving or receiving instruction, the better. (Dewey, 1916/2005, p. 95)

In *Democracy and Education* (1916/2005), John Dewey recognized that education is a *shared process* in which the line between teaching and learning can be intentionally blurred: “In such shared activity”, Dewey says, “the teacher is a learner, and the learner is, without knowing it, a teacher” (1916/2005, p. 95). In his philosophical writings, he promoted the idea of learning as an aesthetic experience and a discovery of the unknown. He also argued for an education in which the identities of teacher and learner are de-emphasized.38

Decentralized approaches to curriculum place importance on conversation and dialogue within an exchange of ideas between teacher and students. It is not just about dialogue between teacher and student; it is also about the conversations between student and student, between student and the content, and between the teacher and the content. The interpersonal is as important as any other part of the learning experience; the difficulty is that the structure of the traditional educational experience, both from the teacher’s and the student’s perspective, mitigates the value of invention and exploration (Burnett, 1999). We are shaped by our own

---

38 For some readers my reference to Dewey in this and later chapters may seem contradictory because the author’s ideas emphasize the experience of an individual as opposed to a collective, as indicated in the above quotation referring to an individual’s learning of an idea. Although this research examines decentralized and emergent learning as something that moves beyond the individual and involves being-with others, my interests in networks and relational processes of art and learning extends beyond relational processes that occur between people alone. I am exploring the art and learning experiences and processes that occur in and between people, ideas, and media. I am investigating relational and learning processes, whether those processes are about what emerges between two or more people or between an individual and an artwork or idea.
educational experiences, which are often defined by a traditional lecture style of teacher-student interaction. Embracing a decentralized approach to curriculum and teaching can allow us to explore the possibilities of dialogue as a pedagogical tool for emergent knowledge.

Critical theorist Paulo Freire is known for his research on democratic communication within the teacher-student relationship and the role that dialogue plays in forming knowledge. Freire discusses the dialogical process stating, “the object to be known in one place links the two cognitive subjects, leading them to reflect together on the object (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 14). Shor and Freire (1987) describe dialogue as a “joint act of knowing and re-knowing the object of study.” In writing about curriculum pertaining to art teachers, Erickson (2004) referred to a study by Short (1998) which concluded that the understanding of art, and the ability to transfer this understanding from one context to another, should include the critical activities of talking and writing about works of art (p. 62). For art educators who place importance on the act of critical thinking, as opposed to solely developing technical skills, I claim that these activities of talking and writing extend into an act of hermeneutic inquiry, ultimately leading to self-reflection. This can be described as an aesthetic, sometimes even existential, experience that rarely exists in a centralized and hierarchical approach to teaching and learning.

**Relinquishing Control: Power-With vs. Power-Over**

Disadvantages to a decentralized pedagogical approach include a major shift in curriculum planning that requires the teacher to adjust instructional strategies according to individual groups, and that the teacher be willing to feel uncomfortable during an unpredictable teaching and learning experience (Milbrandt, Felts, Richards, & Abghari, 2004). Complexity thinking highlights the importance of neighboring interactions of ideas, but the means to accomplish this must be “considered on a case-by-case basis, depending on the topic, the context, and the personalities involved” (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2008, p. 199). In other words, decentralized approaches to learning and teaching can be complicated and time-
consuming, yet can produce an aesthetic experience that deepens meaningful understanding related to cultural issues.

Teachers sometimes find it difficult to relinquish control in order to allow students a greater sense of agency; however, this can sometimes lead to teachable moments as students are individually engaged with the content. Decentralized instruction preconditions students to access their inner feelings and intuitions in the learning process, often expressing non-linear ideas with less fear of rejection (Adejumo, 2002, p. 8). Some groups of students may be more difficult than others to engage in constructivist processes but teachers who embrace these methods have found it to be worth the effort (Milbrandt et al., 2004). With this understanding of the relationship between complexity thinking and decentralized forms of teaching, the power that belonged to the teacher within a behaviorist model of learning might now be thought of as shifting within social activity.

The effectiveness of a decentralized approach to learning and teaching at the post-secondary level can be difficult to determine. How much power should the teacher have within decentralized classrooms that incorporate collaborative learning? How much participation should students be accountable for? Perumai (2008) found evidence of university students actively resisting a decentralized approach to dialogue in the classroom, which led to the teacher having to reclaim authority, resulting in students then submitting to the teacher’s pedagogic authority. Perumai states that power relations of pedagogical interaction will not be overcome by simply adopting different classroom practices (such as student-centred) and that it might be more useful to analyse the kinds of pedagogical strategies and ideological normalizations teachers enact in their classrooms (teachers privilege certain epistemological stances, and disprivilege others). In the conclusion to his/her study, Perumai suggests that in some cases, attempts to rid classrooms of power are futile and that teachers should embrace power by using it more knowingly while being aware of its effects in terms of interpersonal relations. This raises the question: Is power impossible to remove from the classroom? How should power be dealt with in decentralized approaches to curriculum?

In *Transforming Power: Domination, Empowerment, and Education* (1992),
Kreisberg distinguishes the more authoritative “power over” from “power with” which is characterized by collaboration, sharing, and mutuality. Acknowledging the links Foucault made between power and knowledge, Kreisberg examines power relations in schools and its place in the process of empowerment of individuals. He identifies how the power over relationship “cuts off human communication and creates barriers to human empathy and understanding” (p. 47), whereas power with is a “developing capacity of people to act and do together” (p. 71). Kreisberg addresses the dominant discourse of power in modern Western culture and states that upon closer examination, it becomes clear that conceiving power as solely power over is inadequate. When determining the levels of power within decentralized approaches to curriculum, we must consider these different understandings of power and, more importantly, communicate to teachers the necessity to be mindful of power relationships within the classroom and particularly in the dialogue that takes place within group discussions.

In “New Media Art Education and Its Discontents” (Scholz, 2005), media activist and educator Trebor Scholz argues that new-media arts curriculum must be concept-driven rather than media-defined, that learning and teaching should occur in a way that questions knowledge through authority, and that more attention should be paid to establishing relationships among peers and developing interpersonal skills. Scholz (2005) suggests alternative models of art education based on the Freie Klasse (free class) model of the Berlin University of the Arts writing, “participants should organize courses in which they teach each other, write their own curriculum, and invite speakers of their choice...self-reflexivity would be encouraged, and no grades given” (p. 102). Many alternative models such as this one suggest moving away from the studio/workshop atmosphere, as this is said to open up the creative process and critical thinking. From a North American perspective, the example of the ‘free class’ model is quite extreme but perhaps we need to network more with European programs in order to determine the right approach for our own university art programs. Below I discuss how a decentralized network can lead to a rhizomatic experience of learning. This is followed by a review of the concept of emergent knowledge and the noted desire for flexible curricular models in art education.
Network as Emergent

Decentralized and Rhizomatic Spaces for Learning

A decentralized network can produce a rhizomatic experience, almost like a mapping of creative possibilities and connections. When art educators allow for open dialogue and collaborative discourse between students and themselves in events such as group critiques, a rhizomatic experience may evolve as participants each build upon each other’s comments, one response leading to another response and so on. Patrick Slattery (2006) describes the act of interpretation as “something that should emphasize possibility and becoming, for human consciousness can never be static” (2006, p. 282). The idea of human consciousness never being static is similar to the view of knowledge being a complex system of evolving rhizomatic forms. The rhizome form (Figure 3.2) is divergent, extending in all directions, and rather than being comprised of a set of points and positions, it consists of lines in metamorphosis (Deleuze & Guittari, 1987). In describing the rhizomatic form, Deleuze and Guittari (1987) state, “A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines…these lines always tie back to one another” (p. 9). The group critique in art classes has the potential to become a rhizomatic experience, one that occurs within a dialogical space of critical thinking in which the artwork becomes the object of attention and produces emergent

[Image: A rhizome. Illustration by Heidi May.]

39 The word rhizomatic stems from Deleuze & Guittari’s (1987) notion of rhizome, a philosophical concept to describe theory and research that allows for multiple entry and exit points. It is based on how certain plants grow and multiply, not in a linear way that divides into smaller stems, but instead favouring a nomadic system that forms a multiplicity in itself.

40 Deleuze & Guittari (1987) describe ‘becoming’ as embracing the “in-between” and “the movement by which the line frees itself form the point, and renders points indiscernible” (p. 293-294).
knowledge. In referring to Figure 3.2, one can imagine the flow of knowledge that trickles through the educational space, from one node, or participant, to another.

The spatial experience of learning and teaching has been written about by various curriculum theorists, albeit each defining the phenomenon with different language to describe its intangible qualities. Aoki wrote about the “live(d) curriculum” as something in opposition to planned curriculum and explained the concept by using a visual illustration (Figure 3.3) of what he termed as a “rhizomean curricular landscape” (Aoki, 1996/2005, p. 419). There are similarities between Aoki’s curricular landscape and a decentralized network, as the hierarchy and linear structure inherent to the traditional teacher-student relationship are removed. Aoki suggests that the rhizomean landscape signifies the multiplicity of curricula that occurs in the learning space and the relationships that happen ‘between’ the teacher and students – the exchanges of communication. He draws attention to the term ‘multiplicity’ not being a noun, because within multiplicity it is not the elements that matter but what is in between them. I understand this to mean that the curriculum is about the experience, the process, and the relationship between the teacher and students. It seems only fitting that Aoki’s “live(d) curriculum” be taken up by art educators, as it not only leads to self-reflection and critical inquiry but also acknowledges the affective aspects of the learning and teaching experience.

![Figure 3.3. Rhizomean curricular landscape. Illustration by Heidi May, in reference to original diagram in Aoki (2005).](image)

**Learning With/In Emergent Processes**

Complexity theorists describe learning and teaching as collectives elaborating emergent knowledge (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2008). The concept of emergence is understood as a process where properties that have never existed before, and sometimes that are inconceivable or imaginable, are created or somehow come into being (Osberg & Biesta, 2007). The notion of emergent
knowledge has been extended beyond complexity thinking and applied to an understanding of knowledge termed “temporal epistemology.” The authors of “From Representation to Emergence” define it as a quest for knowledge that is not based on developing “more accurate understandings of a finished reality as it is. Rather, the question for knowledge is about finding more and more complex and creative ways of interacting with our reality” (Osberg, Biesta, and Cilliers, 2008, p. 215). This is aligned with an overall understanding of knowledge being something to locate oneself within, rather than something that already exists and which we attempt to acquire. The authors state that a representational, or spatial, understanding of knowledge presents a divide between the world and our knowledge of it, further arguing knowledge is instead emergent from transactions with our environment. They argue that knowledge does not merely exist in order to be acquired; instead we construct knowledge through our encounters with environments and through our participatory actions. The authors state, “(t)he epistemology of emergence therefore calls for a switch in focus for curricular thinking, away from questions about presentation and representation and towards questions about engagement and response” (Osberg, Biesta, & Cilliers, 2008, p. 213). Thus, if we are to understand pedagogy through a temporal epistemology, we must consider how learning can be actively generated and discovered by students rather than merely represented.

In an article titled “The Emergent Curriculum,” Osberg and Biesta (2008) focus on the ‘space of emergence’ in which meaning and knowledge is formed in the classroom, however, they argue that the logic of emergence be not only applied to knowledge, but to human subjectivity as well. Their concern is that even though the teacher structures the curriculum to allow for emergent knowledge to occur in this space, the problem of planned enculturation still exists. The authors are less interested in the pedagogical methods that create emergence of meaning and more interested in the kinds of meaning that are allowed to emerge in the classroom:

This question is important because, if meaning is understood as emergent, and if educators wish to encourage the emergence of meaning in the classroom, then the meanings that emerge in the classrooms cannot and should not be pre-determined before the ‘event’ of their emergence. (Osberg & Biesta, p. 314; italics in original)
The authors illustrate through the work of Ulmer (1985) that simply designing a pedagogy that allows for the ‘invention of meaning’ (or in Ulmer’s terms *inventio*), does not release pedagogy from the logic of enculturation (2008, p. 319). Osberg and Biesta argue that emergence must be used on two levels – for knowledge/meaning and for human subjectivity. They suggest that we need to abandon pre-conceived notions of what constitutes a human subject in order to understand who we are in relation to each other, and that if this process occurs as knowledge emerges in the educational space than it is possible to have curriculum that is free of enculturation. The authors refer to Arendt (1958), underlining the importance of keeping “frustrations” and differences in the classroom to allow individual uniqueness to emerge in students: “For Arendt, who we are is not something that exists before the other, nor is it something that appears because of the other. Rather it appears only in relation to the other (neither before nor after)” (p. 322). Osberg and Biesta conclude that the ‘space of emergence’ for knowledge and subjectivity requires that differences amongst participants be maintained in the classroom. This suggests that the responsibility of the teacher is to enable students to become more unique and not to ensure a desired end but rather to “complicate the scene” (p. 325). Through this research, Osberg and Biesta extend the concept of emergent knowledge beyond that of complexity thinking by emphasizing deeper, and more complex, philosophical notions.

**From Spiral to Lattice to Networks**

Since the beginning of the postmodern era, educators have been calling for curriculum and pedagogy that responds to the challenges of contemporary society. Efland (1995) argued for a flexible curricular model that prepares teachers and students to approach the world of art in all its complexity – a spiral lattice type model (Figure 3.4) that represents learning within art curriculum, allowing for multiple forms of interpretation, implementation and individualization of experience. Efland discussed Bruner’s “spiral curriculum” model, which influenced the field of education beginning in the 1960s – a cognitive learning theory claiming that certain ideas
provide a foundation for more advanced understandings of those ideas. Efland then argues for a new curriculum model in which, “the learner’s knowledge is portrayed as a lattice-like structure, one that utilizes differing strategies for seeking new knowledge” (p. 135) and one that prepares learners for a complex world. One of the main arguments from this article is that the hierarchy imposed on the spiral model might inhibit later learning if the complexity of the material being taught was simplified. Teachers have a pedagogical instinct to simplify instructions for easier understanding and when students are expected to move into more advanced ways of thinking, the simplified representations may limit the depth of later understandings (Efland, 1995).

Efland writes that a lattice model would allow for learners to be able to transfer knowledge from one context to another, whereas this may not happen with just a spiral curriculum: “Even though knowledge may be present, the learner may not have access to it or recognize its potential relevance for solving a problem or seeking new understandings” (Efland, 1995, p. 137). He was appealing for interaction between sub-disciplines within art education (studio studies, art history, art criticism) for the numerous connections needed for successful art learning.

Sweeny (2004, 2008) extends upon the lattice model by suggesting art educators structure their teaching according to principles of complex network systems (differentiation, interaction, self-organization, and emergent behaviour). He proposes a decentralized approach to art education, which I consider to be a more complex version of Efland’s, and similar to that of a rhizomatic decentralized network (Figure 3.2). Earlier I discussed how the rhizome has been used as a metaphoric representation of a decentralized network. When comparing the illustrations (Figures
3.2 and 3.3), we can see that there are more lines and intersections within the rhizome, and the lines continue past the final nodes, suggesting an ongoing and even more complex decentralized network. The intersecting lines and multiple nodes suggest different strategies for seeking new knowledge across concepts and disciplines.

Sweeny (2008) draws parallels to the open classroom movement of the 1960s in which emphasis was placed on learning in small groups with the teacher being less of an authority figure:

> It is relevant for art educators teaching in a networked age at all levels to return to the philosophies of the open classroom, as many of these structures resemble aspects of complexity theory. Perhaps the theories were developed too soon and can only now be implemented in an age of networks. (p. 96)

In many ways, the open classroom movement is being brought back into education through the implementation of online learning and teaching.

With the Internet becoming more and more of an accessible tool for interconnectivity and interactivity, art educators like Sweeny (2008, 2009) are suggesting that teachers take advantage of the flexibility that is part of the Internet and use it to inform pedagogical practices. Social networking sites and online learning systems enable interactive and participatory collaborations, allowing for multi-directional conversations that can occur in multidimensional spaces (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2008). Art educators are capable of seeing new pedagogical possibilities when working with digital technology in curriculum (Wang, 2002; Wood, 2004; May & Baker, 2011), which suggests that networked approaches to curriculum would benefit from the work of art education researchers. For instance, recent research in post-secondary art education has shown that digital technologies, such as social networking websites, are being implemented into post-secondary foundation level art curriculum resulting in better peer-to-peer interaction and creating active learners as opposed to passive participants (Castro, 2009; Collins et al., 2007; May, 2011). As online technologies are being incorporated into the learning and teaching of art, more research needs to be done to properly evaluate how the technologies impact the content being taught and how students are learning
to think and express ideas within these environments.

Summary

A decentralized network for learning and teaching shares similar qualities to that of network art. In this chapter I have provided a brief overview of complexity thinking as it pertains to education from a pedagogical point of view. Specifically, I described qualities of decentralized complex networks in contemporary curriculum and pedagogy, and have examined the notion of network as an experience of exchange and a space for emergent learning. I acknowledged the complications that go along with decentralized approaches to curriculum and pedagogy, such as questions regarding the issue of power. By referring to research in art education and writings of curriculum theorists, I discussed the significance of dialogical exchange between teacher and students, the concept of emergent knowledge, and the noted desire for flexible curricular models in art education that respond to the current cultural networked experience. Complexity thinking not only provides a way of conceptualizing structures for art education and network art, but also articulates the epistemology of this dissertation. This is made apparent in the next chapter, in which I discuss the methodology for this study.
In this chapter I outline the methodology used in this study and how it aligns with the theoretical framework of complexity thinking and particularly a temporal epistemology. Specifically, I state why I chose a reflexive methodology that combines reflective co-inquiry within active interviews. I then describe the research process, introduce the participants of this study and discuss my analytical framework.

Dialogical Experience in the Active Interview

The conventional interview broadens into a metonymic space despite itself. The identity of its subject is taken for granted as coincident with the place of the interviewee, but the very success of an interview turns on its ability to generate a new vision of the subject in the space of its own discourse. This subject thus “appears” in this new light and new place, not in her or his studio chair, but rather in the “lateral” space in-between interviewee and interviewer. (Aoki, 2003/2005, p. 446)

The situation is disposed of as if it were an exercise in bookkeeping. But an interplay may take place in which a new experience develops. Where should we look for an account of such an experience? (Dewey, 1934/2005, p. 40)

In his influential book Art as Experience (Dewey, 1934/2005), philosopher and educational reformer John Dewey, analyses what it means to “have an experience” by using the example of a job interview. Dewey begins by describing it as merely a mechanical exercise, yet acknowledges that within this simple interplay a new experience may develop of which an account may be desired: “Where should we look for an account of such an experience?” he asks, adding, “Not to ledger-entries nor yet to a treatise on economics or sociology or personnel-psychology…Its nature and import can be expressed only by art, because there is unity of experience that can be expressed only as an experience” (p. 44). Ted Aoki notes that the significant experience of an interview is the generating of “a new vision of the subject in the space of its own discourse,” emerging in “the “lateral” space in-between interviewee and interviewer” (Aoki, 2003/2005, p. 446). In his writing Aoki identifies the “interspace” of the interview as more than just empty separation between bodies, but rather a discursive space for production and complication, within which “that distance is negotiated as an engagement with (and evasion of) the subject” (p. 446).
Aoki is responding to the problematic nature of narration in interviews, in that the interviewee is never present in and of him or herself but is instead made apparent through the telling of the narrative. As researchers, we look at this telling and the space in which the telling occurs to better understand the interviewee. This aligns with the idea that knowledge is constructed in an active interview (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, 2004) and through interactional positioning (Wortham, 2000) of the interviewee and interviewer. The interview methodologies discussed in this chapter all relate to the concept of the active interview (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, 2004), where knowledge is co-constructed between the interviewee and interviewer. This methodology aligns with the theoretical framework of temporal epistemology, and an understanding of knowledge and identity in constant flux.

Both Dewey and Aoki not only attest to the necessary quality of aesthetics in intellectual inquiry, they shed light on the experiential aspects of research, those intangible moments in time, telling us not to overlook what we might be able to learn by attending to and reflecting upon the experience itself. In the sections that follow I describe the components that contribute to the reflexive methodology (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009) of this study.

Temporal Ways Of Knowing

When choosing a methodology for this study, I wanted an approach to interviews that would allow for an understanding of temporal ways of knowing as opposed to a representational or static sense of knowledge – a temporal understanding of knowledge that recognizes interviewees as individuals with multiple identities, existing with/in a complex and constantly changing society. I was interested in an interview research process that not only examines the content of knowledge but also “foregrounds issues of encountering the self through the otherness of knowledge” (Pitt & Britzman, 2003, p. 755).

In “From Representation to Emergence: Complexity’s Challenge to the Epistemology of Schooling” (Osberg, Biesta, & Cilliers, 2008) the authors state that a representational understanding of knowledge presents a divide between the world and our knowledge of it, further arguing knowledge is instead emergent, or
constructed, from transactions with our environment. Osberg & Biesta (2008) react against the notion that knowledge merely exists in order to be acquired, arguing, “Knowledge, in other words, does not exist except in our participatory actions” (p. 313). When writing about the “active interview,” Holstein & Gubrium (1995, 2004) argue for an examination of the hows of the interview process in addition to the whats of the content, and with this I see more attention to temporal ways of knowing. These particular perceptions surrounding understandings of knowledge become apparent in qualitative studies that explore how participants feel when confronted with learning that requires a shift in previous knowledge.

Pitt & Britzman (2003) speculate on a ‘crisis of representation’ in narration, which ultimately led them to transform a somewhat static research question into one that dealt with temporal experience. The authors discuss how their research project, which included attempts to interview university teachers and students on how they think about ‘difficult’ knowledge, wavered between two questions and the theoretical issues prompted by each: “1) What makes knowledge difficult? and 2) What is it to represent and narrate ‘difficult’ knowledge?” (Pitt & Britzman, 2003, p. 755). The second question inquires into the construction or production of knowledge, relating to a poetics of experience. The authors discuss how the first question explores the content of knowledge, whereas the second question deals with issues of encountering the self, yet for the purposes of their study they remain interested in the oscillations between the two. Pitt and Britzman demonstrate that it is important for a researcher to be willing to shift positions within the inquiry process, depending on the type of knowledge he or she is exploring.

In the interviews with my research participants I alternated between questions that examined aspects of my participants’ practices of art and pedagogy, and questions that inquired into the processes and relations inherent to those experiences. The first line of questioning can be considered more ‘content’ of knowledge, as described by Pitt and Britzman above, with perhaps more emphasis on ‘what’ they make and ‘what’ they teach; the second line of questioning required reflexive inquiry, or an ‘encountering of the self’, as to ‘how’ these processes occur and the meanings we might attribute to them.
Scholars who have examined the research interview as a subject in itself have discussed how the “interview and its participants constantly develop” throughout the research process (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004, p. 150) through a “negotiation of meanings” (Tangaard, 2009, p. 1509). Fontana (2003) suggests an interpretive method for research interviews that embraces postmodern sensibilities and which draws upon Norman Denzin’s (1989) work with the concept of epiphanies: “By focusing on these existential moments, Denzin believes, we can gain access to the otherwise hidden feelings experienced by individuals and bring them to the fore for others to appreciate” (Fontana, p. 55). The notion of hidden knowledge emerging within a dialogical space and time, points to an emergent and reflective self that is formed within the interview – which is similar to Aoki’s description of the “vision of the subject in the space of its own discourse” (p. 446).

Being Reflective and Reflexive

reflective:
Of or relating to deep or careful thought, esp. as directed inwards at oneself or of a spiritual nature; characterized by or (of mental faculties, etc.) facilitating this. (“Reflective,” 2010)

reflexive:
Social Sciences. Of a method, theory, etc.: that takes account of itself or esp. of the effect of the personality or presence of the researcher on what is being investigated. (“Reflexive,” 2010)

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the Social Sciences definition of ‘reflexive’ is a method or theory “that takes account of itself or esp. of the effect of the personality or presence of the researcher on what is being investigated” (“Reflexive”, 2010). Reflexive research practices therefore involve introspective processes in which interpretation of the research experience is a main element. Similarly, ‘reflective’ is defined as being “[o]f or relating to deep or careful thought, esp. as directed inwards at oneself “ (“Reflective,” 2010). These words are often used interchangeably; however, Alvesson & Skoldberg (2009), state, “there are different uses of reflexivity or reflection which typically draw attention to the complex relationship between processes of knowledge production and the various contexts of
such processes, as well as the involvement of the knowledge producer," further citing Maranhão (1991) when describing how this “involves operating on at least two levels in research work and paying much attention to how one thinks about thinking” (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p. 8).

I conducted my research by acknowledging these two levels through: 1) initiating ‘reflective’ practices in the performance and analysis of interviewing, for myself as interviewer as well as my participants, and 2) relating this to a ‘reflexive’ methodology contextualized within a theoretical approach that makes sense for my research questions. Similar to myself, the research participants of this study are artists who also teach and write, and they rarely define themselves as associated with one particular art medium. In my interviews I inquired into the knowledge that emerges within these multiple practices and if/how this informed the meanings constructed in their role as artist-educators. Conversely, I wanted to know how experiences of teaching and learning might impact the work they make as artists.

Hermeneutic Co-Inquiry

In examining the potential influences between art and education within today’s society, the individual is the connecting element amongst the multiple networks in and between these fields. Through semi-structured interviews that all began with a set of pre-formulated questions yet transpired into more open-ended dialogue, I attempted to gain a better understanding of my participants’ art and teaching practices. The foundational questions were arranged in the following order, however, the participants’ responses often resulted in overlaps that naturally led to moving back and forth between the different categories:

1) To learn about their personal backgrounds, and in order to establish more familiarity between myself and each participant, I first asked: How did you come to be an artist and how did you come to be an educator?
2) To inquire into the details of their art practices, I first asked: What does your art practice consist of? and, How do you usually describe what it is that you
do? This was followed by more specific ‘how’ questions connected to each participant that allowed for reflective inquiry.

3) To inquire into the details of their teaching practices, I first asked: What kinds of topics and courses do you teach? This was followed by more specific ‘how’ questions connected to each participant that allowed for reflective inquiry. Although questions were formulated in advance based on preliminary research into the practices of each participant, I remained conscious of the knowledge that emerged and was guided not only by pre-planned questions, but also by the reflective inquiry that was transpiring in the interview process itself.

Overall, this reflective inquiry is a process of understanding and stems from philosophical hermeneutics, in which: “(q)uestions directed at the whole also alternate with questions directed at the parts, and the two kinds can cross-fertilize each other” (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p. 101). Philosophical hermeneutics is influenced by conceptions of the hermeneutic circle, a type of understanding that constantly moves back and forth between the ‘parts’ and the ‘whole’ that we seek to understand. Gadamer’s (1975/2004) philosophical hermeneutics is concerned more with the event (process) of understandings as opposed to the information (object) in the text, and this particular interest in the event aligns with qualitative research methods that place emphasis on the ‘hows’ vs. the ‘whats’, such as the active interview. In writing about Gadamer’s work, Richard Bernstein states, “[m]eaning and understanding are not psychological processes, discrete events, or states of mind; they are essentially and intrinsically linguistic...meaning is not self-contained – simply “there” to be discovered; meaning comes to realization only in and through the “happening” of understanding” (Bernstein, 1983, p. 126). By embracing a hermeneutic understanding of the interview process, I hoped to move beyond a phenomenological account of “what is” and examine the interpretive meaning aspects of the lived experiences (Adams & van Manen, 2008).

In the case of this particular research study, the ‘parts’ include the individual and the processes of the artwork and the teaching and learning experiences, while the ‘whole’ exemplifies the larger concepts I am exploring in my research questions, being that of art pedagogy and notions of network and learning. The questions
posed in the interviews began by examining the individual parts, then expanded out by reflecting on connections between the parts, while also alternating back and forth between the ‘parts’ and the ‘whole’ when appropriate. This semi-structured active interview process draws upon both philosophical hermeneutics and Socratic dialogue (Dinkins, 2005) that allows for interpretation to occur within the interview process.

Dinkins (2005) refers to the interviewee as ‘co-inquirer’, describing a form of interviewing where both researcher and co-inquirer reflect together on concepts that emerge within the interview. Ideas that emerged within an interview with one of my participants allowed me to rethink how I would approach future questions with my other participants. This process was supplemented by fieldnotes, which I took during the interviews. I discuss these in addition to my transcribed audio recordings later.

**Limitations of Reflexive Research**

Reflexivity within social research is associated with postmodernism and post-structuralism, often understood as a response to the ‘crisis of representation’ and inabilities to directly capture lived experience. Lisa Adkin addresses this topic in “Reflexivity and the Politics of Qualitative Research” (2002) when arguing for reflexive research that remains focused on the context as opposed to the researcher or self, since a focus on the latter has the tendency to produce an authority of the author, or in other words, “research accounts that reproduce ego-identity” (May, 1998, p. 18). Adkin draws comparisons between Tim May’s (1998) suggestion for social sciences to embrace a “referential reflexivity” and Bruno Latour’s (1988) appeal to “look for reflexivity not ‘in’ the author but in the world” (cited in Adkin, 2002, p. 337). Of particular relevance to reflective interview practices is May’s (1998) distinction between the “endogenous” and “referential” dimensions of reflexivity. With the term endogenous reflexivity, May refers to the ways in which the actions of members of a given community are seen to contribute to the constitution of social reality itself. When describing referential reflexivity, May refers to “the consequences that arise from a meeting between the reflexivity exhibited by actors as part of a lifeworld and that exhibited by the researcher as part of a social scientific
community” (May, 1998, p. 8). May discusses how in an attempt to make social science research transparent, there is a tendency to bracket referential reflexivity which can ultimately produce an “inward-looking practice” (p. 18) that ironically transfers the authority to the author.

As I prepared for the interviews with my participants, who like me are interdisciplinary artist-educators teaching in universities, I reminded myself that I needed to be cautious of an endogenous reflexivity. In other words, I needed to remain focused on what I wanted to know more about through this research, as opposed to common personal interests that might emerge within the conversations. I would embrace a referential reflexivity that would allow me to take into account my role as a researcher versus an artist educator, particularly within the contexts of the co-inquiry process with my participants, while also continuing to refer back to my main research objectives.

**Research Participants**

In the early stages of my research, I began compiling a list of practicing artists according to the following requirements:

- he/she works with a range of media practices while producing and disseminating their art to a national/international audience
- his/her work demonstrates an interest in ideas about digital media and/or notions of network
- his/her art practice is multi/interdisciplinary and perhaps not easy to describe
- he/she teaches studio art at a university or college

I also searched for artist-educators who had some of these characteristics:

- his/her work addresses relational experiences with digital technology
- his/her work addresses perceptions of digital or network culture
- he/she was genuinely interested in pedagogy, communication, and learning

To determine appropriate participants for this study, I reviewed numerous artist portfolios online, exhibition catalogues, current art publications, and several
faculty directories located within university and college websites. In order to
determine the artists’ interests in pedagogy, I referred to the university and college
websites where they worked in order to examine related research and experience. I
had already been familiar with the work of Jon Thomson and Alison Craighead, Mark
Amerika, and Simon Levin; in fact, Levin was an acquaintance who frequently taught
courses at the same institution where I often taught. I carefully narrowed my
selection to seven artists and educators whose work spans a range of
multidisciplinary practices and digital media, and whose art and teaching practices
demonstrate interests in pedagogy. I had originally intended to examine three artist-
educators, but later decided to increase the number in order to better understand the
range of art practices I am researching and the contexts in which these artists work.
Since I am addressing ideas of multi and interdisciplinarity in relation to network art
and pedagogy, I felt it was crucial to include a wide range of artists’ practices in my
study, particularly those that addressed and employed digital technologies. I also
wanted to incorporate a mix of gender, geographical location, and art backgrounds,
and this is not possible to achieve with only a few participants.

I first contacted the seven artist-educators by email to see if they would be
interested in participating in this study. In the case of Nathaniel Stern, I had asked
Jo-Anne Green, Co-Developer of Networked: a (networked_book) about
(networked_art), if she could put me in contact with Nathaniel (this communication
process is discussed further on p. 71). After introducing myself via email to the artists,
I provided a general description of the research topic and a brief overview of what
would be involved. Following an email response of interest, I then provided a more
detailed consent form. All seven of the artist-educators I contacted agreed to be
research participants in this study.

Within this group of participants there are two artist duos and each of those
duos is made up of a male and a female member. The first duo that agreed to
participate was Jon Thomson and Alison Craighead, whose artwork is made under
the name Thomson & Craighead. Both Jon and Alison fit my requirements listed
above and although they work in a collaborative art practice, they teach at separate
institutions. The second duo that agreed to participate in this study was Jessica
Westbrook and Adam Trowbridge, who currently work under the title Channel TWo. I had originally contacted Jessica to see if she was interested in taking part as an individual participant, but discovered through this process that she now works only in a collaborative practice with Adam Trowbridge (discussed in more detail in Chapter 6). Upon further inquiry into Adam’s work as an artist and an educator, I realized that it would be beneficial to this research to have another collaborative duo, particularly because Jessica and Adam occasionally teach classes together. Below I provide basic descriptions of the participants for this study, in the order they are discussed throughout Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

**Nathaniel Stern**
Nathaniel Stern is an experimental installation and video artist, internet artist, and printmaker based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and represented by Gallery AOP in Johannesburg, South Africa. He is also a published writer examining art and digital media. Nathaniel is an Associate Professor within the Department of Art & Design at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Head of Digital Studio Practice. An overview of his work can be found at [http://nathanielstern.com/](http://nathanielstern.com/)

**Jon Thomson**
Since 1995, Jon Thomson has worked collaboratively with Alison Craighead under the name Thomson & Craighead. They are London-based visual artists who work with video, sound and the internet. Jon is a Reader in Fine Art at the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London. An overview of his work can be found at [http://www.thomson-craighead.net/](http://www.thomson-craighead.net/)

**Alison Craighead**
Alison is a Reader in contemporary art and visual culture at University of Westminster and also lectures in fine art at Goldsmiths University in London. Thomson & Craighead are “fascinated with how global communications networks continue to transform the way we perceive and understand the world around us” (artist statement). An overview of her work can be found at [http://www.thomson-craighead.net/](http://www.thomson-craighead.net/)
M. Simon Levin
M. Simon Levin is a Vancouver-based artist who “creates site-based systems that explore the aesthetics of engagement using a variety of designed forms and tools that address our many publics. These spatial and pedagogical projects expand the social agency of art making, rethinking notions of space and place, authorship and audience” (artist statement). He is a sessional instructor at Emily Carr University of Art and Design and also lectures at The University of British Columbia.

Jessica Westbrook
Jessica Westbrook is a Chicago-based new media artist working with photography, graphics, animation, interactivity, video, and sound. She is an Assistant Professor and Director of Technology Initiatives in the department of Contemporary Practices at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Westbrook has collaborated with Adam Trowbridge for almost two decades and in 2010 they formalized their collaboration as Channel TWo (CH2), a research and development mixed reality and media construct. An overview of her work can be found at http://onchanneltwo.com/

Adam Trowbridge
Adam is an artist “focused on research that fractures the intersection of sensation, cognition and communication” (blog). He is an Assistant Professor in the department of Contemporary Practices at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. During the writing of this dissertation, Jessica and Adam were also involved with the development of foundation core courses that they would later co-teach at SAIC. An overview of his work can be found at http://onchanneltwo.com/

Mark Amerika
Mark Amerika is an internationally renowned “remix artist” and his “body of remix artworks includes published cult novels, pioneering works of Internet art, digital video and surround sound museum installations, large scale video projections in public spaces, live audio-visual/VJ performance…” (artist’s website) He is a Professor in Interdisciplinary Media Arts Practices (IMAP), Digital Arts, in the Department of Art & Art History at the University of Colorado Boulder, where he has also implemented a practice-based digital arts research initiative called TECHNE. An overview of his work can be found at http://markamerika.com/
Data Collection and Procedures

Interviews, Blogs, and Email

Upon establishing initial relationships with each of the participants and providing general information about this research study, I conducted one interview with each participant that took approximately 90 minutes each. I was able to conduct an interview in person for the three participants situated in Vancouver, New York and Portland. For each of the duos involved in this research, I conducted interviews using video conferencing via Skype to the UK and to Chicago. With the first duo, Jon and Alison, I suggested separate interviews so that I could inquire into their individual teaching practices. With the second duo, Jessica and Adam, I suggested either separate interviews or one combined interview, to which they chose the latter. Because my participants are involved with art and teaching responsibilities that require traveling to different locations around the world, and because I am an artist-educator working below them in the same field, I wanted to make the research process as convenient as possible.

After the interviews I provided a list of follow-up questions by email, to inspire and serve as jumping off points for participants to respond to on individual private blogs set up on the university password protected system. The blogs were intended for participants to track and reflect on their art and teaching experiences, to add text, images, links to websites, and anything else they wished. Only the participant and myself had access to these blogs. They were asked to reflect upon certain points brought up in the interviews or to provide more details. In some instances, I posted comments in response to continue dialogue. This data also included artist and teaching statements collected from the participants and samples and links to the participants’ artwork and creative projects. The participants were asked to complete their blog postings over a three week time period. All but one participant posted information to the blogs41; however, considering my position as a fellow artist

---

41 In regards to the artist duos, separate blogs were set up for Jon and Alison, but they chose to post everything to Jon’s blog with Jon doing most of the responding. Jessica and Adam chose to have one blog under the name Channel TWo, to which they each posted separate entries and combined entries.
researcher “studying up” (Priyadharshini, 2003), I chose to adapt to what my participants were willing to contribute to this co-inquiry process. In addition to the interview and blog data, I referred to published interviews (text and video) with my participants as well as writings of their own previously published.

Throughout the research process, I also maintained a personal private blog (Figure 4.1) that functioned as a place for me to organize some of the data, which helped me in my written analysis. All of my participants agreed to make themselves available for final questions via email correspondence, and I have since maintained contact with each of them staying up to date on their art and pedagogical projects.

![Figure 4.1. Screenshot of personal research blog.](image)

**Reflective Fieldnotes**

During the interviews I made brief notes in response to fieldnote categories that I reflected on when later analyzing the data. Richardson’s (1994) typology of fieldnotes was used by Wakeford & Cohen’s (2008) study employing blogs as research. I chose to use the same category classification within my own fieldnotes: 1) **Observational** included notes related to the interview context, the communication experience, and behavior of myself and participants; 2) **Methodological** notes
included how I arranged for interviews/correspondence and how I recorded and documented the interviews; 3) *Theoretical* notes allowed me to jot down hypotheses and to critique myself as interviewer/researcher and it was, as Richardson states, “a way of keeping me from being hooked on one view of reality”; 4) *Personal* was an area for me to note my doubts and my pleasures, and a way for me to reflect on how my own feelings might be influencing not only my hypotheses but perhaps the actual encounters with my research participants.

By continuously reminding myself of these categories during the interview research, I was able to consider the setting, the experience, my own thoughts, and the interview process as a whole when reflecting on the content that transpired from each particular interview. Because of the co-inquiry nature of my interviews, it was difficult to simultaneously be engaged in the conversation and to observe and reflect on the situation. However, by having the categories listed, I was able to quickly jot down a word or two, which ended up being helpful when it came to analyzing my data in a reflexive way. This was also aided by the fact that I was recording the interviews not only with an audio recorder but with a digital smartpen recorder that was connected to my handwritten notes. By directly acknowledging my own reflections I was able to better distinguish between an endogenous and referential reflexivity on my part as a researcher, something I describe in the next section.

**Data Analysis**

Adhering to a reflexive methodology, the analytical framework for this qualitative research takes into account the effects of relational processes that occur in and between the following: 1) myself and each participant (co-inquiry between interviewer and interviewee), 2) the situational context of the interviews and data collection (different physical settings in person, video chats on screen, and asynchronous text communication on blog), 3) individual narrative accounts and the interactional and organizational contexts of which they are embedded (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006). Aligned with the concept of the active interview, Atkinson and Delamont argue for an analysis of narratives as a social phenomenon, not as a special vehicle for personal or private experience. My analytical framework is also
inspired by methods of a/r/tography\textsuperscript{42} in that I am analyzing the “living practices” (Irwin, 2004) and the dialogical interplay between the different ways of working (art/ research/ teaching) and rhizomatic relationships (Irwin, et al., 2006) that make up a network/ed artist-educator. Although this study does not employ arts-based methods, its content, questions, and theoretical framework are aligned with a/r/tography’s practice of generating knowledge and potential over research that narrows results (Triggs, Irwin & O’Donoghue, in press) – I elaborate on this idea in Chapter 8. In essence, I analysed the data for accounts of a relational process between how the participants’ understand their art and teaching practices and how they produce art and perform acts of pedagogy. Particular attention was also paid to participants’ thoughts regarding curricular frameworks within art departments and how their approaches to producing and teaching art correspond to these structures.

Thematic Organization

After transcribing the interviews, examining the participants’ blogs, and analyzing the practices of my artist-educator participants, I spent some time reflecting back upon my main research question and the theoretical framework of this study. In addition to exploring a deductive process based on preconceived categories, particular notions of network and learning, I conducted a conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) based on identifying key thoughts observed within the data itself. Reflecting back on my research questions, I reviewed the data and searched for instances in which the artist-educators described or illustrated methods, behaviors, and processes of their art practices and their teaching practices. While analyzing the interview transcripts and blog responses, I looked for connections between narratives of making, teaching, and learning art and was particularly interested in overlaps, similarities, and differences in how they

\textsuperscript{42} Triggs, Irwin & O’Donoghue (in press) state, “A/r/tography is an educational practice-based research methodology in which knowing, learning and making are not opposed to each other, but instead, encompassed within the sensation and movement of art practice” (p. 1). Of particular interest to this dissertation is the notion that “(a)r/tography as an academic disciplinary practice is concerned with past and current knowledge but extends the concept of a methodology to a broader conception of inquiry, including that which is not already known. A/r/tography insists that whatever is already known immediately diverges in practice…” (p. 5). This aligns with my theoretical framework of a temporal epistemology and the complex networks that exist in the content of this research.
describe their art and their teaching. I was looking for connections and differences across these ways of working, artistically and pedagogically, while also continuing to think about notions of network in art and notions of network in pedagogy.

Summary

In Chapter 2 I examined how the notion of network has been addressed in art of today. In Chapter 3 I examined how understandings of decentralized networks, stemming from complexity thinking, have been explored in contemporary approaches to curriculum and pedagogy. By thinking through literature, academic research, and artworks, I defined four ways of understanding the notion of network in art and in education: network as assembling, network as situation, network as exchange, and network as emergent. Because of limited space, two of these were discussed in the art chapter and two in the education chapter, but each of these understandings can be applied to art or education. Drawing from connections between Chapters 2 and 3, and following an overview of the methodological approaches described in this chapter, I now move into a discussion of my research.

The following Chapters 5, 6 and 7 examine the ways in which these network artists make art and approach pedagogy, focusing on observed correlations between their art and teaching. As described earlier in this chapter, I chose to analyse the methods, actions, and processes of both their art and teaching. In these research chapters, I discuss the three main thematic connections that I observed between my participants’ art and teaching practices: dialogical, collaborative, and performative. In Chapter 8, I argue that these thematic connections are also relational characteristics of current network art practices. I do not have the space in this dissertation to describe in detail the dialogical, collaborative, and performative aspects of all of my participants’ art and teaching practices, thus, I have chosen to focus each chapter around one or two of the artists, while including mention of the other participants’ practices when it makes sense to do so.
CHAPTER 5 – DIALOGICAL FEEDBACK BETWEEN ART AND PEDAGOGY

Purpose emerges as something to be worked towards, rather than as something that is necessarily present at the beginning of the making/experiencing process. Demands are made throughout the process—the perception, selection, and organization of qualities and responsiveness to them. These relationships reorganize thinking in an on-going dialogue. (Latta, 2008, p. 692)

The modern means of communication, of feedback and viable interplay – these are the content of art. The artist’s message is that the extension of creative behavior into everyday experience is possible. (Ascott, 2003, p. 112-113)

This chapter is based on one of the main connections I found between the ways my research participants make art and the ways they teach – both their art and teaching practices are centered on dialogical relationships that continue to feed back into their art and pedagogy. Dialogue is a central component to their art and to their pedagogy, but I was also interested in examining any dialogical interplay between each of these areas – between their work as an artist and their work as an educator. The first part of the chapter focuses on Nathaniel Stern and the second part focuses on Jon Thomson & Alison Craighead.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, this research is inspired by methods of a/r/tography (Irwin, 2004) in an attempt to understand the dialogical interplay between the participants’ multiple practices and the rhizomatic relationships (Irwin, et al., 2006) of a network/ed artist-educator. I am working with the dialogical framework of Bakhtin (1981), moving beyond communication and incorporating dialogue as a structure and a process through which we come to consciousness and through which we give meaning to our behaviors and begin to understand our connection to others. In reviewing the data I looked for correlations between the participants ways of making art and ways of teaching. I looked for pedagogy in their artwork and art-making processes and I questioned how these processes might have entered into their teaching practices and course content. In this research the participants described significant moments of learning in these instances where their own art practices bumped up against their teaching.
Nathaniel

The connecting thread throughout Nathaniel Stern’s work as an artist, writer, and educator is the dialogical relationships that contribute to and evolve out of his multiple projects. I became aware of Nathaniel Stern’s work a few years ago when searching for artists who use digital media in their art yet also work with a range of other materials that are not medium-specific.

Throughout this research I have been particularly interested in artist-educators who use digital media in a networked way with other media, processes, and individuals. I anticipated finding artists who each possessed different aspects of the characteristics listed in Chapter 4, and to varying degrees. Nathaniel Stern was the first artist-educator I located who met all of my requirements as a potential participant. But before I chose other artist-educators for my study, I found myself reaching out to the field of network art in general – the artists and scholars working in the intersecting areas of media, art, digital and internet culture studies. I suppose I wanted to gage the level of interest in my research topic. In hindsight, I guess I was at a point many doctoral students experience: I was starting to question what I was researching; would this research really matter to anyone but myself? I mention this moment of questioning since it helped me to clarify the reasons for doing this research and the artist-educators I chose.

In June of 2010, I had asked Jo-Anne Green to introduce me to Nathaniel Stern via email. Jo-Anne Green is the Co-Director of New Radio and Performing Arts, Inc., Turbulence.org and Co-Developer of Networked: a (networked_book) about (networked_art). I had been in contact with Green to inquire about exhibitions and symposiums that address digital media and art. In addition to Nathaniel, she put me in touch with two other academics cited in my research: Anna Munster and Kazys Varnelis. Following some insightful personal email correspondence with Munster and Varnelis, I decided to inquire into understandings of network art on mailing lists and discussion forums, particularly the Institute for Distributed Creativity\(^\text{43}\) organized by

Trebor Scholz and the *NetBehaviour* listserv\(^44\) (A Networked Artists' Community). I wanted to get a sense of what others in the field of art and the field of new media understood “network/ed art” to be and how that compared to my own understandings that were informing my research questions (See Appendix for a sample of mailing list discussions). One of those forum participants was Simon Biggs, Research Professor in Art at Edinburgh College of Art, who later invited me to be a discussant for a thematic month-long discussion on Empyre\(^45\), an online forum that facilitates critical perspectives on contemporary cross-disciplinary issues in networked media through thematic discussions. In the end, my initial email inquiry to Jo-Anne Green led me to a deeper place of understanding the artwork that my participants make.

**My Practice is Pretty Messy**

After obtaining consent from Nathaniel Stern, I noticed that he was presenting at the same art conference in New York that I was presenting at, so we arranged to meet in person for our first interview. We met following a conference session chaired by Sarah Cook and Beryl Graham (February, 2011) titled, “Participation and Engagement: Curating Contemporary Art after New Media.” Their session took into account the writings of Nicolas Bourriaud and Claire Bishop and the idea that art becomes complete only in the process of interaction with its audience. I feel it is important to mention this, since these are the kinds of contextual details I later reflected on as I analysed my interview data. In fact I actually acknowledged the session at one point in our interview, considering that the session’s content may have informed Nathaniel’s responses to my questions and to the active inquiry process of co-inquiry. Nathaniel stated:

… so many artists don’t go to look at other art. So many writers don’t read other writing, and I think it’s such an essential part of being a contemporary maker and a contemporary thinker to read, and to look, and to write, and to be a part of that and try to understand that. And so I consider myself a

\(^{44}\) [http://www.netbehaviour.org/pipermail/netbehaviour/](http://www.netbehaviour.org/pipermail/netbehaviour/) (see December 14, 16, 17, 18 / 2010)

\(^{45}\) [www.subtle.net/empyre/](http://www.subtle.net/empyre/)
dialogical artist in that regard and I think generosity and reciprocity are key. I believe in the artist as a public thinker, as a public figure.

When asked how he might summarize what it is that he does as an artist, Nathaniel Stern described the various components that make up his work:

Well, first I think in terms of my practice, which I think is broader than the work that I make. I’m interested in dialogue. I consider my work to be dialogical, and I enjoy a kind of generous spirit of reciprocity… I consider writing to be a part of my practice, teaching to be a part of my practice, collaboration to be implicit in everything I do and often explicit toward the end of a given piece. That being said, because I understand how complex that kind of collaborative/dialogical investigation can be, my practice is pretty messy.

Nathaniel can be described as a multimedia artist, but I don’t feel this label sufficiently describes his individual works that span experimental installation, video, internet and printmaking. One can search his artist website chronologically, or by medium, or by concept. The mediums listed on his website are works on paper, installation/sculpture, time-based/video, net.art, and performance. The project descriptions include more details, such as “site-conditioned intervention, networked + participatory performance, interactive and immersive environment, panoramic installation of performative prints, hand-made prints, collaborative networked art” (artist’s website). In addition to describing his practice as complex and messy, Nathaniel told me that his “products” and “performances” are very different, “even though they all center around generosity, curiosity and dialogue, and that they all feed into one another.” From this messy practice of making art, collaborating, teaching, and writing, Nathaniel stated:

(t)he work itself manifests in any number of ways… I would say I like to challenge or intervene in taken for granted or presupposed categories, like “body, language, vision, space,” words we use every single day… Implicit in that is challenging what gets to be art, what gets to be critical, what gets to be writing, etc., and there are often layers there.
As Nathaniel discussed the various ways his work manifests into different forms, I became curious to know how he felt his academic publications fit into his overall art practice. Nathaniel completed a written PhD dissertation in 2009 that is now being published in monograph form for release in 2013 from Gylphi Limited, titled *Interactive Art and Embodiment: The Implicit Body as Performance*. When discussing his written research of contemporary art, Nathaniel observed, “for me, I wanted to contribute something in writing. So I liked to joke I was a producing artist doing a humanities-based PhD in an Engineering department … But even as I was writing that full PhD… I was making art that whole time.” In response to how he sees this book in relation to his art projects, Nathaniel states:

> I think of them both being part of the same practice, but not as the same kind of project, no. The same way that a net art piece is one kind of thing, whereas a sculpture is another, a book is another… They’re both dialogical. They both come out of the same practice. They both come out of deep research. But that kind of product where I’m engaging very deeply with someone else’s work is very different than doing the kind of research to produce an art object that asks and invites others into my work to participate in. … So I think it’s two sides of the same relationship and coming out of the same practice, but it’s definitely not the same kind of work there.

Nathaniel describes the kind of research in his art-making process as that of investigating “material questions,” noting in an artist statement that his practice has become increasingly engaged in the exploration of relationships: “These could be personal or professional, online or offline, for example, and between artists and the academy, epistemology and technology, bodies and space, or history and public dialogue, to name a few of my interests. This trajectory also means I am progressively more involved with interdisciplinary and collaborative projects.”

> “my practice has become increasingly engaged in the exploration of relationships”

Central to my work are the feedback loops between our experience of the world

---

46 [http://implicitbody.net/](http://implicitbody.net/)
(via embodiment and perception, for example), our movements within it (through performance and performative acts), and our understandings of it (in language and signs). I want to foster greater dialogue around these complex systems and their relationships to matter, affect, and meaning-making. (Nathaniel Stern, artist statement)

A few months after I first interviewed Nathaniel, two of his works were shown for the first time in the UK: Wikipedia Art (2009), a collaborative work developed with Scott Kidall, made of dialogue and social activity online, and Given Time (2010), an internet artwork that creates a feedback loop across virtual and actual space. Each of these networked-based artworks examine our relationships to and with/in the online world, yet there is the additional relationship between the artists and the legal system with Wikipedia Art and the material vs. immaterial in the installation of Given Time. In this next section I want to focus on two of his artworks that explore dialogue in relationships, particularly what emerges from dialogical relationships – the first in which the medium of the work is actual dialogue, and a second in which the dialogue explored is that which occurs between traditional prints and superimposed video. This will be followed by a discussion of the dialogical relationships that exist in his practices as an educator.

1) Doin’ my part to lighten the load (2008) (Figure 5.1) began with Nathaniel proposing an idea to an exhibition curator in Cape Town, requesting that arts critic Sean O’Toole, editor of Art South Africa, give up any use of electricity for 24 hours. Nathaniel proposed to pay South African “labourers” to assist O’Toole as needed, equipped with hand-crank generators and light bulbs. This would follow by an installation of documentation of the relational experience, including letters and photos. Once the proposal was passed, an ongoing correspondence began between Stern and O’Toole in which they worked through the parameters and logistics of the project. In a statement about the piece, Nathaniel describes this ongoing dialogue as a debate:

48 See http://nathanielstern.com/2010/given-time/
O’Toole and I spent weeks debating the pre-set rules for this event, where he asked about everything from his safety to the art work’s merit. In the end, the night wound up as a fun and honest discussion of the aforementioned relationships between all those involved, over beer, pizza, and a bit of singing. An installation and online documentation consist of vestiges of the performance: letters, photos, hand-written notes, the generators and bulbs. (artist statement posted to research blog)

The relationships between all involved ended on good terms; however, Nathaniel’s intentions with this relational artwork – and the anxieties evident in the correspondence – were very complex and layered with serious questions. He was interested in “highlighting, unpacking, playing with and antagonizing the layers of hierarchy between real people with varying degrees of symbolic capital, financial influence and sociopolitical authority” (Stern, 2008, ¶ 2). Some of the questions Nathaniel explored in this piece were: “What does it mean for an artist to ask so much of a critic? What kinds of relationships will emerge between us, between O’Toole and his hired hands, between each of them as they get tired or their
generators break, between the group as a whole” (Stern, 2008, ¶ 2)? The full correspondence of this artwork along with an edited/highlighted version of the correspondence, and photographic documentation, can be downloaded from Nathaniel’s website.49

2) A second example is *Distill Life* (2010) (Figure 5.2), a series of collaborative works that Nathaniel made with printmaker Jessica Meuninck-Ganger in which they “approach both old and new media as material formations” (Stern, 2010, ¶ 2). Translucent prints and drawings are mounted on top of LCD video screens, creating moving images on paper. The prints include traditional techniques like woodblock, silkscreen, etching, and lithography. Although this collaboration is an example of Nathaniel’s dialogical practice as an artist, the dialogical relationships I am most

![Figure 5.2](image)

**Figure 5.2.** Jessica Meuninck-Ganger and Nathaniel Stern, *Floating Worlds*, from *Distill Life* series, 2010. Woodcut, LCD with video; 18 x 26 x 3 in. Courtesy of the artists; Creative Commons licensed.

interested in highlighting are the ones that occur between the prints and videos. What I feel is the most interesting about Nathaniel’s work in the scope of this paper is his use of digital media in conjunction with other non-digital media, ideas, and individuals. New things emerge that are not dependent on any one of the components, but rather the focus becomes the relationship between the different components. In the case of *Distill Life*, Nathaniel stated that by pairing the different media in the way that they have, both the materials and the content can be understood in new ways: “(Our) juxtaposition of anachronistic and disparate methods, materials and content – print and video, paper and electronics, real and virtual – enables novel approaches to understanding each” (Stern, 2010, ¶ 2).

More recently, the artists have collaborated on a new series of these hybrid works titled *Dynamic Stasis*. Nathaniel writes on his website that the works continue to explore “matter, media, materials, and their entanglements with the arts and science, as forces that continuously transform and mobilize one another” (Stern, 2013, ¶ 1). The drawings in each print are based on images that occur in the accompanying video at different moments in time. For example, with *Mediation* (Figure 5.3 and Figure 5.4), the video shows bowling pins set up and knocked down while the translucent print shows a contour drawing of one moment from the video.

Richard Grusin (2013), whom I also referenced in Chapter 1 when describing the notion of remediation (Bolter & Grusin, 2000), wrote an essay for the exhibition catalogue. In it he describes this work as involving both remediation and a “reverse remediation”:

Remediation does not always involve the refashioning or re-mediation of older media forms by newer ones, but also names the way in which older media forms remediate newer ones… *Dynamic Stasis* involves both remediation and reverse remediation: of print by digital video, and of digital video by print. Rather than simply digitizing earlier print media, the artists produce static graphic prints from the medium of digital video. (Grusin, 2013, p. 2-3)

50 http://nathanielstern.com/2012/dynamic-stasis/
Figure 5.3. Jessica Meuninck-Ganger and Nathaniel Stern, *Mediation*, from *Dynamic Stasis* series, 2013. LCD video, etching on varnished Thai mulberry paper; edition 3, 318 x 420 mm. Courtesy of the artists; Creative Commons licensed.

Figure 5.4. Detail, *Mediation*. Courtesy of the artists; Creative Commons licensed.
Another moment in *Mediation* that brings this reverse remediation to our attention is when the movement of the bowling pins in the video is reversed, made possible by digital media. In contrast, the stillness of the captured moment within the translucent print on top reminds us of the mechanical nature of the printmaking process.

*Mediation* is only one example from within the *Dynamic Stasis* series. *Dynamic Stasis* is but one artwork in which Nathaniel explores dialogical relationships in and between different media. Overall, this work explores how media can be used in ways that lead to new understandings – past, present, and post-media.

“cultivating interdisciplinarity and collaboration”

[TEACHING]

Nathaniel approaches teaching with a similar emphasis on dialogue and begins every course with the intentions of creating a supportive environment, where critiques can be taken seriously and not personally. He believes firmly in the studio critique model and encourages dialogue in his classes: “If art is a conversation,” I say to my students, “make people want to talk to you. Be nice; ask questions; be not only interesting, but interested – in other work and what others say and do. This is how I run my classroom” (teaching statement).

The above statement aligns with Nathaniel’s belief in the artist as a “public thinker” and the role of “generosity and reciprocity” in being a dialogical artist. I feel it’s important to reiterate here what Nathaniel stated earlier when describing his own practice, since much of his narratives about teaching reflect back upon what he tries to establish in his own practice: “… so many artists don’t go to look at other art. So many writers don’t read other writing, and I think it’s such an essential part of being a contemporary maker and a contemporary thinker to read, and to look, and to write, and to be a part of that and try to understand that.” Nathaniel feels it is important for art and design students to develop an understanding and a language that goes beyond the specific discipline that they want to work in. How he chooses to expose

---

51 Other works of his that specifically look at the relationship between printmaking processes and digital processes are the *Distill Life* series described above, *The Giverney Series* (2011) and *Printing Time* (2011), also included at [http://nathanielstern.com/art/descending/](http://nathanielstern.com/art/descending/)
students to these histories and different ways of working, often comes from the
students themselves and the dialogue that emerges around each others’ work: “By
cultivating interdisciplinarity and collaboration, and by using both seminar and studio
critique models across my classes, I ask students to step outside their own work,
and speak the contemporary language necessary to pay attention to their peers”
teaching statement). For example, most of Nathaniel’s students majoring in Digital
Studio Practice want to make media art, however, the students that make the best
media art take a course he teaches called Social Participation and Contemporary
Art:

I want them to understand the history outside of the media, and so this
class looks at... installation art, Minimalism, Situationism, Fluxus, relational
aesthetics, relational antagonism, and we do projects that relate to each of
these. Written proposals, and then they each get to run the class for a day
and have the whole class at their disposal to do their project. They love it.
And they make so much better work when they’re working in video or
interactive (art) from (an) understanding of that history of trajectories
they’re on.

Nathaniel follows this stating:

I should mention, one other thing is with Junior Project and what we get up
to that point as well with all of these is that art is research. That this is why
we talk to each other, to learn where we need to look. And by the end,
each of my students … should be doing some technical and/or something
conceptual that we did not discuss in class... something that’s not on the
syllabus, something very often that I didn’t even know how to do.

The dialogical and collaborative ways of working that Nathaniel instigates in his
classroom very much mirror the ways he works as an artist, including his desire for
students to implement art/research in projects not listed on the syllabus.

Nathaniel’s overall approach to teaching, however, is more structured in
comparison to his ways of making art: he organizes his courses and relates to his
students with very clear intentions. Within his private blog set up for this research
project, Nathaniel reflects on the similarities and differences between his art and
teaching when he writes, “My art practice is far more experimental [than my
teaching] in that it isn’t framed before, or even during, its production. Yes, I’m pretty
good at talking about my work, but usually that reflection is after it happens, after its affection…” Like many artists, Nathaniel doesn’t talk about his teaching as much as he talks about his art practice, stating: “My practice of teaching, I know what I do, but I’m not as articulate about it in the everyday because I don’t talk about it all the time.” Although he doesn’t talk about his teaching as much as his art, Nathaniel told me that he is genuinely interested in pedagogy and that this is connected to his interests in dialogical relationships. In our initial email correspondence, Nathaniel made the suggestion of comparing artist-educators artist statements and teaching philosophy statements, a comment that inspired me in the early stages of my research.

Nathaniel’s syllabi, lesson plans and course readings are planned in advance, yet the structure accommodates for active dialogue. In a teaching statement, Nathaniel describes how he teaches:

My general approach to pedagogy does not focus on teaching content or production per se, but is centered on exposing students to various strategies for engaging with texts and materials, their audiences, and the world at large. Reading, writing and debate are always juxtaposed with conceptualizing, making and critique. I aim to create a structured environment that facilitates active discussion and ongoing analysis.

An interesting finding in my research was the number of times the word “scaffolding” was used in Nathaniel’s verbal and written descriptions of his approach to teaching. This word is often used in teacher education and although Nathaniel didn’t study to become a teacher, his mother, father, aunt, sister, wife and brother-in-law are all teachers. He talks about how scaffolding is particularly important for classes involving technological skills, such as his course ‘Video and Audio Strategies for Artists and Designers,’ “They learn everything from beginning to end of that process, but they also learn different brainstorming tools, different technical strategies, different ways of thinking about the video medium.” In his teaching statement, he discussed this progression through the courses again:

Pragmatically, my courses are “scaffolded” – at each stage in their development, students learn the theories, technologies, skills and strategies that help them move towards the next, each building on what
came before. Within these classes, I’ve found that beginning with a series of readings and/or minor projects with very specific goals, and later moving into larger works of art and writing, can be most effective.

Nathaniel described in the blog for this research that he feels teaching must serve the needs of a given class and its students, and that he always works to improve how he teaches based on what he learns, describing this approach as “more of a short-term dialogue with specific students.”

**Jon & Alison**

I mentioned earlier that I was invited to participate in a month long forum on the listserv Empyre, a thematic online discussion moderated by Simon Biggs. One of the other discussants was London-based Jon Thomson, of the art duo Thomson & Craighead. Once introduced to Jon by way of this forum, I wrote Jon and Alison to invite them to participate in my research.

For some time now I have been interested in the way Jon Thomson & Alison Craighead examine our relationships to global communication systems, undoubtedly influenced by the internet and digital technologies. I am particularly interested in their work that takes the digital into the non-digital realm. Two of these works do just that while also exploring dialogue as the subject matter: 1) *Google Tea-Towels* (2002) (Figure 5.5) and 2) *London Wall* (2010) (Figure 5.6).

The first work is a set of four tea towels that each display a browser window that contains a series of “search engine results returned to a user when the criteria, 'Please Help Me', 'Is Anybody there?', 'Please listen to me' and, 'Can you hear me?' were entered into the search field, while using Google…” (Thomson & Craighead, 2013). The questions communicate a personal desire for connection, yet are ironically entered into a computer search engine. By printing the results of these Google searches on cotton tea towels, and placing them for sale on the artists’ online retail outlet www.dot-store.com, the artists not only provide materiality to the immaterial in a humorous way, they also draw attention to the dialogical yet often contiguous qualities of human engagement with technology.
Figure 5.5. Thomson & Craighead, Google Tea-Towels, 2002. Courtesy of the artists. These tea-towels were originally part of and sold through the artwork www.dot-store.com

Figure 5.6. Thomson & Craighead, London Wall, 2010 (and ongoing). Photo taken at the Museum of London. Courtesy of the artists.
London Wall (2010) is “a physical manifestation of the invisible city all around us; a poetic snapshot of social networking traffic from within a three-mile radius of the Museum of London” (artists’ website). The artists selected status updates from Twitter and Facebook over a ten-day period and presented them as typeset posters, “revealing the idle mutterings of ourselves to ourselves as a form of concrete poetry” (artists’ website). Here, again, the artists bring the digital space into a physical space, creating a public installation that allows us to question the relationship between the virtual and real. Archer (2005) writes that Thomson & Craighead are exploring information as material: “Far from thinking of the words, images and sounds encountered on a web surf as immaterial, phantasmatic effects of the system, they confront the fact not only that they are open to manipulation and organization, but also that such engagement is rooted in and ears upon the physical and the real” (p. 10). Thomson & Craighead capture moments of dialogue and re-present them in a different way, so that we can see ourselves apart from the originating media. Although London Wall involved the artists’ selecting status updates, much of their work that explores dialogue is auto-generated in ways that Stallabrass (2005) has described as “marry(ing) the polish of the authored, dystopian work with the endless cycle of dialogue” (p. 74). Thomson & Craighead create generative networked art projects that continue to be accessed online, allowing for the artwork to never be complete, but rather an open process.

Generating Feedback

Jon Thomson has been working with Alison Craighead under the name of Thomson & Craighead since 1995. Since they both teach at universities, I was interested in having each of them participate in this study as artists and educators. As described in the previous chapter, I interviewed them separately to gain a better understanding of how their experiences working collaboratively might have informed their individual approaches to pedagogy, and how their experiences as artist-educators might influence their joint art practice. Previous to this interview, I reviewed a couple of video and radio segments that featured the both of them talking about their artworks. As I proceeded with my research, it became more and more
important for me to examine the role of collaboration in the artworks and practices that I was studying: artists collaborating with other artists is extremely common to all network art practices. I will examine the role of collaboration in more detail in Chapter 6. Below I continue to examine the dialogical aspects of Thomson & Craighead’s work by looking into the ways in which they make art and the ways in which they teach.

I arranged to interview Jon and Alison separately during the same week via Skype video, a format in which each is quite comfortable. Fortunately for all of us, the summer months provided some time for them to participate – in between international exhibitions, art production, research and teaching. Jon was on vacation from his post as Reader in fine art at The Slade School of Fine Art (University College London) and Alison from her position as Reader in Contemporary Art and Visual Culture at University of Westminster and lecturer in fine art at Goldsmiths. I interviewed Jon first and then Alison a few days later. I learned about each of their individual practices and experiences leading up to their formal collaboration. Jon explains in an interview that since they each began working with technology very early on, it was quite common for collaboration to occur with other artists: “Because you share tasks and skills amongst a peer group… Back then video was hard heavy, early 90s, so even carrying stuff required more than one person” (Jon, interview). When discussing their artwork, both artists mostly answered questions with “we” instead of “I” with the exception of specific questions inquiring into the dialogical aspects of their ways of working and the everyday methods that make up their art practice. I will discuss their ways of working as artists in a moment but first want to summarize the range of work they make and how it is that they talk about their art practice.

“the work we make is more like participation in an ongoing conversation”

Jon Thomson and Alison Craighead work with video, sound, and the internet to produce installations and online artworks. Many of their projects use data found
on the internet, often live data, to make artworks in the form of gallery installations and “template cinema online artworks.” Several of these are networked to auto-generate existing live video and audio feeds in real-time. An example is Short Films about Flying (2003) (Figure 5.7), which combines live video feed from Logan Airport in Boston with randomly loaded net radio sourced from elsewhere in the world. Thomson (2006) discusses this work stating, “it’s almost like the Web is a piece of string and we’re just tying different knots in it, and by placing the viewer centrally, s/he joins the pieces together that are often un-related” (Cohen, 2006, p. 146). In response to the term “template cinema,” the artists’ interest is not about expanding cinema necessarily, but rather visualizing the experiences we have

Figure 5.7. Thomson & Craighead, Short Films about Flying, 2003. Installation view at Walter Philips Gallery in Banff. Courtesy of the artists.

52 The artists describe these as “Low-tech networked movies made from existing data appropriated in realtime from the world wide web.” Template Cinema first started in 2002 with a gallery installation called, ‘Short films bout flying’ and uploaded to this website in 2004: www.templatecinema.com
53 See http://www.thomson-craighead.net/docs/sfafdoc.html
with/in huge networked spaces like the internet. A thread that runs through their work is the idea of using networks to physically be in one place yet virtually be somewhere else. With Horizon (2009; Figure 5.8), the artists use webcams set up in difference places around the world and collect all of the live feeds together in a large projected grid. When each row of images is read from left to right, the viewer is provided with snapshots of what is going on in that area of the world, but when looked at vertically there is a progression from night to day. The artists describe this as a “narrative clock… an electronic sundial” (Thomson & Craighead, 2013). Similar to other works they have done, this piece connects virtual space with the physical space of a gallery and provides a reflection of ourselves to ourselves.

In terms of how to classify the art of Thomson & Craighead and what it is that they do, Jon states that he and Alison just describe themselves as artists, or

Figure 5.8. Thomson & Craighead, Horizon, 2009. Installation view at Dundee Contemporary Arts. Courtesy of the artists.
“sometimes we’ll say visual artists, but generally artists. Whereas other people will tend to describe us as digital artists, sometimes net artists or networked artists and we don’t mind… We like to keep things open” (interview). Preceding this response, and after discussing debates surrounding the language of “fine art,” “intermedia,” and “network,” Jon ponders the fact that his description “is an interesting example of how things can have a kind of reciprocal relationship – the teaching and the institution that I’m a part of – I’m sure, has a kind of feedback effect on perhaps the way in which you practice as an artist. Not singularly but just as a kind of facet of things.” Because Thomson & Craighead make work about/with technological communication based systems, their work is exhibited in both “fine art” and “new media” contexts, often playing off of and informing the works they are exhibited with.

“We’re not utterly strategic in how we position ourselves,” says Jon, “but we do like being in exhibitions that aren’t technologically determined.” He goes on to say:

The work we make is quite specific (technological communication based systems) so we like being in open (exhibitions). (W)e’ve found that often when we’re in those kind of exhibitions, people will say, ‘Oh, you’re the tech/net artists.’ Then, perhaps if we’re in a show that’s more from the new media ghetto, they’ll say, ‘Oh, you’re the gallery artist.’ We’ve just decided that we must like that in some shape or form. There must be something going on because we didn’t plan it.

In an interview I conducted with Caitlin Jones, Executive Director of the Western Front in Vancouver, she described Thomson & Craighead as one of those artists that have been unfairly overlooked by a mainstream, commercially based art world. They were pigeon holed early on because of their particular use of technology, even though their work is extremely relevant to understanding today’s culture. Prior to her position at the Western Front, Jones had a combined curatorial and conservation position at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and was a key member of the Variable Media Network. Along with co-curating Seeing Double: Emulation in Theory and Practice at the Guggenheim, she was an assistant on the groundbreaking exhibition, Nam June Paik: Global Groove 2004. When discussing the kind of art that interests her, she told me she is not interested in art that deals with technology as novelty but, instead, art that looks at how technology affects our daily lives:
“Technology is important. The context of technology is important. But it’s not important in and of itself. It has to be attached to something else” (Jones, 2012). Jones feels that Thomson & Craighead are making work that explores our relationships with technology and how technology is affecting culture at large.

In my interview with Jon Thomson, he summarized his and Alison’s desires to critically reflect on the everyday technologies that are inherently part of the work that they make:

I think a lot of what we’re interested in is how the moments of technological change that we find ourselves in is changing the way we understand things... I suppose the feedback of the digital back into the physical is something that does fascinate us, which is why in turn we often find ourselves pitting different things together - like if it's a railway flap sign and an information feed, or perhaps a data visualization that looks like a piece of early cinema.

Before Jon and Alison became “Thomson & Craighead” they were already working together in a collaborative way for their individual projects. Jon had a background in sound and Alison was working with a computer program called Paintbox. Alison would make an animation and Jon would make the sound for it. Quickly they found that they were working together very closely as well as being in a romantic relationship. They decided it would be useful for them to work collaboratively as opposed to competing against each other for exhibitions. In my interview with Alison, she talked about this often hidden aspect of collaboration in the history of modern and contemporary art:

I think a lot of contemporary art has been collaborative but since Modernism we really like the idea of the solo artist. If you even just talk to people, you know, parents who’ve been artists, they will tell you that it was both of the parents. Ok, one of them was famous but the other one was working away at the practice but they just didn’t get the name… Realistically, there are loads and loads of examples of one just going forward.\footnote{Both of the artist duos in this study are romantic partners in addition to work partners. As Alison said in the interview excerpt above, artists working together while also being romantically involved is quite common and has been for some time; however, it is not always something that is discussed. During my interview with Jessica and Adam, Adam noted, “I didn’t discover into well into graduate...}
When interviewing Alison and Jon separately, each of them discussed the importance of dialogue in terms of how they work as artists and the dialogical process that is their work:

Alison: “The really nice thing about working together is that instead of things existing in your head... they can't just exist in your head, they've got to be verbalized in some way. And that kind of process... Really, really, we make the work by talking. ... Drawings are for people outside of us ... but those are really for other people to help understand what we're up to, rather than part of our process."

Jon: “…if either of us has an idea about something, it is immediately externalized and discussed because there is two of us. And that's quite useful because it also has an affect on the kind of ownership you might feel for it as well, it makes you appraise it [the work] more objectively. Even though collectively and collaboratively we're dealing with subjective iterations of things, which are artworks, our process can feel a bit more objective simply because we have to speak the thoughts out of our heads and we're not sort of set on our own respectively, in a studio staring at a canvas or a computer screen or a piece of stone or whatever. So I really value that."

As Jon discussed with me how essential dialogue is to his and Alison's artistic methods, I came to the realization that an artist duo might share similar characteristics to a teacher-learner relationship – in that learning takes place as the roles of teacher and learning alternate back and forth. I scribbled Dewey and the words “shared activity” in my field notes, reminding myself to later locate the passage in which Dewey describes the process of shared activity where, "the
teacher is a learner, and the learner is, without knowing it, a teacher” (Dewey, 1916/2005, p. 95). Responding to this personal revelation and acting within the co-inquiry model I had set in place for these interviews, I put this idea forward to Jon:

I have been interested in the dialogical aspects of your work, but I hadn't actually put [your collaboration with Alison] into a pedagogical learning feedback loop (before). At certain times, you are a teacher and learner, learner and teacher… I hadn’t really thought of an artist duo in that way before.”

Jon replied by saying that he and Alison have recognized this aspect of their art practice as something that might come from their time spent as students and teachers in art schools: "I think it's because perhaps we find ourselves in art school that we've sort of noticed that. ...The students at the Slade are ... often learning how to articulate what it is that they do. And that's a very big part of the learning experience as an undergraduate" (interview). Jon continues to reflect on this process of talking about what one does as a way of understanding what one does, this being a major part of what occurs where he teaches, further adding:

Because obviously being able to describe what you do in words – that is, something you do that is not using words – is not an intuitive process, necessarily. So that kind of moment of articulating clearly what it is that you're making and doing as an artist...is also an act of externalizing a thought as well, which makes something more concrete and less speculative as a conceptual basis for something as well. So it's all interweaving isn't it.

The active interviews and my written analysis have allowed me to see more clearly the interplay of teaching and learning that can exist within an artist duo, particularly by shaping my written analysis around the topic of external dialogue. Throughout my discussions with both Jon and Alison, I noticed that there was a lot of narrative overlap around how they approach their art and how they approach their teaching. After analyzing how I framed the discussion topics in comparison to my interviews with other participants, I can't determine anything particular that I might
have done differently that led to this. One main finding that might explain this is the fact that Jon and Alison speak about their students as artists and seem to place themselves in the position of the students/artists when thinking about dialogue in teaching/learning.

“I don’t really like to say students. They might be younger but, they’re still artists”

What I didn’t anticipate when starting this research, was how much I would need to really educate myself about the differences between the various post-secondary schools and art programs that my participants teach in. The Slade School, where Jon Thomson teaches, is a studio-led school in which students are treated as young artists from the outset. All of the artist-educator participants in this research project teach in post-secondary programs that require art faculty to be practicing artists, however, the curriculum and planning at the Slade School, as well as at Goldsmiths where Alison teaches, is much more open-ended and independent. The program is developed around the studio work that the students do and the seminars and artist lectures. There aren’t a lot of required courses, but rather students are assigned to a tutor (faculty) whom they meet with regularly and in addition to this there are plenty of group and individual studio critiques. Although I don’t have the space here to get into the differences between the UK and North American post-secondary art programs, I have become more interested in the impact that these different structures have on how artist-educators approach pedagogy.

Jon and Alison both emphasized the communal experiences of teaching and the close relationships formed with other artists/students. Alison specifically said that she doesn’t like to call them students, recognizing that “as soon as you go to art school, you’ve taken that step.” The schools that both Jon and Alison teach art in are quite difficult to get into and, as Alison said, once you get in and have a studio space, you are matched up with a tutor, and then you “just get on with it.” The teaching methods that both Jon and Alison described to me in separate interviews arose in the context of discussing learning than teaching, with most of the conversation centering on talking and listening. Alison’s responses to questions about teaching implied that she was as much learning as teaching: “What you can do is listen and
help them understand what they’re trying to do. I learn a lot about art and about how art is changing… what’s different, what’s fashionable…” In another discussion about the relationships formed with her students Alison described the significance of being able to talk deeply about one’s practice with a tutor:

(\text{Jon and I}) both really like teaching undergrad because it’s a really special time when you start to understand what you’re interested in… Being a lecturer and having a relationship with maybe a person you’re tutoring, you see them all the way through the year and then you see them graduate. You don’t often have that kind of closeness with another artist. With tutorials you get a deep understanding of their practice. It’s a very gratifying thing and I think it really helps you understand what you do as an artist. Because it’s not very often that you can have that kind of frank conversation with someone about their practice – you don’t do that on a day-to-day basis.

It’s interesting to note that when describing this unique kind of close relationship, Alison repeated the word “you” in a way that shifted the narrative back and forth between herself as teacher and herself as student: in fact, both roles are merged together through the word “artist.” Perhaps by placing herself in the role of the artist-student, Alison is better able to listen and guide the artist-student through the process of making their work… bringing to mind again Dewey’s famous words – the teacher is a learner and the learner is a teacher.

This desire for an equal exchange and relating to students as artists is also something that Jon and Alison feel is important for student-artists to learn. Alison commented on the importance of peer-to-peer learning, when she said, “I try and make them understand that as much as they’re going to learn through lecturers and tutors, they’re going to learn as much from their peers… (T)he students who work the best are the ones that are smart, are the ones who take an interest in each others’ work and they learn so much more” (interview).

The idea of incorporating methods from one’s art practice into one’s teaching is for Jon, a “complex question and an interesting issue” and basically comes down to what has already been discussed about treating each other like other artists: “I
think that kind of basis that we’re all artists and we can share our experiences is perhaps the bedrock upon which critical discussion and practical discussion” (interview). Jon and Alison have not taught together, except for visiting artist lectures that last no more than a couple of days. Jon stated in our interview that they tend to avoid co-teaching so they can have some things separate and to find a balance between their art practice and the teaching, adding, “… as the years have gone by it’s become more important… I agree that it’s a dialogical experience and certainly not a one-way street.”

**Instigating Difference**

What should not be overlooked in this chapter is the kind of dialogue demonstrated in the art and teaching practices being studied. Ellsworth (1989, 1997) has argued that the pedagogy of dialogue actually has the potential to constrain the exchange of knowledge, and that an analytic dialogue, one that embraces disagreement, can lead to understanding. Duncum (2010) proposes art educators adopt a post-critical and dialogic pedagogy, based on Bakhtin's notions of dialogue; the idea that dialogue consists of a "multiplicity of views." These ideas align with Arendt's (1958) notion of the importance of maintaining individual uniqueness from one another, with human subjectivity only existing in relation to the other. Significant to this discussion is the learning that can occur in these moments of critical dialogue, which can often be difficult moments for either or both parties involved.

“I think it really helps you understand what you do as an artist” [LEARNING]

In my interview with Nathaniel Stern he talked about the idea of learning not being easy and how sometimes that means challenging students in ways that they may not like all the time. Nathanial talked about some of his students really fighting with him at the beginning and having to be hard on them:

But sometimes you need to hear that. So I try to be as generous as possible. I don’t try to put people in their place, but at the same time sometimes feeling that way results in really good things. I’m thinking of one student in particular who made a work that was unkind to his participants. It was a Social Participation and Contemporary Art class I was teaching, and it really took
advantage of the viewers… it was pulling a prank on them that they would be really unhappy with, and you know, it was after we read Claire Bishop’s “Relational Antagonism” so he thought he was doing a great thing. And he really took me on... so I really went out of my way to say, “I love your ideas, what you’re doing here. Would you please read this?” [And now] (h)e actually has taken five classes with me. He’s been my assistant for the last year.”

In a separate instance Nathaniel recalled being the one impacted by the insistence of a student – well, in this case it was a former student whose undergrad was in printmaking. Nathaniel told me that this particular student approached him at an exhibition of his digital prints and critiqued his work, stating, “This is mark making, this is not just digital prints. You are a printmaker now, because you are making marks and editioning art objects.” Nathaniel reflected on this encounter with his past students, adding, “And this is so important… And it changed my practice forever… But also how I think about these media and these materials… was transformed because of his insistence…”

All of the artist-educators in this study described how critical dialogue with students has led to significant learning moments in relation to their own art practices. In our interview Jon Thomson talked about how critiquing other peoples’ work can teach you how to see your own work differently:

(B)eing able to have discussions in that sort of situation, I think (it) definitely helps me as an artist as well, because you recognize things differently at different times. So when something perhaps a student does in a certain way kind of makes a certain discussion happen then it may, well it will, influence your own experience as well. It’s a great context for everybody over the long term. And that’s one of the great things about art school.

In the next chapter I look more closely at collaboration as a way of making art and teaching and will focus on my discussions with M. Simon Levin and collaborating artists Jessica Westbrook and Adam Trowbridge. Levin, Westbrook, and Trowbridge very much embrace debate and critical dialogue in both their art practices and their teaching practices. Simon refers to himself as more of an instigator than a facilitator in his practice as an artist-educator. In our interview he
mentions Chantel Mouffe's notion of an agonistic society55 and discusses how he intentionally tries to instigate differences of opinion amongst his students:

I don't want the people I'm engaged with to all think the same way. I want them to disagree. I believe our society needs difference of opinion. I don't want everyone to be like me. I want to create these moments where there is conflict, there is lack of clarity, there is confusion. And yet ultimately people are going to continue to try and be engaged, to make sense of it.

Simon explains that his pedagogical approach is not just to confuse and frustrate people; rather, it's about creating a place where people are irritated yet still talking. The intention, Simon continues, is to have this dialogical engagement become meaningful to them:

When I choose to engage somebody in any kind of strategy, where does something in that engagement become meaningful to them? As opposed to saying you need to look at this piece and see it as something different. I'm more interested in the fact, when we engage in a conversation, you are going to experience things that are different because ultimately I’m not you, and you’re not me and that ultimately we are exploring that difference.

---

55 Mouffe (2007) describes the 'agonistic' struggle as the core of a vibrant democracy: "It is the very configuration of power relations around which a given society is structured. It is a struggle between opposing hegemonic projects which can never be reconciled rationally… Contrary to the various liberal models, the agonistic approach that I am advocating recognizes that society is always politically instituted and never forgets that the terrain in which hegemonic interventions take place is always the outcome of previous hegemonic practices and that it is never an neutral one" (p. 3) Mouffe distinguishes her conception different from Habermas and Arendt, stating that the Arendtian understanding of ‘agonism’ is an ‘agonism without antagonism.’ Mouffe describes critical art as art that instigates dissensus and makes visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure.
CHAPTER 6 – COLLABORATING WITH THE UNKNOWN IN ART AND PEDAGOGY

Authorship is not necessarily disappearing, as in all of these "death of the author" scenarios we keep hearing about. Rather, it is being reconfigured into a more fluid, often collaborative networking experience. (Amerika, Meta/Data, 2007, p. 171)

... many historians and critics remain wedded to definitions of artistic practice that are considerably less radical than those embodied by the artists themselves. This is evident in the tendency of mainstream scholarship to focus primarily on collaborations among and between "artists" rather than those collaborative projects that challenge the fixity of artistic identity per se. (Kester, 2005, ¶ 8)

In this chapter I discuss a second main connection I discovered between the ways my research participants make art and the ways they teach—both their art and teaching practices encompass an emphasis on collaboration. In preparing for this research I anticipated the topic of collaboration to be something that would come up in the interviews, but not to the extent that it did. I was interested in examining how artist duos collaborate to make artwork and how having a collaborative art practice might impact their approach to pedagogy. I was also interested in the ways in which a solo artist collaborates with multiple artists for different projects, and how these ways of working impact understandings of what art and pedagogy can be. The first part of this chapter focuses on M. Simon Levin and the second part focuses on the artist duo Channel TWO consisting of Jessica Westbrook and Adam Trowbridge.

Simon

I became acquainted with M. Simon Levin a few years before I began thinking about this research project. As I began to determine the topic of my research, I looked at his practice as an example of someone being “in between” art, teaching, and learning. In different versions of his artist statements over the years, Simon has always described his projects as both spatial and pedagogical, exploring the aesthetics of engagement by using a variety of forms and tools that address “our
many publics” (bio statement, Maraya website\(^{56}\)). It’s not all that common for artists to use the word ‘pedagogy’ when describing their work, even if those artists clearly are addressing ideas and practices of pedagogy. I remember when I first described my research interests to Simon at the launch of his \textit{Code.lab} project in 2010. I suggested perhaps he was interested in the same things, to which he responded “my art \textit{is} my pedagogy.” What he does as an artist and what he does as an educator, is basically one in the same; the only element that changes are the people he works with. Simon Levin has been an artist collaborator since the early 90s, working on projects that can be summarized as ‘site-based systems,’ which explore audience relationships to physical and virtual spaces primarily within the public sphere. Recently these projects have involved new media platforms that utilize telecommunication systems in innovative ways.

My first encounter with Simon’s artwork was through \textit{Glocal}, an artist in residence project that was initiated in 2008 with collaborators Jer Thorp and Sylvia Borda, operating out of the Surrey Art Gallery’s Tech Lab:

\begin{quote}
\textit{The Glocal Project is a collaborative multifaceted artist-led project that examines the changing role of digital image making today… As this democratization of digital technologies makes the ability to make photographic images so ubiquitous, \textit{Glocal} is interested in looking at the implications of the changing roles and relations of images within the field of visuality… Through interactive installations as well as a series on-line platforms, \textit{Glocal} examines the new digital lives of images. (www.glocal.ca)}
\end{quote}

The artists made custom-built software and hardware gadgets that are meant to foster an individual’s thinking about and ability to make digital images. They held a series of workshops and events for students from local schools, for artists and educators, and made the project open to an online submission process using Flickr.\(^{57}\) In 2008 I invited Jer Thorp to come and introduce some of these image

\(^{56}\) See \url{http://marayaprojects.com/artistbios/m-simon-levin}
\(^{57}\) See \url{http://www.glocal.ca/gallery/} for photo and video documentation of some of these workshops and student creations. See the Glocal Flickr photostream \url{http://www.flickr.com/photos/26891884@N03/}
making tools to my students at Emily Carr University. From 2008 to 2009 a team of artists and educators developed and explored a networked platform of delivering workshops in various public contexts. Eventually thousands of images were contributed to Glocal from all over the world, while the artists developed multiple ways of presenting the images that responded to common properties and relationships. Levin and Thorp and their team researched a variety of exhibition strategies for these images, including installations, large-format prints and web-based interfaces. One of these was an interactive table prototype (Figure 6.1) that visitors to the art gallery could use to explore the many images. Another exhibition installation format was tested at the Vancouver Art Gallery when the Glocal team created a site-specific application for an all-night event in which live camera feeds of captured images were projected onto the architectural dome of the gallery’s rotunda (Figure 6.2). Gallery visitors composed the projected images that were automatically generated into a narrative grid format that played off of the content of the neighbouring exhibition in the gallery, while Glocal team members juxtaposed images from printed media against those of the gallery visitors (Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.1. M. Simon Levin, Jer Thorp & Sylvia Borda, Glocal. Interactive table prototype at Surrey Art Gallery, 2008. Courtesy of the artists.

Figure 6.3. M. Simon Levin, Jer Thorp & Sylvia Borda, *Glocal*. Composite image created at gallery Fuse event, 2008. Courtesy of the artists.
With *Glocal*, and with the other works described in this section, Simon and one or two other artists facilitate a team of people that contribute to the development of the artwork. In an interview with art historian and curator Sadira Rodrigues, Simon discusses his ongoing interest in engagement systems and describes the collaboration involved in the investigation process: "I create a model of a collaborative team that will then work to create entry points, so that these gaps (within the system) start to get revealed."\(^{58}\) Like a lot of works that deal with notions of complexity, one must really just engage with the work in some way – and in this case, it can be done through the *Glocal* website and the online archive.

**Outside One’s Comfort Zone**

We met for our interview at a local coffee shop on the east side of Vancouver. In advance of the interview I researched websites and art journals for any information I could find on Simon’s art education and life history in general. Because I knew Simon as a colleague, this detective work felt a bit more voyeuristic than it did with my other participants; however, that could also be because I had to dig a lot more to find any information. Unlike my other participants, Simon does not have a website that focuses on his own career as an artist – instead his profile exists in the online archives of his collaborative projects. In Chapter 7 I discuss the overall performative aspects of my research participants’ ways of working and how they align themselves to a very open/public way of making art and teaching. I found it interesting that Simon’s art and teaching address issues of openness, particularly in art/pedagogy with networked media, yet his identity online is not very visible. Knowing what I know now about Simon, I feel this is because he is constantly working on collaborative projects and is not interested in highlighting any kind of a public persona. Because his work very much overlaps art and education and research, and knowing that he has always moved between different artist

\(^{58}\) This unpublished interview by Sadira Rodrigues was originally intended for a West Coast Line publication around the theme of collaboration. The text of the interview was provided to me by Simon Levin.
collaboratives, projects and institutions, I asked him what kind of a career position he might create for himself if he had the choice. He responded as follows:

Well, it wouldn’t be a permanent position. Because I don’t believe in permanent positions… Just like I don’t think there should be permanent art, especially public art… Put it on rotation… Start to think about that as the conditions of looking at something that’s going to be gone soon. But that’s not how the art world is set up – it needs longevity, it needs materiality, it needs to be collected because that’s the political and capital model it’s in. Same thing for education… These positions become permanent whereas for me, what would be exciting would be some form of instigator.

In the conclusion to the previous chapter I mentioned Simon’s approach to teaching art as one of instigating differences of opinion and exploring those differences through dialogue. Within his collaborative art practice, he also chooses to surround himself with people who have different opinions and different ways of working. Because his ways of working in the classroom and in his studio practice are very similar, the inquiry process in our interview often oscillated back and forth between how he approaches his art and how he approaches his students. For instance, when asked a question about instigating moments of learning with his students, his answer immediately directs him towards an understanding of his own practice and how that informs what he does with students:

I think I’m interested in creating propositions for students that move them outside of their comfort zone. And the way I do that is to try to find something that is outside my comfort zone. It’s one of the reasons that I work collaboratively. If I just work by myself, I’m pretty sure of what I’ll produce. If I work with someone else, I’ll probably produce something that’s very different than what I would produce alone. And that’s why I do it. Because I know myself … I’m not interested in seeing where my aesthetic goes. I’m more interested in seeing where the conversations (that) I have with people (go)… (to) produce disparate things.

The above instance demonstrates the interconnected relationship between art and pedagogy within Simon’s role as an artist-educator. Similar to my interviews with Jon Thomson and Alison Craighead, Simon’s narrative inquiry alternated between himself as an artist and himself in the position of the art student that he teaches.
Although the art and teaching that make up Simon’s pedagogical art practice are very intertwined, I have attempted to highlight different aspects of these practices in the sections below.

“I’m not interested in the resolved form... I’m more interested in a formation”

The title of this chapter – Collaborating with the Unknown in Art and Pedagogy – is drawn from the reasons Simon provided for why he works collaboratively. If he works by himself, he knows what he’ll produce but if he works with someone else, he gets to see what the conversations with other people will produce. Simon is interested in the surprises and the sense of discovery in this process towards the unknown, and what interests him the most about the unknown is the process towards something that will never be defined. His work is about creating moments of engagement, whether those moments are produced by instigating differences of opinions or feelings, or by producing a sense of wonderment and awe. Simon states:

I’m interested in, as an artist, actually trying to figure out ways that people can come to a collaborative way of engaging with me in which I don’t quite know what those end results are, of what I’m actually making. But in the act of me moving outside of me, and in the act of you moving outside of you, there’s this messy little gap that actually can create this amazing mystery and something can come out of it. (Rodrigues interview)

I understand Simon’s work to be a form of relational learning and very dependent on the collaboration between a group of individuals, however, it is also about these moments of interaction or engagement that happen on an individual level. Within Simon’s response above, he uses the words “me” and “you” and narrows the collaborative process down to an encounter between two people and one “messy little gap” that has potential. In addition to dialogue and collaboration, he is interested in the personal process of discovery and the learning that can emerge out of a collaborative action or event.
Simon Levin’s work is about the making of an experience or an event and not about producing an object aligned with the traditions of fine art. In our interview, I asked him how his work is different from artists who observe and collect other people’s photos online, such as Penelope Umbrico’s recent work that arranges found photos of sunsets and television screens from online social networks. In response, Simon stated:

She’s still working with a studio-based model…In the art world you need to have some kind of form that is recognizable… She’s playing with this idea of artist as collector… I’m very interested in the idea of collecting, but I’m not interested in the archive as a rarified thing or as something that needs to be tightly framed so that it’s clear. My work ultimately is Baroque… it’s about making sure that you have no place to focus, that you’re constantly always in the process of trying to engage. So whether it’s a set of educational resources that are developed to be given, I see that as much as the making of a work that goes into a rarified space.

Simon describes these processes as part of the same practice and that the art world wants to look at the thing in the rarefied space, without seeing all of the mess, adding, “I’m not interested in the resolved form. If I’m designing a desk for the house that I’m building then yes, I might do that. But for my art practice, I’m more interested in a formation, (in) how these things come together.”

“you want them to discover something”

[TEACHING/ART]

*Code.lab*, led by Simon Levin and Jer Thorp, was both a single installation and a collection of smaller parts, in which artists investigated the relationship between both the act of observation and the experience of being observed. It took place in Vancouver during the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. The artists were interested in exploring a photo-saturated environment with questions about surveillance and spectacle. *Code.lab* existed as an artist residency project at Emily Carr University of Art and Design and brought together faculty and students from

---

59 See [http://www.ecucodelab.org/about/](http://www.ecucodelab.org/about/)
60 Artists and students contributed to a research blog at [http://www.ecucodelab.org/](http://www.ecucodelab.org/)
various art and design disciplines. Projects were produced through a unique collaboration between artists, students, and the public – including performances, interventions, robotic vehicles, and artworks with hidden surveillance cameras\(^61\) (Figure 6.4 and Figure 6.5). Many of the artworks were performance-based and networked, with the intention of placing participants in unique situations in which their relationship with image and observation was constantly changing (website description).

The projects were all connected through the digital cameras that documented the ruptures within the public space of the tourist location of Granville Island, where Emily Carr University is located. In the communal lab space, a projection-based installation assembled live feeds from the cameras – viewed both on the large circular disk placed outside the entrance (Figure 6.6) and on the surfaces of three tabletops that viewers are encouraged to move back and forth (Figure 6.7). An interesting point to note is that these small circular tables served as the ‘drawing board’ for the conceptual development of the Code.lab project. Simon’s individual art contribution to the project was *That Space in Between* (Figure 6.8), consisting of an Umbrella Cam that participants could sign out to venture out in the rain and contribute captured images to the CODE Lab system. The camera in the umbrella shot straight up and straight down in order to see what we are *not* looking at during a time of the oversaturated spectacle of the Olympics. *Code.lab* is an example of one of many of Simon’s projects in which art and teaching blend together and a teacher-student hierarchy is reduced.

*Code.lab* was unique in that it allowed students to gain university credits in accordance with the framework of the artist residency project. This is not the way that the majority of art classes are operated within the academic institution. In our interview, Simon discussed his frustrations working in the confines of the university system by first saying that, “(s)o much of our educational institutions are an ideological construct… (and) their primary reason for being is to supposedly disseminate knowledge (yet) their practical reason for being is that it is a business.”

\(^61\) See [http://www.ecucodelab.org/projects/](http://www.ecucodelab.org/projects/) for links to ten of the art projects.
Figure 6.4. Code.lab; Chun Hua Catherine Dong, [Absence | Presence], 2010, 12’ x 8’ x 42’ gallery wall pushed by a performer. Courtesy of the artists.

Figure 6.5. Code.lab; Karen Garrett de Luna, Whoo?, 2010, 3 of 6 plastic decoy owls with surveillance cameras above the Code.lab entrance. Photo by Heidi May.
Figure 6.6. Code.lab; Projection-based installation on large circular disk outside of entrance, 2010. Courtesy of the artists.

Figure 6.7. Code.lab; Projection-based installation on table tops, 2010. Courtesy of the artists.
He uses the example of an individual artist/teacher wanting to challenge the structure of disseminating knowledge by requesting a course be taught with five teachers instead of one. Simon, seemingly speaking from experience, stated that it wouldn’t be of interest to the university because they would make very little money; however, they may agree to offer the course with just one teacher. Within his role as an artist-educator, Simon chooses to bring these issues of power and knowledge to the forefront in a self-reflexive way that encourages students to take ownership:

> By me articulating the power dynamic…— if I spell out that I am playing this role (and) that the content and the delivery of that content is in some ways a manipulative act because I have the power... It creates this slight destabilization that happens where all of a sudden I am asking them to join (me) in examining this relationship that we have. (Rodrigues interview)

He continued to say that by identifying the power dynamic it can lead to students challenging him, which then allows him to point out which parts he has control over.
and which parts they can gain more power with. The kind of relationship Simon
described can be considered more of what Kreisberg (1992, discussed in Chapter 3)
defined as “power-with” versus “power-over”.

On the other hand, when embracing an open and collaborative approach to
pedagogy, the teaching and learning relationship can get messy and resistance from
students is inevitable. Simon feels it is absolutely important for art students to learn
to work with others in a collaborative way and to be willing to step outside of their
own comfort zone. He faces resistance from some students and feels obliged to
challenge them, sharing with me an interesting exchange of dialogue with a resistant
student. Simon told me he gave a “crazy assignment” to a class and the
conversation between him and the student went as follows:

“Yeah, I find that interesting but I don't work this way.”

"But you're a student, what do you mean you don't work this way."

"Yeah, that's not how I make my work."

"But you're in school, that's exactly why you're here. That's how you learn!"

In our interview, Simon commented on the fact that this student insisted on only
reproducing the same thing over and over again, and was not willing at all to try
something different. Another example Simon shared with me is when he took a
group of students to the airport and told them they were going to sketch. He had
them position themselves right at the edge of the runway and as the planes flew
above them, the students had to draw the planes. The students responded by saying,
“it’s going too fast, I can’t,” to which Simon responded, “Well, figure it out – what are
you going to do?” Because Simon is open to conflict and tension, he told me he is
“someone who appreciates the productivity of dissent,” further stating, "If it’s
pedagogically appropriate, I will tell them why I’m giving them this assignment and
then I'll ask them to propose another way of doing it… But they have to show me
that they understand why they would go in that direction."

Simon stipulated that he has to connect what he is currently doing in his art
practice to his teaching. He feels that it is important for students to see a teacher
that is passionate and in the midst of exploring the same questions that they are:

There’s nothing better for students to see the person delivering the
knowledge, or creating or facilitating a space for the discussion of that knowledge, to be excited about this question, as opposed to “yeah, well I’ve been doing this for 20 years, so here’s the same thing I did last year.”… That’s the biggest problem with our educational system is that everyone gets tenure and then they just don’t need it anymore. They can still say they’re doing their research but they’re really not, they’re doing their own stuff that gets more and more separate. For me, it’s something that has to be connected… it’s my primary interest.

**Jessica & Adam**

There was a point in this research project when I realized that collaboration must be analysed more closely as a major method of working for these network artist-educators. It was the moment I encountered collaborative art processes (or participatory, interactive, relational) identified as a way of being as opposed to just a way of working. In this next section I describe this moment of realization and examine the joint practice of Jessica Westbrook and Adam Trowbridge, an artist duo whom have recently extended their collaborative art/living practice into the university classroom.

In the early planning stages of this dissertation, Jessica Westbrook was interested in participating in my research but did not respond to my email request for confirmation. Time had passed and I began to wonder if she had missed my email or changed her mind about participating. It turned out that she did not want to participate in the project as an individual artist-educator because of her current collaborative practice. Jessica responded to my follow-up email stating: “… I collaborate with Adam Trowbridge. I have no independent practice – studio, professional, life – all collaborative. This is a conscious decision. I didn’t see this collaboration reflected in the documents you sent or the email language. Are you still interested in talking to us?” (personal email correspondence, June 31, 2011). At first I was surprised at the direct tone of the email, considering that our previous correspondence had been very chatty and informal, but within a few seconds I felt this to be an extremely compelling statement made even more significant because of the succinct clarity. It pointed to her desire, perhaps a necessary requirement, to
have Adam’s voice represented in the dialogue of her/their practice. I then reflected back to the early stages of my research proposal and how I had struggled with deciding on an exact number of artists for this study as well as the challenge of documenting *everything* that contributes to networked artist-educator practices. I had felt that it was important to include artist duos, but how many? Should both artists in the duo be professional artist-educators? Jessica’s response helped me know that I needed to have at least two artist duos in this research study, for the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of collaborative art practices occurring today. Her response also reassured me that my inquiry into the blending of art and life, as demonstrated by Robert Filliou and Fluxus artists, was relevant to networked artists today.

When I first selected Jessica as a potential participant in this project, I was drawn to several aspects of her art and education practices, and this included her collaborative projects. At that point in time, it was not clear to me that she saw her collaboration with Adam as actually constituting her practice in full. Based on preliminary research, I understood Jessica and Adam as artists with separate practices who collaborate and sometimes exhibit together. In contrast to Thomson & Craighead, they each presented separate artist identities online (at that time) and their collaborative work as *ChannelTWo* was still listed as a project on Jessica’s website as opposed to an entity that defined how she worked as an artist. Since then, and through more research and engagement with their work, *ChannelTWo*[^62] has become more clearly established as a networked art/design entity and all previous websites now link to the *ChannelTWo* identity/site. Following my interviews and throughout my writing of this dissertation, I have also witnessed Jessica’s and Adam’s collaborative practice evolve into projects that overlap art, design, teaching, and research.[^63]


[^63]: One example of this is “Dynamic Coupling,” an issue of Media-N (Journal of the New Media Caucus) that Jessica and Adam guest edited. The issue consists of dialogues/interviews with 18 artist duos discussing their working relationship and motivations through responses to a series of questions. The questions explore ways in which the artists make art, teach, and live life together. This issue is available online at [http://www.newmediacaucus.org/wp/media-n-journal/journal-archive/?issue=1075](http://www.newmediacaucus.org/wp/media-n-journal/journal-archive/?issue=1075)
First, let me provide some background on how I came to know about Jessica Westbrook and Adam Trowbridge. I became aware of Jessica and Adam during an annual FATE conference – Foundations of Art: Theory and Education – in which there was a session presented by some of the faculty teaching in the Foundation program at School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). Amongst FATE members, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago is referred to as having one of the most progressive Foundation programs for art and design students in North America. “Transition to Contemporary Practices” was a conference session that provided an overview of SAIC’s recent transition from a “First Year Program” to a “Department of Contemporary Practices,” and what this shift means for the ways in which art faculty work with incoming students. The session was led by Amy Vogel, Co-Chair of Contemporary Practices, and consisted of a few faculty describing their approaches to art and pedagogy and how that fits with the courses they teach at SAIC. Vogel stated that faculty are hired for their practice and are encouraged to “teach through their practice” (FATE session). Faculty described their approaches to teaching and both Jessica and Adam were mentioned as fellow art faculty in the program. Vogel explained how this restructure of their first year program aims to instill a research inquiry model of pedagogy and learning, influenced by ideas that transpired in ThinkTank programs. Vogel discussed how Jessica Westbrook was hired as both Assistant Professor and Director of Technology Initiatives in the Department of Contemporary Practices, meaning that she would be guiding the implementation of digital media throughout the first year curriculum. As I listened to Amy Vogel describe the co-teaching model for this program (each course taught by two artists) and how studio courses were divided by general notions of surface (2D), space (3D) and time (4D), it became apparent to me that this was perhaps the closest model for my theoretical positioning of the future implementation of digital media within studio art and design curriculum and pedagogy.

64 See [http://integrativeteaching.org/](http://integrativeteaching.org/)
Life and Art Blurred

Jessica and Adam have been collaborating in art and life for almost two decades and in 2010 they formalized their collaboration as *Channel Two*\(^{65}\), which they have described as “a studio/research construct focused on mixed reality, media, design, development, and distribution, authorized formats + unauthorized ideas, systems of control + radical togetherness (personal email correspondence, January 2012). *Channel Two* (CH2) is a network based entity that encompasses both digital, physical, and social components, encompassing both a platform through which Jessica and Adam function as artists/researchers as well as an interface/hub for the work that they make. The artists write,

Channel TWo happens slightly above the noise level, between words that organize our communities and the chaos that lies beyond them. We are a post-network instance that begins with entertainment-based narrative and internet behavior as a common, shared language. Our research involves media habits, algorithms, embedded marketing, and systems of control.

(research blog)

The above statement is an excerpt from the blog they were asked to post to for my research, which followed a Skype video interview between myself, Jessica, and Adam. As with all networked based and durational art projects, this project and the artists’ understandings of this project continue to evolve over time. While writing this chapter, the artists sent me an update on their art and teaching practices, which included additional project statements and conceptual positions. The artists state that CH2 responds to global media empires and brands in their work: “We embrace marketing and product placement as a contemporary landscape and reflexively insert our own loving layer of hyper-identification into the contemporary landscape” (research blog). In a more recent statement, the artists expand on the above by describing how the construct/project is loosely aligned with the concept of over-identification, further referring to Slavoj Žižek’s description of “a tactic intended to

---

\(^{65}\) CH2 was recently awarded a Rhizome commission in 2012, a Terminal Commission in 2010, and CH2’s media distribution system “Play” driven “New York City on ChannelTWo” received a Turbulence Commission and Pace exhibition in 2011.
reveal the hidden nature of dominant ideologies – not by pointing to them but by becoming extreme forms of them” (research blog).

The CH2 website (Figure 6.9) reveals some of the iconographic objects/symbols that are dispersed throughout the CH2 projects [soda, cherries, coins, bones, hearts, and bombs]. The symbols are embedded throughout the screen landscape similar to how we experience product placement in everyday life and visual cues in video games. Under the heading “Featured CH2 Companies” is a grid of the CH2 logo and when clicked, you arrive at an overview of the collaborative art projects. In describing the CH2 identity and “station identification,” the artists write that, “(t)he “station identification” is fluid, it’s history is adaptive, it’s products are conceptual,” adding:

For us it is a way to structure, engage in, and produce the sort of research and development we want to participate in. It is also an other, completely removed from a notion of singularity or individualism. We like working like this. We don’t think a lot about how it fits into the established worlds. It integrates art, design, media, anthropology, internet culture, branding and vaporware, but doesn’t articulate its alignment with any of those fields... There was probably a point in my life where I (Jessica here) would have wanted to streamline this as a project with a clean set of definitions and objects, but I’m past that now. (research blog)

Figure 6.9. Screenshot of Channel TWo home page, located at http://onchanneltwo
Courtesy of the artists.
In a similar way to how ChannelTWo projects integrate art, internet culture, and branding in an open-ended way, the artists choose to blur and overlap their art, design, research, teaching and life in general.

“Collaboration... More and more it is just a state of being for us”

[ART]
Jessica and Adam embrace the multiple overlaps amongst their identities as artists, researchers, partners, educators, and parents. This way of being infiltrates the ways in which they make art and approach pedagogy, and it also infiltrates into the way they live their lives outside of art and teaching. The artist-educators note that ChannelTWo as a project or entity is a “collaborative unit, container, intersection, process, whatever it needs to be” (research blog); it is in fact both the art and themselves. The acronym TWo stands for Adam Trowbridge (T), Jessica Westbrook (W), and their son Oskar (o). Figure 6.10 is a screenshot from the CH2 website About page, which contains illustrations of each of the contributing members behind the production, including their son Oskar and their dog Sophie. When responding to questions about their artistic collaborative processes, the artists use CH2 as an example of how the decisions they make in their art practice are extensions of the negotiation process in their everyday live:

Channel TWo is a total mixed bag. Who does what when why. It changes all the time. Our lives are so completely blurred – family, art, design, teaching, dog, laundry, meetings, we don’t think we bother trying to compartmentalize. We do both have strengths regarding art and design and social skills, but more and more we are just figuring out our way through things. (research blog)

In the same way that the different areas of their lives are blurred, the artists acknowledge that more and more they pay less attention to where one person’s work ends and the other person’s work begins. In an interview in journal Media-N, Adam discusses his diminishing desire for individual authorship:

At some point our relationship, specifically our relationship as collaborative artists, entered a point where I no longer particularly cared to differentiate between my own work and Jessica’s work. As worn as the reference is, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s work together, and how they speak about it helped me to give up the idea of individual authorship within my working
relationship to Jessica. This is not to say I would claim authorship of her work. There are things she contributes that I do not (Trowbridge & Westbrook, 2010, Question 2).

Both Jessica and Adam discuss how their personal and professional lives have become seamless and indistinct, and how they actually prefer this. They both admit to not being able to ‘turn off’ their research/studio practices:

Jessica: “…it’s all research. For example, I may be really tired, and need to zone out, but then I will start considering “zoning out” some kind of “event” and it all turns back into an idea worth organizing. I might email it to myself or post something about it on Facebook. If it sticks, it will make it to the white board.” (Trowbridge & Westbrook, 2010, Question 4).

Adam: “We have no personal lives. We have no professional lives… We have been together for so long that we may have become characters in the same book. Neither of us is the author but neither of us is only a character… However, it is vital that we do not bend all of life into art, into art “work.” That
would be a sad, and ultimately an American capitalist approach. We blend art into our lives and bend art into the everyday.” (Trowbridge & Westbrook, 2010, Questions 3 and 4).

Adam and Jessica don’t like breaking their practice down into technical parts because it implies limitations and an overall simplification in how the work is made. Adam explains in our interview, “Maybe it makes sense in an organization… but we’ve sort of rejected it because people make it into a stereotype – who’s the technical one, who’s the idea one.” Inquiring deeper into the methods and approaches that constitute their practice, however, they each agree that Adam tends to be the one who reads and screens massive amounts of information and is the risk-taker with ideas. Jessica is organized, motivated and will work through “it” until it’s just right. Adam poetically concludes:

We have vastly different approaches. I want to destroy it all to the point that art becomes part of a crash from which I cannot recover. Jessica is a counterbalance… I think there is something to her art that brings a tragic beauty to existence and thus affirms existence. Combined with my approach, this brings us to an art practice that hovers on the brink of a black hole – a beautiful, extended moment before everything ends. (Trowbridge & Westbrook, 2010, Question 8)

Reading the above description, “on the brink of a black hole – a beautiful, extended moment before everything ends,” immediately conjured up images and sounds from one of CH2’s interactive landscape installations – FIND EACH OTHER. Begin There (2012). Yet, in addition to being a beautiful, extended moment before everything ends, it’s also suggestive of the moment before something begins. This piece consists of a dual-channel, networked, video game environment in which players (gallery visitors) cooperate to find each other. Video documentation with an embedded text description (Channel TWO, 2013) can be found at https://vimeo.com/44730644, with additional information on the artists’ website at http://www.onchanneltwo.com/projects.html. The installation takes place on opposite walls with room in between the two projects for participants to engage with the work and with each other, while collaborating in virtual and real life to locate each other in
the game. Figure 6.11 reveals two images of the networked installation and video still of the projected game environment.

**Learning How To Negotiate**

As discussed above, Jessica and Adam each have different ways of working as artists, which ultimately impact how they make choices and negotiate decisions about the direction to take with projects. Jessica describes the process as a lot of conversations that happen online and then scheduling times to meet and talk through ideas, adding, “There is also usually a big fight to work through. We have very different approaches and we can make each other crazy. We don’t have any boundaries so when we are stubborn, it can get personal fast” (Trowbridge & Westbrook, 2010, Question 2). For Jessica and Adam, negotiation is a valuable skill that is learned through ongoing processes of social collaboration. In a statement in which Jessica and Adam describe new media practices as both digital and social, the artists highlight collaboration as a necessary component:

We believe collaboration is a priority because new media practices are situated across relationships, disciplines, cultures, complexities and economies and it is friendship/connection, not competition or hierarchies, that defines authentic, constructive, accessible, supportive and sustainable conditions for artists, designers, scholars functioning outside the market.

The artists discuss the importance of relying on each other and constantly learning from one another, acknowledging that they try to extend this way of working with one another into how they work with students in the classroom.

“As educators we are co-authors, with our students, of the experience of interpreting and learning”

[TEACHING]

Aligned with their identities as collaborative artists, Jessica and Adam define themselves as “co-authors” with their students in the experience of interpreting and learning, through which they try to enable their students to “carve out a place for themselves.” Recently they have been teaching core foundation courses together at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) in the Department of Contemporary
Practices described earlier in this chapter. For this program at SAIC, it’s not unusual to have team teaching and, as Jessica stated in our interview, it’s an opportunity for students to see how an artist duo works together and negotiates: “Students are privy to us in action… They see our compromises and negotiations… they hear what we’re talking about and the way we describe the same thing very differently.” Not only are students exposed to different approaches to making art but they can also experience different approaches to pedagogy from within the same course, with each artist-educator able to draw on their own strengths and being able to rely on the other.

Adam: “What I do well is let the students talk a whole lot... What Jessica does really fantastically is take a project and take the next 3 projects and then combine them all into a flow that moves between one project and the next 3 so that it becomes one meta project that you move through and as you learn these skills you expand.... it's a model that I haven't seen a lot of - it comes from design thinking, in design education, but I think it's not limited to the usefulness in that... I think it's something that can also be applied to new media education.”

Jessica: “This is what I love about our relationship, we really do have completely different approaches to things - it's great... Yes, Adam is extremely articulate and intelligent in a spontaneous way… Myself, I am definitely more procedural. So when we teach together we both bring our inclinations to the classroom, which is great.”

Jessica and Adam value all of the benefits and challenges that come with collaboration, including necessary compromises within the negotiation process.

Before teaching art and design at the post-secondary level, both Jessica and Adam spent several years working in the design industry where they learned the importance of technical versatility and knowing how to negotiate. The artists talk about this as part of the design skills that art students need to have when entering contemporary society, regardless of the specific job they have. In our interview, both Adam and Jessica describe how this wasn’t an intentional part of their teaching practices at the beginning, but that they are able to recognize it now.
Adam: “We’ve been able to build websites and do interactive things… and it kind of crosses over with skills that we need to do our work. So we’ve kind of motivated towards teaching art students these sorts of design skills and, I don’t think it was conscious at first but it’s something that I’m definitely conscious of now; …giving students skills that both can be made to produce art and also can be used to effect social change… and …can also make a buck on the side. I think that’s vital to have the realization that students will need to make money on the side.”

Jessica: “… (l)t’s not so much about professionalism as it is just being self-reliant. So we try to communicate that to students – that research is really key, and relying on each other is really key, and collaborating with people who may have skills different than you, but learning how to negotiate with other people to make things happen, whether they’re your projects or someone else’s projects. We weren’t necessarily able to articulate those ideas back when we started teaching but that’s what brought us back into education.”

Adam and Jessica’s collaborative art/teaching practice has led to moments of self-reflection that have allowed them to redefine their approaches to pedagogy and understandings of authority in the classroom. In the Media-N interview, Adam states: “I think we have become more humble in our collaborative experience and that has entered our teaching… We have been experimenting with leveling strategies like Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed. I attempt to subvert my own authority in the classroom in ways that turn more power over to the students.” Continuing on the importance of students learning how to negotiate with other students, Adam adds, “It is vital that they learn how to form packs of their own and that they begin making critical friendships. In studio classes this means making friends who are radically different in ways that challenge one another” (Trowbridge & Westbrook, 2010, Question 18). In our interview I asked about the potential danger of replacing basic fundamentals and conceptual exploration with ‘technical skills’ for the job market, Adam stated that rather than giving students the skills in new media, they focus on enabling them to learn the new skills:

I am incredibly opposed to ‘career education’… and the move currently to destroy colleges, to destroy liberal arts education, and to move towards
‘training’ workers – that’s definitely not what we’re about… To teach them to learn these new skills to support themselves is different than teaching them to be someone else’s worker.

In responding to the question of how they integrate the teaching of technical knowledge with conceptual exploration, and how their collaborative art practice impacts what and how they teach, Adam stated: “(R)ather then give them a tech thing and train them in it, what we try to do is give them an opportunity to experience this process (which) could be anything from something that’s completely physical or something that’s completely digital… and frame it in a way that explores some kind of conceptual thought.” Jessica expanded on the importance of enabling students to engage in processes of learning, viewing it as something that might prepare them for the future:

I’ve always thought of this mantra in the back of my head… Our roles as educators is to enable… For students to move forward in their lives… to be situated in a space with a banker, an attorney, a politician, and a maniac and be really able to hold their own… and able to articulate their ideas with research and passion, and to carve out a place for themselves.

Jessica and Adam are also conscious of the fact that generational shifts continue to occur, recognizing in our discussion that, “the things that we’ve learned and the ways we learn (are) not necessarily the things or the best ways that these guys need to learn that will help them become the best artists and designers.”

Jessica and Adam’s collaborative art and design practice, aka Channel TWo (CH2), has recently expanded to include overlapping academic research involving new media and social practices. One of these projects is directly related to their collaborative teaching practice: a Rhizome Commissioned free and open source “textbook/toolkit” that addresses the need to teach, contextualize, and share a wide array of contemporary media (art + design + social practice) skills in the first year of college using project scenarios that integrate technology and studio practice(s) in
contemporary meaningful ways. They have instigated dialogue and debate through panel presentations including “Writing Your Own Instructions, New Media Approaches for 2022 (Rethinking Foundations)” which was later published on the critically established online forum Furtherfield (www.furtherfield.org).

Similar to the work of Simon Levin and the work of Mark Amerika discussed in the next chapter, Jessica and Adam’s “textBook/toolKit” project merges categories of art, research, and teaching in a networked way. In their writings the artists not only discuss contemporary curriculum for art and design students in the first year of college, but also state “we should plan for the day when our curriculum becomes less relevant” (Trowbridge & Westbrook, 2012, Part 5, ¶ 1), further raising the question, “How can we break from our own limited models, and refrain from indoctrinating students into our own art and design worlds and instead support them in the formation of their own?” (Trowbridge & Westbrook, 2012, Part 5, ¶ 4).

---

66 See the proposal submitted to Rhizome here: http://rhizome.org/commissions/proposal/2599/
CHAPTER 7 – PERFORMING ARTIST-MEDIUM THROUGH ART AND PEDAGOGY

Performative refers to the operative and systematical aspect of something as an occurrence: something is not performative in itself, but rather becomes performative by being enacted and experienced within a specific framework… Thereby, to speak of a performative artistic work means to claim that the process of being realized and experienced make something art, rather than, e.g., its object qualities. (Networked_Performance, ¶14)

The use of “performing” as a term in the book’s title should also not be taken as the now-academicized interpretation of “performance art” as a discrete, circumscribed category, but as the performative aspect of “creation” – the term Filliou preferred to “artmaking.” (Patrick, 2010, p. 52)

In this chapter I discuss the third main connection that emerged between the ways my research participants make art and the ways they teach: both their art and teaching practices include performative aspects. I was interested in examining how artists (particularly the artists I define as network artists) work across multiple media and situations and how their work is or is not determined by specific mediums and disciplines. Alongside this I was also interested in the notion of artist-medium, a term derived from one of my participant’s art practice.

In this research I have found that even though digital media is an element within each of the participants’ practices, it is not necessarily definitive to their ways of working as artists. In other words, the digital technology exists as part of the process and sometimes as the final form, but the work (and the related production methods) cannot be adequately described as digital. I began to understand these practices – both their ways of producing art and teaching – as performative. Below I discuss the performative aspects of one of my research participants, Mark Amerika. I begin by describing Mark’s network art practice as a whole and then focus on his ways of producing art and his ways of teaching. Similar to ideas presented in Chapter 6, Mark’s art, pedagogy, and life are very intertwined. Because of his combined writing/art practice, the reflective inquiry into his ways of producing art is thus complexified, as I have attempted to communicate through the multiple subsection headings: art/living, art/writing/persona, art/networking, art/performing.
Mark Amerika is one of the leading pioneers of early Internet art. He is a “remix artist”\(^{67}\) whose body of work includes cult novels, digital video and installations, live audio-visual/VJ performance and most recently feature-length films. Amerika has had five mid-career retrospectives and is the author of several fiction and non-fiction books published between 1993 and 2011. He is Professor of Digital Arts in the Art and Art History program at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Mark has also initiated a practice-based digital arts research project at the university called TECHNE.\(^{68}\) Because of his internationally renowned status, I was hesitant to solicit his participation for this research project and then pleasantly surprised when he agreed to take part. After traveling to Portland, Oregon to meet with him in person, I was even more surprised at the deeply engaged level of co-inquiry that transpired in our interview at a downtown coffee shop. As I now consider more thoughtfully the self-reflective approach to his art and his writing, it seems only natural that he would want to inquire further into his practices as an artist-educator.

Leading up to my trip to Portland I did a lot of background research on Mark and was able to access both video and text interviews along with several writings from over the years. In order to make good use of my time with him, I developed questions that would allow me to learn more about his own understandings of his art production and his teaching practice. Before discussing what transpired in the interview and the blog follow-up, I will begin by providing an introduction to Mark Amerika’s work. As with much of the art discussed in this dissertation, the scope of Mark’s work is difficult to summarize in words and photographs. To glean a more comprehensive understanding of his practice, readers may wish to review his website at [http://markamerika.com](http://markamerika.com) and interact with the work online.

\(^{67}\) “Mark Amerika is an internationally renowned “remix artist” who not only reconfigures existing cultural content into new forms of art, but also mashes up the mainstream media forms and genres that most commercial artists work in.” ([http://marka.com/who-is-mark-amerika-html](http://marka.com/who-is-mark-amerika-html))

\(^{68}\) The TECHNE initiative develops innovative approaches to the invention of new forms of knowledge generally considered to be both artistic and scholarly. The invention of these new forms of knowledge are oftentimes manifested as digital art projects distributed over the Internet and come into being as a result of TECHNE participants interacting with emerging and converging new media technologies that are becoming more easily accessible to the public at large. See [http://art.colorado.edu](http://art.colorado.edu)
It’s important to note that Mark is first and foremost a writer and was already a published novelist before entering an M.F.A. creative writing program at Brown University in the late 1990s. After his two cult-novels – *The Kafka Chronicles* (1993) and *Sexual Blood* (1995) – he began to focus on Internet art, mainly referred to at the time as ‘net art’. Beginning in 1992, Mark founded *Alternative-X*, an experimental online site where many multidisciplinary artists could network and exhibit Internet art and writing. The community of net artists soon shortened the name of the site to *Alt-X* and it became a place for testing out new forms of digital narrative, later termed electronic literature69, and other genres within Internet art. During the time he spent at Brown University, Mark developed perhaps his most famous work of art, *GRAMMATRON*, 1997; (Figure 7.1 and Figure 7.2) a work that combines online hypertext narrative, visuals, audio soundtracks, and digitally expanded forms of cinema.

*GRAMMATRON* was the first part of his major Internet art trilogy (which includes *PHON:E:ME* and *FILMTEXT*). The project still exists online at www.grammatron.com and visitors are invited to click on the highlighted words to navigate through the narrative. In an interview excerpt archived on Mark’s website, he states, “this work was created exclusively for the Web as a way to track the developments of ‘Web culture’ in a networked-narrative environment… I also was very conscious that I wanted to experiment with many of the evolving technological features that the Web could offer me – features that I would never have reason to consider when writing my novels” (Amerika, 2011a, ¶4, ¶6). The *GRAMMATRON* narrative depicts a world in the future where the book industry has been taken over by an “immersive networked-narrative environment that, taking place on the Net, calls into question how a narrative is composed, published and distributed in the age of digital dissemination.”70 The artwork is a self-reflexive metafiction in which a question common to most of Amerika’s work is explored: “how does the

---

69 Electronic literature (e-literature) first appeared in the 1980s. “Electronic literature, generally considered to exclude print literature that has been digitized, is by contrast “digital born,” a first-generation digital object created on a computer and (usually) meant to be read on a computer” (Hayles, 2007, A Context for Electronic Literature, ¶ 4).

70 See http://www.grammatron.com/about.html
contemporary artist, one who is bound by the historical circumstances they are born into, develop a personal aesthetic style in a culture of information that may at times stifle creativity” (Amerika, 2011a, ¶8)? With GRAMMATRON, Mark distributes his own experimental narrative format through the Internet while simultaneously engaged with/in a new performative and interactive art form. Bolter wrote about creative works using hypertext and hypermedia\(^71\) in the 1990s, stating, “some hypermedia works are closely related to performance art; indeed hypermedia becomes a way to remediate the tradition of live performance art” (Bolter, 2001, p. 160). In discussing a live performance of GRAMMATRON that included sound and poetry at an Ars Electronica\(^72\) festival for digital art, Bolter (2001) described Mark as both a hypermedia author and a performance artist.

While experimenting with this new creative hybrid of hypertext and visual/audio exploration, Mark and fellow Alt-X artists were exploring new and more appropriate exhibition formats for this kind of work:

Of course, we soon realized that publishing was not always the best term to describe what we were doing. Growing, researching, and developing through the transition into WWW space, we saw that the new forms of knowledge now manifesting themselves as http-based work were blurring the distinctions between such expressions as visual art, literature, performance art, conceptual art, and interactive cinema, and so we began to investigate what an exhibition context for this work would require. (Amerika, 2007, p. 164)

Since creating GRAMMATRON, Mark has continued to mix and remix different genres in his work, while exploring questions about the future of media, the future of artists, and the future of art education.\(^73\) Mark Amerika’s artworks function

---

\(^71\) Hypertext is text displayed on computer screens that contain links to other texts. The word was first coined by Ted Nelson in 1965. Hypermedia is hypertext that is not limited to text, but that includes images, video, and sound.

\(^72\) Ars Electronica is an organization, founded in 1979 around a festival for art, technology, and society, based in Linz, Austria.

Performative Creations

In terms of the art of today, I understand ‘performative’ as being part of a system or network and as something that emerges from the relational situation and experiences within that system/network. This is not to be confused with traditional understandings of ‘performance art’ but rather as a continuation of Fluxus artist Robert Filliou’s suggestion that the word ‘performance’ be considered as a performative aspect of creation and not solely the result of an artist’s individual actions. Filliou’s influence on network art is discussed earlier in Chapter 2. The overall production of this performative art is dependent on audience reception, which is ultimately dependent on how the work is disseminated. Performative processes can be understood as relational (while also being dialogical, collaborative, and generative). Considering that a range of media and methods may be used, this kind of work might be thought of as a performative occurrence or event.

In regards to Internet-enabled artworks that employ digital media, Bolter et al. (2013) argue that contemporary digital-media theories do not adequately account for these new forms: “To understand collective and social-media forms, we supplement the notion of procedurality by exploring the performative character of digital media” (p. 324). They suggest concepts from performance studies be used to deepen our understanding of digital media, and that performance studies can also benefit by studying digital media. Mark Amerika’s work is performative in the sense that he is not only performing fictional personas; each work he makes needs to be understood within the context of a larger performative, networked art practice. His art practice emerges from and in relation to his everyday life and digital writing methods. To understand Mark’s work as performative, one must understand him not necessarily as a performer but rather that work becomes performed through the relational experience:

*Performative* refers to the operative and systematical aspect of something as an occurrence: something is not performative in itself, but rather becomes
performative by being enacted and experienced within a specific framework…

Thereby, to speak of a performative artistic work means to claim that the
process of being realized and experienced make something art, rather than,
e.g., its object qualities. (Networked_Performance,
http://turbulence.org/blog/about/)

Mark’s work lives on the internet and in non-art spaces in addition to the
traditional gallery exhibition format. He embraces what Allan Kaprow described as
“nontheatrical performance… an art of living that effectively takes the art world out of
the museums and galleries and blurs all human action and social behavior into a
kind of artistically generated Life Style Practice” (Amerika, 2007, p. 61). In our
interview, Mark discusses how the difference between Internet art of the 1990s and
Internet/digital/networked art now is the fact that digital media is currently embedded
within the practice of everyday life, adding, “So the terms for me (Internet/network
art) just have become melted away. It’s not as much networking but ‘net living’… In
Meta/data, I discuss the mixing/blurring of art and life. I think I make a direct
reference to Allan Kaprow’s Happenings… blurring art and life vis a vis net living.”
Mark envisions the future of art not limited to “networking” but understood as “net
living,” which requires a broader understanding of what art is and where it is made,
as well as relationships between technology and art.

Post-Studio

“it doesn’t really feel like a ‘studio’ environment anymore”
[ART/LIVING]

In our interview Mark talked about his frustrations with traditional artist
practitioners who impose arbitrary divisions between different media and want to
maintain an individual artist model in both the art world and in the university. He
feels that digital technology is embedded within the practice of everyday life and
when artists choose to enforce divisions between them (the artists themselves), they
are in a state of denial. Mark adds to this, stating, “I’m just generalizing to make the
point… They make their work in their studios. They’re not luddites, but that’s just part
of their communication strategy. They separate it. The two (aspects of their life) have
very little to do with one another… And so there’s a struggle… (T)hat’s how I feel about it today and have been feeling about it for awhile.” In Mark’s own work he chooses to merge his daily digital processes and his writing practice together into artworks that incorporate self-reflexive methods, and he does this outside of a traditional studio practice.

Mark feels that we need to do away with the old artist-as-genius model and the idea that an artist is supposed to isolate him or herself in a studio. Annoyed by the fact that curators and writers, including those familiar with his digital-based practice, keep asking for a studio visit, he states in our discussion (as if speaking directly to these curators), “Stop asking me if you can stop by for a studio visit! If you want to visit my studio, so to say, go to my website, track my twitter stream, look at my blog. Let’s go out for a coffee, I’ll bring my laptop and show you some stuff that I’m doing.” Mark follows this statement by clarifying that it’s not that he is against artists having studio spaces where they make things; however, for him, and for the kind of practice he has developed, “it doesn’t really feel like a ‘studio’ environment anymore.”

The idea of artists working beyond the art studio is not a new idea. Mark mentioned the word ‘post-studio’ and how it was first conceived by John Baldessari and the CalArts Post-Studio Art class many years ago. Mark’s reference to Baldessari reminded me of an article I had recently read, in which Caitlin Jones discussed the legacy of “post studio” art in relation to current art practices where the studio is either a laptop or a network space linked to other network spaces. Jones (2010) suggests that the notion of “post studio” might now be amplified for artists working with digital forms and online environments. Throughout our co-inquiry interview process, Mark repeatedly voiced his concern about traditional models of art being promoted as the only way for artists to work. Mark hopes that if we can’t completely get away from the idea of the individual artist-as-genius model, then we

---

74 In John Baldessari’s infamous “Post-Studio Art” class at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), students were encouraged to embrace a wider framework for art production. After stepping away from painting for a couple of years, Baldessari was asked what he wanted to teach, “I said I want to teach students who don’t paint or do sculpture or any other activity by hand. I didn’t want to call it ‘Conceptual Art’ so I called it ‘Post-Studio Art’” (Baldessari quoted in Tumlir, 2012, p. 59).
at least see that model as just one part of an art practice and look more towards collaborative networks, particularly computer supported collaborative networks, which I discuss later in this section.

“*I didn't aspire to become something specific.*”

[ART/WRITING/PERSONA]

A common theme across Mark’s work is the notion of multiple personas and personas ‘becoming’ and in transformation. Sometimes the persona explored is the artist himself (as in his autobiographical writings within *Meta/Data* and *Remixthebook*) and other times the persona is a fictional and/or hybrid character that is searching for something in an unknown world or state of being (as in his feature-length film *Immobilité* – Figure 7.3). Many times the persona is an artist or a creative writer who is faced with a struggle (as with *GRAMMATRON*) or observed as someone unique from all others (as with The Artist 2.0 character in the *Museum of Glitch Aesthetics* project)\(^75\). Although Mark doesn’t write very much about the individual artworks, he does share a great deal about his creative process and how this plays into the work that he makes as an artist, a writer, and a remixer. Sometimes his writing will oscillate between experimental poetry and theoretical insights, which allow the reader to draw their own conclusions or be left wondering.

In Mark’s writing on *Immobilité*, in which he discusses a selection of his other creative works as well, I came across the phrase “Multiple Persona Becoming” (2009b, p. 26). Although I knew this was to be understood within the context of the multiple identity transformations of his characters and of artist, writer, creative being, and digital persona in flux, I was inspired to think about the added personas of

---

\(^75\) “The Museum of Glitch Aesthetics (MOGA) is the latest work in Mark Amerika’s collaborative series of transmedia narratives. MOGA tells the story of The Artist 2.0, an online persona whose personal mythology and body of digital artworks are rapidly being canonized into the annals of art history. The piece traces the life of the artist and his ongoing commitment to a practice of “glitch aesthetics” that leads to the museum of the title. MOGA features a wide array of artworks intentionally corrupted by technological processes including net art, digital video art, digitally manipulated still images, game design, stand-up comedy, sound art, and electronic literature. The project also includes a full color museum catalog available in both free e-book and limited edition print editions. The entire project is now online at [glitchmuseum.com](http://markamerika.com/news/museum-of-glitch-aesthetics-in-digital-aesthetic-3).”
teacher or pedagogue, learner and collaborator. In our interview I asked Mark about this, beginning with how he would describe his becoming of artist and teacher, and how he felt his artist persona related to his teacher persona, and vice versa. Mark stated that he never self-consciously identified himself as an artist or a teacher or an academic, adding, “I didn’t aspire to become something specific. I did early on see that I was a writer … there was no question. If it was today, I might have thought of myself as being an artist.” When I inquired further into this question on the research blog he contributed to for this project, he directed me to a personal blog post dated July 12, 2009, “Philosophy as Cinema / Pedagogy as Performance.” The following is a short excerpt from just one of several blog posts in which Mark explores his overlapping identities or personas – Professor VJ: Art / Remixology / Politics / Cinema / Fiction / Theory / Performance / Writing:

Figure 7.3. Mark Amerika, Video still, Immobilité, 2007-2009. Courtesy of the artist. Immobilité is a feature-length “foreign film” shot entirely on a mobile phone in Cornwall, UK. “The work was composed using an unscripted, improvisational method of acting and the mobile phone images are intentionally shot in an amateurish or DIY [do-it-yourself] style similar to the evolving forms of video distributed in social media environments such as YouTube. By interfacing this low-tech version of video making with more sophisticated forms of European art-house movies, Amerika both asks and answers the question “What is the future of cinema?”” (http://www.immobilite.com/film/)
What I am calling the postproduction of (pedagogical) presence challenges the old footprint of disciplinary regimes in by-now outmoded academic institutions. Whether I am performing online, in class, or inside a club space, I never wear a particular (disciplinary-revealing) hat. I could be a novelist, a net artist, a web publisher, a live A/V performer, a professor, a cultural entrepreneur, etc. … Perhaps we need to reinvent the way we design the interactive learning environment so that everyone who is present can work together while a) maintaining their solo spirit of creativity and b) collectively contributing to the intersubjective and interdisciplinary meta-tag team adventure of the moment. (Amerika, 2009a, p. 1)

I will elaborate on Mark’s approach to pedagogy later in this chapter, however, it is important to note here that his performative ways of working as an artist are not easily distinguished from his performative approaches to pedagogy. In this way, his practice as an artist-educator is very similar to that of research participant Simon Levin.

“[Authorship] is being reconfigured into a more fluid, often collaborative networking experience.”

Mark embraces an experimental process of discovery in his writing and art-making, often facilitated through collaborations with others. He believes that the notion of authorship is not necessarily disappearing but rather “being reconfigured into a collaborative networking experience” (2007, p. 171). He uses the example of PHON:E:ME (the second part of the trilogy that followed GRAMMATRON) to describe the role of collaboration in his work:

Sure, I came up with the initial concepts and negotiated the funding and exhibition context for its eventual display, but the work was collectively generated by both an internationally networked team of artists, DJs, writers, designers, programmers, and curators who produced the work as well as a select group of artist-writers-theorists whose work got sampled into the project’s Big Remix. The Author as Network Conductor has many implications and possibilities… (2007, p. 171)

In the process of making FILMTEXT (the third part of the trilogy noted above – Figures 7.4 and 7.5), Mark found that as he began to introduce additional digital
source material into the mix, the project became more inventive and unpredictable, which ultimately led to a completely open experience for the participating viewer/user as well:

With FILMTEXT, as with PHON:E:ME and GRAMMATRON, we don’t pretend to have any of the answers or at least to define exactly what those answers are or might be. We are much more focused on discovering some of the intimate details about the nature of digital source materials and how it can be sampled and manipulated into a variety of cross-media formats, such as mp3 concept albums, experimental artist e-books, Flash art, interactive cinema installations, and live performance. (2007, p. 172)

When one encounters *FILMTEXT*\(^\text{76}\) in its current online form at [http://www.markamerika.com/filmtext/](http://www.markamerika.com/filmtext/), there are no instructions for how to interact with the work, just an image with both static and moving bits of text and a soundscape. Surprises occur once the screen is explored with the cursor — hidden images may be uncovered and audio tracks change as if turning a radio dial or antennae. As one plays with the work, audio/visual triggers may be discovered through interactive patterns realized through repetition. In certain instances lines of text are randomly generated, made up of electronic code and personal narrative.

In describing the performative process of *FILMTEXT* — the sampling and manipulating of digital media into a variety of cross-media formats — Mark says that “the source is consciously captured using various apparatuses and then brought into our DT mixers for further manipulation and investigation. DT, by the way, stands for digital thoughtography. Digital thoughtography is the term we use to describe our current field of study, which we are inventing as we speak (spin, rap, transpire)” (2007, p. 172). Mark often describes his art practice as a form of research. Similar to participants Jessica Westbrook and Adam Trowbridge, Mark is actively considering his artwork as practice-based research (see earlier footnote on his TECHNE project). In *Meta/Data* (2007) he includes words of advice for those wanting to develop their

---

\(^76\) “FILMTEXT is a philosophical investigation that plays with the animated Internet environment and its supposedly liberating potential to help free us from some of the encumbrances of material reality.” Full project description can be found on artist’s website at [http://markamerika.com/artworks/filmtext-by-mark-amerika](http://markamerika.com/artworks/filmtext-by-mark-amerika)
own innovative research paths: “(T)ry to leave any preconceived notions of what a writer, artist, or scholar is behind. Expand these concepts to integrate various media platforms and research agendas into creative and scholarly work” (2007, p. 175).

Mark's inclination towards artistic and technological collaboration stems from his experience with Alt-X and the situation he found himself in while working on GRAMMATRON as an MFA student. In our interview he reflected positively on this experience and speaks about the benefits of working within a creative environment of individuals willing to learn from one another:

I didn’t know this was going to happen but I ended up spending most of my time in the Graphics Visualization lab in the Computer Science department. Because the grads and predominantly undergrads working there were fascinating… They were very creative, exploratory, willing to collaborate. They weren’t so attached to an idea [and] they understood this [collaborative learning] process more than the individual artist-as-genius…”

Mark further explains more of his thinking behind “computer supported collaborative learning and work environments” by pointing to the fact that when involved in this kind of work, the act of sharing information just happens:

And it’s not just helping. You’re working together, sometimes on your own stuff… It’s a lot different than working in these silos, that I think breeds an unhealthy kind of competitiveness… There are alternatives out there, through sharing, through collaborative workspaces… basically there are other ways. That’s something we don’t get a lot of in traditional art programs.

The collaborative networking (learning) experience that Mark describes as pivotal to his early development as an artist is carried forward into his approach to teaching and is a general guiding influence to his understanding of authorship and artist identity.

The Artist is the Medium

To understand Mark’s work as performative, one must understand him not necessarily as a performer; rather, he is the medium being, rather, *becoming* performed in and through the work. In other words, he uses his multiple personas to engage with digital source materials and fictional'autobiographical texts to produce
works that transpire through reader/viewer/interactive engagement with multimedia spaces online and in physical space. One of the most significant understandings from this research that continues to resonate with me is the notion of the artist as the medium or, in other words, artist-medium. In several of Mark’s texts (2007, 2008), he describes the notion of artist-as-medium or artist-medium in terms of how he works as an artist and, in turn, this has an impact on how he approaches pedagogy. To describe this idea to his readers, Mark begins by citing an essay written by performance and video artist Vito Acconci, “Steps Into Performance (And Out)” (1979):

If I specialize in a medium, then I would be fixing a ground for myself, a ground I would have to be digging myself out of, constantly, as one medium was substituted for another – so then instead of turning toward “ground” I would shift my attention and turn to “instrument,” I would focus on myself as the instrument that acted on whatever ground was, from time to time, available. (Acconci, 1979/1996, p. 759)

Mark draws attention to the fact that what Acconci is saying is quite simple yet is something that tends to be overlooked, especially with the advancement of digital technology: “it’s the artist that is the medium or instrument most capable of conducting radical experiments in subjective thought and experience” (2008, p. 75). Mark further adds that “the tools we use, the theories that justify it all, and the outcomes that play into the preconceived agendas and methods of the academic research community… should have very little to do with the way an artist or collaborative network of artists bring their creative compositions into society” (2008,

77 The notion of artist-medium is of particular interest for this research because of the possibilities it might offer to understandings of pedagogy and ways of teaching. I elaborate on this further when discussing the idea of “becoming the medium” in Chapters 8 and 9. It is important to note, however, that discussions of video art of the 1970s (Krauss, 1976), hypertext works of the 1990s (Bolter, 2001), and work that involves social media and mixed-reality (Bolter, et al., 2013) have each described a split subjectivity in which the viewer/reader/participant can be both performer and audience. Therefore, the medium of the work is more complex than just the artist, the viewer, or the technology; rather, perhaps it is the network of relations between all three? For this research, I like to focus on the artist as the medium of their practice as opposed to a particular artwork, for reasons that become more apparent later in this dissertation. Nevertheless, this all proves as more reason to question and rearticulate our understandings of “medium.”

78 The original Acconci essay was first published in A. A. Bronson and Peggy Gale, eds., Performance By Artists (Toronto Art Metropole, 1979), p. 28-40.
p. 75). He extends Acconci’s idea of a ground to a playing field, where one doesn’t have to dig themselves out of it continuously, “but [a field] that they (the artists) would act on as a part of their constructed persona(s) as they move through time… one that takes place in the networked “space of flows”” (2008, p. 76).

As I reflect on Amerika’s writings of the artist-as-medium, I am reminded of Nicholas Bourriaud’s (2009) book, The Radicant. Bourriaud describes current contemporary artists as radicants, adding and selecting ideas while multiplying identities and reimagining their roots. The artist-medium adapts to varying situations and media, transplanting ideas into different contexts as a way of working with the interconnections that emerge across disciplines. I revisit the notion of the artist-medium in Chapter 8.

“This all-over sense of being in perpetual postproduction”

Mark is inspired by Acconci’s desire to shift our attention away from specific media and disciplines, and to instead focus on becoming the instrument that acts on whatever ground is available. Within emerging fields of new media art and performance, Mark views the artist as a “postproduction medium.” The term postproduction in film and television refers to editing done after the filming or recording has taken place; however, in art it refers to specific artworks made of preexisting works. Bourriaud (2007) describes it as the artist expressing a new cultural configuration that speaks not only to contemporary culture but to the original material as well. In addition to postproduction, Mark refers to this way of working as “remixing” and his understanding of postproduction is expanded to include the artist’s identity in flux: “To even begin to enter this zone of unconscious readiness / aesthetic / mediumistic potential, artists recognize that they may have to reinvent their artistic personae over and over again” (Amerika, 2011b, p. 93). Yet Mark describes this zone of unconscious flow as also being a process of self-reflexivity from which aesthetic forms emerge:

Artists use electronic media to contemplate themselves too. And not just to contemplate themselves as artist-mediums but as flux personae navigating the networked space of flows where the resonance of all that has come before pulsates like an archive fever waiting to be discovered so that it too
can be sampled from and remixed into a temporary aesthetic form that struggles to exist in the flow of readymade impermanence. (2011b, p. 95)

This unconscious flow of self-reflection appears within FILMTEXT when the persona listed as “The Digital Thoughtographer” is made evident through narrative fragments that appear on the screen at unexpected moments, revealing fragments of a struggling creative being who is locked within a digital world (Figure 7.6). Although the landscapes represented in the filmic scenes portray what appear to be abandoned ruins of civilization, the data left behind for us to investigate reveals a digital thought process alive and in constant postproduction.

In Remixthebook (2011b) Mark poetically responds to this idea of the artist in postproduction, writing:

But those final stages are never really final
or at least they don't feel that way
as we push ourselves further into the Infinite -
that unidentifiable space of mind where
the unconscious projections of near-future events always keep us on the cusp of what it is we are in the process of creating while experiencing this *all-over sense* of "being in perpetual postproduction" even as our remixological methods smudge together with what we used to think of as simply being *in postproduction*. (p. 97)

Further questioning the nature of the postproduction process and its impact on the artist, he asks,

What exactly is going on when artist-mediums find themselves operating in perpetual postproduction? (Amerika, 2011b, p. 97)

**Pedagogy as Performative Remix**

In certain instances, my research participants’ pedagogical approaches reflect the performative nature of their art. For instance, the pedagogical approaches of both Jon Thomson and Alison Craighead become performative when experienced within the dialogical process of the studio critiques they take part in. What occurs in this space of teaching and learning is completely dependent on what happens to be experienced by the artists and the particular students involved. I believe that their teaching (and learning) becomes performative in the same way that Thomson & Craighead’s work becomes performative through the generative processes of the networked media. Although the majority of my research participants didn’t use the word performative when describing their teaching, Mark Amerika recognizes his teaching as a performance and views pedagogy similar to how he views one of his live VJ remix artworks – “an intersubjective and interdisciplinary meta-tag team adventure of the moment” (Amerika, 2009a). What I find very interesting is how he sees the act of teaching and learning as a remix process – drawing from past and current resources, working back and forth between art, writing, and the students’ ideas through collaboration and conversation, in order to create new understandings.

“In the classroom I refer to it as ‘inter-subjective jamming’"

[TEACHING/PERFORMING]

Mark’s teaching is not only similar to his ways of making art, but it actually feeds off of the same strategies and methods employed within his digital networking
life style practice. His use of the word ‘tag,’ along with ‘remix,’ are part of his digital art vocabulary and methods, yet they become teaching tools and performative strategies employed in the classroom:

This unique style of experientially tagging the data is what an evolving digital poetics is all about and, although it can't be taught as a particular disciplinary field of expertise per se, it can still be modeled in the classroom… it’s teaching through example how to enter a space of mind where the artist-as-medium improvisationally composes their work on and in the open playing field of potential artist development, while pointing to the radical, intersubjective experiences we are always filtering, tracing, remixing, and otherwise conjuring into multiple and hybridized works of art when tapping into our unconscious readiness potential. (Amerika, 2008, p. 82)

Mark and I discussed the notion of remix as he has been exploring it as a (post)production method/ medium for art and writing. At the time of our interview, Remixthebook (2011b) was soon to be released, followed by www.remixthebook.com website – “an online hub for the digital remixes of the theories generated in the print book and featur(ing) the work of artists, creative writers and scholars for whom the practice and theory of remix art is central to their research interests” (website). Mark further adds, “the remixthebook project could be considered an open content platform for others to use as source material for their own art work, literary creations, 21st century multimedia theory, and/or innovative coursework” (website). In fact, Mark has developed a Course section of remixthebook.com that contains readings and links to various subjects that can be taught in conjunction with the print book, topics including Pla(y)giarism, Appropriation, Hactivism, Postproduction Art, and Net Art 2.0. At the end of each subject/ module, Mark provides exercises and questions that can be used in classes. As an open platform meant to be borrowed from and remixed by anyone, the site can also be considered a pedagogical project.

In our interview I inquired into Mark’s understanding of pedagogy. More specifically, I was interested in how he perceived remixology through the lens of pedagogy and if this was of any interest to him. Could remixology be considered
another form of pedagogy? When we teach, whether the subject is art or something else, are we not just remixing? In the exchange below, I ask Mark about this relationship between remix and pedagogy, knowing that ‘performance pedagogy’ is something he has acknowledged to a certain extent in his published writings:

Heidi: “In addition to (remix and performance) being part of your art, might it also be considered as part of your pedagogy? performative pedagogy?”

Mark: "It is a performance – the relationship between remix and performance is crucial. Everything that you're playing, showing, citing... and then you're taking those ideas and you're bringing them into the mix, and in the classroom I refer to it as "inter-subjective jamming." So, if you're really going to engage in loosening yourself up, so you can really get a lot out of the session... each individual session... you're going to have to become a lot more fluid (pause) in relation to your own subjectivity. To be able to not only listen, but process and contribute, almost at the same time, like you would if you were in an improv jazz band... So you're all playing together at once, someone takes on a solo, you let them run with it and as they're soloing and you're in the background, you're still processing it so that you can take it to the next level when they're done with their solo. So it's almost like catching the rhythm and flow... So it really is like remix performance."

Heidi: “There's someone who once called a teacher a DJ.”

Mark: "Yes, that makes sense. It's like part DJ and part network conductor."

The first part of Mark’s response focuses on the role of the teacher, or rather the network conductor. Once he begins to describe the importance of listening in order to know when to contribute to the process, it becomes more about not just the teacher but the individual – teacher or student – within a collaborative experience (see bold). Pedagogy becomes performative through the framework of the jamming process. The collaborative and relational aspects of the jamming experience – knowing when to let someone else take the solo but processing it in the background so you can eventually take it to the next level – are what contribute to Mark’s understanding of the teacher as a “network conductor”.

148
Earlier in this chapter I described how collaborative networking experiences were a significant part of Mark’s art production and that he believes the notion of authorship is not actually diminishing today, but rather is being reconfigured into a collaborative practice. Mark views collaboration as not only significant to current art practices but to the role of educators as well:

We also need to open ourselves up to all kinds of collaboration: collaboration with students, technology, local partners, and the like. Real-time group collaboration in the classroom is essential. My teaching practice is proactive and involves mentoring students on the development of new digital art works... *Given the speed with which these technological changes occur, my role as an educator in this area requires me to become more of an open-minded facilitator of knowledge and creative production than an authority figure with a singular view of the world.* (2007, p. 176)

The terms ‘facilitate’ and ‘facilitator’ came up in this research several times. Reflecting on this later, perhaps the use of this term can help to convey more of a non-linear exchange of knowledge between students and teacher. The last section of the above quote (see bold) is, in my opinion, a significant point for art educators to consider as we continue to question the best ways to move forward with the teaching of creative practices involving digital media – to aim to become open-minded facilitators of knowledge and creative production. This statement aligns with Jessica and Adam’s approach to pedagogy discussed in the previous chapter and the importance of enabling students with the ability to learn processes as opposed to teaching to specific technological skills, with the understanding that the technologies will eventually change.

---

79 Excerpts from separate interviews/research:
(Nathaniel) “I aim to create a structured environment that facilitates active discussion and ongoing analysis.”
(Jessica & Adam) “(H)ow does collaborative practice inform the way you facilitate student projects and teach studio courses?” (question posed in Trowbridge & Westbrook, 2010).
(Mark) “…requires me to become more of an open-minded facilitator of knowledge and creative production than an authority figure…”
(Simon) “(F)or me, what would be exciting, would be some form of instigator… I think facilitator is ok but it tends to read nice, nice… Why is it not sometimes potentially productive to… get everybody screaming at each other?”
“I don’t embrace the studio critique process: studio critique should be SOCIAL critique”  
[TEACHING/LEARNING]

Mark sees himself as very different from the majority of artist-educator colleagues that teach within his department at the university, particularly in terms of how he was educated as an artist and how he approaches teaching art. Amongst his colleagues, he tells me in our interview that there is probably only one other person who didn’t go through the traditional studio critique process besides himself: “Every one of them went through that process and continues to go through that process.” Since he did not initially get his higher arts education by going to art school, Mark does not adhere to the typical studio critique model, in which the student spends a lot of time talking about him or herself followed by the teacher giving feedback. Instead, Mark says he got his education from “hanging out or dropping in to various international art scenes.” In describing his teaching philosophy to his students, Mark tells them that they can get “that traditional feedback model through (their other professors)… (W)hat I’m going to try and help you do is develop a community, develop a scene, because that’s what I know. And it will relate to your work individually and collaboratively.” Elaborating on this process, Mark adds, “That’s what I meant by “social critique” rather than “studio critique” – It happens within the scene itself.”

The term “social critique” is connected to Mark’s interest in the idea of “social media art… or collaborative social media art,” and the process of one tapping into their unconscious creative potential within a digital life style practice of net living. In our interview, Mark states:

When you say (social media art), I think a more traditional practitioner would say where’s the art… For me, lately, it’s been related to Remix, so it’s more through a self-conscience stylization or aestheticization of the data, of the source material that you’re sampling every day… every moment that you’re living your life. It becomes more of a philosophical quest as well.

Within a social model of teaching art, the critique process extends from the collaborative dialogical jamming process described earlier, where the students and
teacher listen and contribute to the experience. Describing a social model of critiquing in relation to the traditional studio critique model, Mark states:

It's just showing another model... it's not saying that one is better than the other, there's lots of models out there. It's just that (the traditional critique model) about the studio artist with studio visits (and) getting studio critiques, who then tries to get that worked developed in the studio into a gallery so that it can then find its collectors and so they can develop their career - that's just one trajectory. And in this age of digital communications (or whatever we're going to call it)... it's clear that there are other ways that don't have to really distance themselves or isolate themselves from what we think of as art history. We can find all of these connections throughout art history where artworks and artists develop a reputation by building communities, by activating themselves in scenes, by experimenting with technologies of their day...That's why it's sort of frustrating to not see it more integrated into contemporary art schools, their programs and curriculums... it's not that it doesn't exist at all (but)... I think it should be prominent.

Mark wants to see contemporary art school programs integrate more approaches to critiques – the specific framework for viewing and discussing creative production in art courses – that reflect the history of artists building communities and collaborating through experimental means. For lack of a better term, he refers to this in our interview as 'social critique' in an effort to promote an alternative from the understanding of the traditional 'studio critique.'

Overall, Mark feels that post-secondary art programs no longer reflect the current culture of artists today and that they are not really connected to how many artists work today: “It used to be that art schools were kind of on the cutting edge, they were leading the way. Like what happened there would then be reflected in the culture… in the art world. But they’re not even reflecting what’s going on in the art world anymore… It’s almost as if they’re reflecting what went on in the art world 30 years ago” (interview). Mark continues, saying: “What I find most interesting, exciting and frustrating is that… (t)he schools are not reflecting the rise of the more socially oriented, collaborative network… To me that’s what is predominant in our society today. The school is reflecting the older model, which is still relevant but is not as prominent.” He refers to his own university department and the desire to adhere to old curriculum requirements while assigning elective status to those courses, which
actually do reflect the ways that current practicing artists work. He says that the types of courses he teaches are often viewed as “controversial” within a department that already struggles with a division between “Art” and “Art History,” even though he is the department’s most published professor writing around contemporary art. Mark adds, “I can teach whatever I want. I have from the minute that I’ve arrived. But what is changing is how those courses that I teach are being accepted into the curriculum – whether they’re looked at as electives, and do they count towards specific requirements.”

Mark and I then began to talk about the stage in artists’ careers where they might not need to teach anymore because of their ability to survive and flourish financially as a practicing artist and writer. We discussed certain artist-educators we know who chose to leave the academy in order to have more time to spend on their art, to which Mark responded, “I’m at that point too… I (teach) because I get a kick out of my relationship with the students. There’s something about that that I find really interesting” (interview).

In the next chapter I bring together the ideas and analyses presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. I suggest that the observed connections between the participants’ art and pedagogy – dialogical, collaborative, performative – are related to the earlier identified notions of network in art and education: assembling, situation, exchange, emergent. I suggest that network art, when looked at through the lens of pedagogy, can potentially be understood as relational learning. I argue that the dialogical, collaborative and performative processes of the participants’ art and pedagogy practices exist within a rhizomatic network of art and learning.
CHAPTER 8 – TOWARDS A NETWORK ART PEDAGOGY

Knowledge, in other words, does not exist except in our participatory actions. (Osberg & Biesta, 2008, p. 313)

Reflecting on the Research Question

I began by asking these questions: a) **What are some of the ways that multidisciplinary and network artists make art and approach pedagogy?** and b) **What challenges does this pose for artists and the post-secondary education systems in which they teach?** I was led to explore the numerous processes of artist-educators working in multidisciplinary and networked ways. Along the way I became engrossed in my understandings, gathered through examination of artworks, interviews, and blogs. When it came time to analyse my research in a structured and coherent format, I quickly became overwhelmed by all of the networked possibilities.\textsuperscript{80} I definitely felt the need to organize the data thematically, yet I was beginning to regret my decision to include as many participants as I did – even though I had felt it necessary to include a wide range of network practices in order to effectively explore the research question stated above.

Reflecting back on the entire research process while simultaneously gaining a more articulate understanding of what I set out to study, I now realize that I have been sorting through dynamic complex processes that are all in interaction with one another. I now recognize that each art practice and each teaching practice examined is a network on its own, and that the components of these networks are extending beyond their individual borders and interacting with other networks. Osberg & Biesta acknowledge the difficulty in trying to understand complex systems due to this continuous interaction, writing, “(s)ince complex systems are always already in a

\textsuperscript{80} During this research I have become interested in ideas of networked methodologies and networked analyses of qualitative research. For example, Alvermann (2000), referring to Deleuze & Guittari’s (1987), wrote about rhizoanalysis and the possibilities it might hold for looking “once again” at the data: “Deleuze and Guittari recommend that once we have drawn a map, it is important to put the tracing back on the map. By inspecting the breaks and ruptures that become visible when the more stable tracing is laid upon the always becoming map, we are in the position to construct new knowledge, rather than merely propagate the old” (p. 117). Alvermann suggests that this provides a “freeing” way of looking at data, which makes it possible for the researcher to “see” something other than what he/she went looking for.
state of dynamic interaction with other complex systems that are themselves in a state of dynamic interaction *ad infinitum* we find that in trying to understand such systems there is no place to begin, no foundation or point of origin that is not already in interaction with something else” (2010, p. 598).

For this research it was helpful to keep returning back to the main research questions in bold above even though the dynamic nature of my topic revealed many networks and many questions in-between. The network art practices in this study can each be understood as individual networks made up of processes informed by the multiple projects each participant was/is engaged with, including collaborative projects informed by other artists’ networks. The teaching practices examined in this study can be understood as individual networks consisting of processes informed by the particular curricular programs, the networks of their students and, as this research has shown, the participants’ ways of producing and thinking about art (which, as pointed out, are made up of multiple networks). In addition, and specifically in response to the second of my research questions, the participants’ teaching practices also exist in relation to the post-secondary educational systems in which they teach. Thus, networks interacting with networks interacting with networks, and so on.

At the beginning, I had too many questions. By simplifying my objectives and basing this research on the main questions above, I was able to move forward in my thoughts. That said, due to the networked nature of this research and my reflexive methodology, the question constantly evolved to a network of *in-between questions* that all informed one another. Although I repeatedly returned back to the main question, I found it necessary to also engage in a process of reformulating the question (by thinking about the in-between questions) in order to effectively answer the main research questions in the end. Some of these questions are included throughout the text in this chapter, whereas others are written in the form of answers, or rather suggestions to take forward in thinking about pedagogy. I had to move beyond the *whats* and the *ways* in order to understand the networked connections that were becoming visible *between* the art and pedagogy practices. I had to engage in the active co-inquiry with my participants and acknowledge the
rhizomatic pathways that emerged. I soon began to see the potential for a network art pedagogy as an extension of the participants’ art practices.

In this chapter I elaborate on some of the resulting complications from the networked nature of this study described above. Specifically, I discuss the traditional format of this dissertation in relation to the rhizomatic potential of the content and theory of this research. First, though, I discuss where this research began and how my chosen format has led me to a better understanding of the relationships between multidisciplinary and network artists’ ways of making art and ways of teaching. Through this research I have come to realize that the connections between the participants’ art and teaching – those being dialogical, collaborative, performative – exist in relation to one another, even though I have chosen to organize them separately in this dissertation. They exist within a network and are aligned with the earlier identified notions of network in art and education – assembling, situation, exchange, emergent. Throughout this chapter I propose a network approach to art pedagogy (and pedagogy in general) that acknowledges the above mentioned notions of network and incorporates the three thematic connections/characteristics observed in this study. Moreover, since networks exist in everything we do (as demonstrated in my above account of this research process), I am suggesting that we become more conscious of and reactive to the ways in which we might enact these complex concepts and characteristics within our networked pedagogies.

Connections Between Network Art and Pedagogy

Pedagogy’s dream and desire is to spring lived events of thinking-sending-becoming different. (Ellsworth, 2011, ¶ 20)

This research began with an inquiry into current multidisciplinary art practices in which artists explore digital technology within other media, practices, and artworks that are perhaps difficult to categorize. Through my examination of notions of network in art and education, consistent of processes defined as assembling, situation, exchange, and emergent, I began to question if network art might lead to relational learning. After exploring how these similar understandings of network have
been addressed in both the fields of art and education, I wanted to know how artists involved with network art approach teaching and how they understand pedagogy, specifically those artists teaching in university and college art programs. I wanted to know how their ways of making art might impact their ways of teaching and vice versa. By conducting interview research with a selection of artists who also teach in post-secondary institutions, I was able to actively inquire into their ways of making art and their ways of approaching pedagogy.

In this research I have found that even though digital media is an element within each of the participants' practices, it is not necessarily definitive to their ways of working as artists. Rather, it is just one part of a larger network practice. In other words, the digital technology exists as part of the process and sometimes in the final form, but the work (and the related production methods and resulting aesthetic) cannot be adequately described as digital. In pursuing a deeper understanding of network art and pedagogy, I examined the methods and processes of these artist-educators and determined three main connections between their art and pedagogy: **dialogical, collaborative, and performative.** Below I will address some of the understandings from each of these thematic connections, ultimately arguing for a network pedagogy in post-secondary art programs that emphasizes these components.

It is important to note that dialogical, collaborative, and performative aspects were the main connections found within all seven participants' art and teaching practices. Due to the length of this dissertation, however, I analysed each thematic connection with reference primarily to the one or two participants whose comments most evidenced the theme. These three main connections interweave with one another throughout my understandings, but for the sake of clarity I have chosen to reflect on them separately below, while also thinking about how these connections can be pedagogically networked for relational learning.

**Dialogical**

As I discussed in Chapter 5, Nathaniel, Jon, and Alison each engage with dialogical relationships as part of their ongoing practices as artists and educators.
Nathaniel’s work reveals dialogical interplay between a range of collaborators and different media, such as in his print/video works jointly created with Jessica Meuninck-Ganger (Figures 5.2 to 5.4). The remediated relationship between the two forms of media led me to think about how the constructed space in-between allowed for emergent potential, almost as if the artists were leaving a space for the viewer to enter into a conversation with the work. Throughout the Distill Life series and the Dynamic Stasis works, multiple opportunities are presented for viewers to engage with a clever system that can be considered a form of ongoing dialogue between the artists, and between the artists and the public. When thinking about this aesthetic system and the space in-between the two media formats, I can’t help but look at this work through a lens of pedagogy and learning. How might this particular kind of in-between space be brought into the teacher/student relationship? How can this space for emergence be reflected with/in pedagogy?

Nathaniel’s approach to pedagogy clearly embraces dialogue and reciprocal exchange, as well as being something that he continues to adjust and improve based on what he learns in the process. In fact, he describes this approach as “more of a short-term dialogue with specific students,” that he adapts accordingly, adding, “teaching must serve the needs of a given class and its students.” What I find most interesting is that Nathaniel applies a structured sense of dialogue when teaching, yet the dialogical nature of his artwork is more universal, the latter perhaps allowing the viewer/learner to be guided into the work through an aesthetic experience that incorporates curiosity. How might we guide students through learning in a way that instills a sense of curiosity in the unknown? Although this seems to be an obvious premise of learning and teaching, how often does this really happen? Is there a tendency to follow a scripted plan rather than embrace a teachable moment?

When responding to these ‘in-between’ questions that emerge throughout this chapter’s written inquiry, I look to the networked connections discussed in this research for answers – not only the two other thematic connections, in this case collaborative and performative, but to the earlier identified notions of network as assembling, situation, exchange, and emergent. For instance, by embracing the dialogical experience itself and attending to the situation and what might emerge in
that encounter, perhaps the teacher-student dialogue can be one that is guided by curiosity as opposed to a planned direction. I suggest we need to work towards a network pedagogy in which we actively consider, in a constant and dynamic fashion, the other components of the larger network while we are with/in the network itself.

When discussing the notion of network as exchange in Chapter 3, I referred to Shor & Friere’s (1987) article ‘What is the ‘Dialogical Method’ of Teaching?’ In this article the authors describe dialogue as a "joint act of knowing and re-knowing the object of study" (p. 14). They argue for a level of openness on the part of the teacher, a willingness to relearn the content and to become engaged in the dialogue. They describe the role of the teacher as an artist who works to uncover key themes and access points to consciousness, recomposing them into unsettling critical investigation. Freire (2000) defined dialogue as “an existential necessity” which “cannot be reduced to the act of one person's 'depositing' ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be 'consumed' by the discussants (2000, p.88-89). These words are reminiscent of Dewey (1916/2005), also cited in Chapter 3: “In such shared activity, the teacher is a learner, and the learner is, without knowing it, a teacher…” (p. 95). What I find particularly significant about Dewey’s words in the context of this research is the phrase “without knowing it,” which can be understood as teaching and learning merged together into one experience based on the emergent aesthetics of the situation itself. In a decentralized art studio/social critique process, this might be thought of as a type of “self-forgetfulness” (Smith, 1999) where a non-linear and circular exchange of interpretations between all participants is supported with the intention of “…each new experience add[ing] to the accumulated meaning of experience for each individual” (Slattery, 2006, p. 282). A learning process constructed through the dialogical relations within the group, perhaps moderated and guided by the teacher, but which cannot be planned in advance. In comparing his art and teaching practices, Nathaniel described his teaching as more structured, yet the aim of the structure is to “facilitate active discussion and ongoing analysis,” where he asks his students “to step outside their own work… and pay attention to their peers.” Through my interview with Nathaniel, I gained a better understanding of the range of dialogical aspects of a networked
art/teaching practice; however, I felt I needed to dig more into the intimate process of dialogue and how this can contribute to a relational learning experience.

The collaborative and intimate nature of Jon and Alison’s joint art practice is reflected strongly in their individual teaching practices. This might also be due to the types of schools they teach in and the smaller number of students they teach at one time. What resonates with me most is their discussion of a lack of hierarchy between teacher and student when it comes to dialogical exchange. In fact, the word ‘artist’ is used over ‘student’, which perhaps might lead to teaching and learning viewed as more of a shared process. Jon stated in our interview that what it “basically comes down to … [is] treating each other like other artists.” As noted earlier, Alison, in response to a similar question, said that she doesn’t even like to say ‘students,’ adding, “they might be younger, but they’re still artists.” I suggest that this shared process of learning through dialogue is derived from the pedagogical/learning feedback loop that Jon and Alison have been working in as an artist duo for several years. They attested to it being something that allows them to look at their artwork more objectively, and observed that it helps them to better understand what they are doing. Alison talked about how this deep understanding emerges in tutorials with her students/artists, during moments when, while listening to someone else talk about his/her work, she might realize something she had overlooked with her own.

As mentioned earlier, the three main connections between the art and pedagogy of the participants of this research do not operate in isolation from one another. Dialogue is a major aspect of the other two art and pedagogy connections discussed below.

**Collaborative**

Nathaniel described teaching experiences in which he both challenged students through dialogue, as well as students challenging him by voicing their disagreement. Overall, the participants in this study choose to embrace a more open kind of critical dialogue over an authoritarian stance. Arguments have been made in the past about dialogue creating an illusion of equality between teacher and students (Ellsworth, 1989, 1997; Cary, 2007; Duncum, 2008). Ellsworth (1997) argues that
the pedagogy of dialogue is not neutral but is embedded in particular “networks of power, desire, and knowledge” (p. 49). She wrote that this “mode of address” has the potential to constrain the exchange of knowledge and needs to be questioned. In discussing characteristics of “understanding,” Ellsworth points out that understanding can actually be an “act of disagreement” (p. 103) that requires a different kind of dialogue: “analytic dialogue” (p. 115). She suggested analytic dialogue is transitional, multiple and never complete. The collaborative practices81 of the artists featured in Chapter 6 – Simon, Jessica, and Adam – consist of analytic dialogue and ways of working that present challenges to the traditional networks of power and knowledge that exist in most post-secondary institutions.

Simon’s teaching is often informed by questions he is exploring in the collaborative art projects he is working on at that time, which allows him to be guided by the unknown within his approach to pedagogy. In our interview he talked about choosing to work outside his comfort zone, this being something he likes to transfer to his students as well, claiming, “it’s one of the reasons I work collaboratively.” His projects and assignments consist of questions that force students/artists to explore possibilities with others in order to determine the direction they want to take with their work. Within this collaborative process, which also incorporates dialogical and performative tools, he chooses to “instigate differences of opinion and explore those differences” as opposed to trying to resolve the debates. He is strongly influenced by Mouffe’s (2007) notion of agonistic struggle and a critical art that makes visible what the dominant consensus (the art world) tends to obscure, which we discussed in our interview as the ‘mess’ or the process of things coming together. One of the main things that resonates with me from this research is the idea that resistance from students is inevitable and that, as educators, we should embrace this in our pedagogy.

In Chapter 3 I discussed research in which adopting a student-centred

---

81 This research has shown that there is a great deal to learn from artists working in collaboration with one another, whether artists work as duos or they choose to move from project to project, working with people who have specific skills in different areas. The impact that collaboration can have on a creative project, and the particular areas of strength that belong to those working in collaborative practices, are subjects for future research.
approach to teaching and learning did not prevent resistance to learning (Perumai, 2008). Referring to Kreisberg (1992) I argued for the necessity of educators being mindful of power relations and embracing a “power with” approach characterized by collaboration, sharing, and mutuality, as opposed to the more authoritative “power over.” Simon has chosen a “power with” approach yet does so in a very reflexive way by actually bringing to the forefront issues of power and knowledge into the discussions with his students, as well as having them reflect on the roles of teacher and student within the art-making process. Rather than simply giving them the freedom to explore on their own, he told me that he instead “asks them to join him in examining this relationship that they have” (interview). As educators we need to allow ourselves to become learners within a process of investigation, so knowledge can be understood as something that has emerged within the collaborative process as opposed to something forced from the top down. As Osberg & Biesta (2010) argue, this is especially important when it comes to judgements that occur in the learning process: “… (E)ngagement in such judgements should not be seen as something that is done from the ‘outside’ – teachers judging students; parents judging children – but should rather be seen as a collaborative process, as something that all who are engaged in the activity should take part in and should do so continuously” (Osberg & Biesta, 2010, p. 603). Simon works towards exposing and creating “messy gaps” when teaching, and then collaborates with his students in a shared learning process.

For all of the participants of this research, collaboration is not just a potential way of working, it is inherent to the practices they choose as network artists and, therefore, to the artists they have become. With the artist duos examined, it is of course even more pronounced in their identities. For Jessica and Adam (Channel TWO), their identity as a collaborative duo has now become a central aspect of their views on pedagogy and learning as well. Bakhtin (1990) wrote that there is often a mechanical separation of the human being and the artist, arguing that these components need to answer to each other: “But what guarantees the inner connection of the constituent elements of a person? Only the unity of answerability. I have to answer with my own life for what I have experienced and understood in art,
so that everything I have experienced and understood would not remain ineffectual in my life” (1990, p. 1-2). Jessica and Adam answer with their approach to pedagogy and within their writings for what they have experienced and understood in their art. They have intertwined the collaborative areas of their life to the point that it has become a “state of being” for them. They want their students to be exposed to and prepared for the compromises and negotiations that they will inevitably be confronted with regardless of the professions they embark on.

In addition, they feel it’s significant for students to experience different approaches to pedagogy from within the same course – something that is still not very common within the post-secondary education system. In the Media-N (2010) Dynamic Coupling issue they guest edited, Jessica and Adam featured a conversation with artists Shannon McMullen and Fabian Winkler in which the topic of collaborative teaching came up. They discussed reasons for the lack of collaborative artist duos holding teaching positions at the university level. Winkler observed, “There are obstacles to overcome – especially the corporate model of the university and individual models of the “expert” often seem(ing) to conspire against team-teaching,” further raising the question, “If, for example, a class stresses the importance of teamwork among students how better could it be demonstrated than through a well-coordinated team of instructors?” (Winkler in Trowbridge & Westbrook, 2010, p. 1).

Jessica and Adam are now in the fortunate position of being able to implement (and research) collaborative approaches to pedagogy in their roles as professors at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. They noted, “team-teaching was a model implemented across SAIC way before we arrived… (since) the school recognized the team-teaching dynamic as a necessary condition for interdisciplinary approaches and outcomes” (personal communication, May 28, 2013). In the past, they collaborated on courses just “for the research/experience” as there was no team teaching model, pedagogical or financial, in place at their previous institutions. They feel that academia is moving slowly in this area even though their peers within institutions are recognizing collaboration as a significant aspect of art and design practices. When asked about the chances for collaborative duos to be hired to teach
in post-secondary art programs, the artists state, “Logic suggests that a committed duo would be a more stable and invested hire especially if there is a solid record of research there, but tradition and hierarchy favors individuals with no pre-existing alignments and easy-to-read experience” (personal communication, May 28, 2013). Upon reflecting on this conversation with Jessica and Adam, I also question the ability for academic systems to recognize different forms of research and practice (whether collaborative or not) for individuals hired to teach studio-based courses. As many other artists working today, the participants of this research are involved with multiple projects beyond traditional studio practices and networked with other academic fields. How might post-secondary art programs adapt their hiring practices to account for networked artists and educators working outside of the traditional model of studio art? Should they?

**Performative**

What I am calling the postproduction of (pedagogical) presence challenges the old footprint of disciplinary regimes in by-now outmoded academic institutions. Whether I am performing online, in class, or inside a club space, I never wear a particular (disciplinary-revealing) hat. I could be a novelist, a net artist, a web publisher, a live A/V performer, a professor, a cultural entrepreneur, etc. (Amerika, 2009a, p. 1)

In Chapter 7 I discussed the interdisciplinary and network art practice of Mark Amerika, who discussed his ways of working as a life style practice of net living and a type of post studio practice. He stressed a need for art education to move away from the “old artist-as-genius model” and to “open ourselves up to all kinds of collaboration: collaboration with students, technology, local partners, and the like.” Mark is a published writer first and foremost, yet he works in and between different media forms in a way that challenges traditional fine art and new media categories. Perhaps this is why, even though he has had Full Professor status for many years, he still encounters difficulties within the rigid structure of academia when it comes to establishing innovative curriculum and teaching. When I discussed the ‘individual artist model’ with Jessica and Adam, they voiced similar concerns as Mark, stating,
Collaborative ways of working are common to post-studio practices, which have been around since the 1970s and, more recently, amplified for artists working with digital media and online environments (Jones, 2010). I suggest that Baldessari’s notion of “post-studio” be reevaluated today alongside Quaranta’s (2010) appeal for a debate on “postmedia” (discussed in Chapter 1), in relation to understandings of what has been termed as “postdigital.” I claim that my inquiry into the notions of network in both art and education is essential to postdigital discourse, particularly in regards to educating artists of the future. Alexenberg (2011b) provides a lengthy definition of postdigital (see footnote above) that ends with the phrase “artworks created with alternative media through participation, interaction, and collaboration.” With artist-educators working in networked ways beyond digital forms, I suggest that poststudio, postmedia, and postdigital practices should be thought of as verbs and processes, constantly in formation and not necessarily resolved as completed acts. It is for this reason that I have chosen to describe the main art/pedagogy connections from this study as adjectives vs. nouns – dialogical over dialogue, collaborative over collaboration, and performative over performance – to assist the reader, and myself, in perceiving these characteristics as fluid and in process. It is also why I argue for continued exploration of the “performative character” (Bolter et

---

82 The term postdigital (also post-digital and post digital) has recently been a topic of conversation in digital art and media discourse (Alexenberg, 2011a) but has existed for several years (see Pepperell & Punt, 2000). Alexenberg (2011b) states “postdigital art addresses the humanization of digital technologies through interplay between digital, biological, cultural, and spiritual systems, cyberspace and real space, embodied media and mixed reality in social and physical communication, high tech and high touch experiences, visual, haptic, auditory, and kinesthetic media experiences, roots and globalization, narrative art, blogart, wikiart, and artworks created with alternative media through participation, interaction, and collaboration” (p. 1). One of the best resources for following the progression of this topic and obtaining updated information on published literature is the ‘postdigital’ entry on Wikipedia.org.
al., 2013) of relational and durational (and perhaps postdigital) practices within both the fields of art and education.

In current art practices, ‘performative’ can be understood as something that occurs in a system or network, and that which emerges from the relational situation and experiences within that network. Network art practices and networked approaches to pedagogy can provide new ways of thinking about relational and durational processes involved with art and education. To assist these ideas, I suggest the notion of performative be understood as something becoming performed within or through a relational experience. I discussed ideas related to performative art and performative pedagogy when describing the work of Mark Amerika in Chapter 7, as well as Fluxus artist Robert Filliou in Chapter 2. Mark’s performative ways of teaching are not only very similar to his performative ways of making art, his approach to pedagogy actually feeds off of the same strategies and methods employed within his larger network art practice. Mark describes his role as a teacher as that of being a network conductor engaged in collaborative dialogue, which he prefers to think of as ‘social’ as opposed to studio critiques. He used the phrase “intersubjective jamming” when describing what he does with his students. I suggest that this performative pedagogy, which incorporates the dialogical and collaborative, can lead to emergent knowledge that can be understood as relational – or performative – learning.

When discussing the notion of network as emergent in Chapter 3, I argued for a temporal and emergent epistemology in art curriculum and pedagogy, and for curricular thinking to move “away from questions about presentation and representation and towards questions about engagement and response (Osberg, Biesta, & Cilliers, 2008, p. 213). If we are to understand art curriculum and pedagogy through an epistemology of emergence, we must consider how learning can be actively generated and discovered by students rather than merely represented. Mark Amerika’s intersubjective jamming is one way of actively generating potential moments of performative learning and reconsidering the role of the teacher as a network conductor. By rethinking knowledge as something that emerges through performance, and coming to understanding this process as performative learning,
perhaps it can be better understood as something that is not fixed but rather something that is dependent on network processes; something that is not merely acquired but rather that one locates themselves within; something that becomes performed.

A common theme across Mark’s work is the notion of multiple personas and personas ‘becoming’ and in transformation. He sees himself as the medium of his art practice, acting on experiences that take place in the networked “space of flows,” and terms this ‘artist-medium’ in his creative and academic writings. In Chapter 7 I discuss how this notion of artist-as-medium connects with Bourriaud’s (2009) understanding of the artist-as-radicant who transplants ideas into different contexts as a way of reimagining one’s roots. Mark sees both his art and his pedagogy as performative and although one cannot attribute this directly to a process of becoming artist-medium, it is worthwhile imagining how one might become the medium of their pedagogy or to imagine pedagogy as the medium. How might rethinking pedagogy as a medium impact innovative thinking about curriculum and art education?

**Becoming the Medium**

Through this research I have learned that becoming the medium requires a willingness to move in and between disciplinary boundaries and genres, while engaging in relational, dialogical, and collaborative processes. These processes may lead to learning experiences in which knowledge emerges through acts of performance. Performative learning requires a “temporal epistemology” (Osberg, Biesta, & Cilliers, 2008) – an understanding of knowledge that is not representational and spatial, but rather emergent and ongoing; Knowledge is something to locate oneself within rather than something to acquire – an ongoing process of discovering creative ways of interacting with our reality. Although this is an experiential understanding of knowledge, the knowledge gained gets represented along the way, ideally in a form that takes into account the temporal process. Within this movement the individual may become open to the negotiation process that contributes to the medium. One must be willing to move in and between identities of teacher, artist, and learner. Extending from this research I argue that the identities of teacher, artist,
and learner be opened up to include collaborator, performer, writer, scholar, networker, etc. All participants in the learning and teaching process need to be willing to let go of their roles and who they think they are in this ‘space of emergence.’

It is necessary to revisit the words of Osberg & Biesta (2008), who, when discussing the space of emergence in which meaning and knowledge is formed, argue that the logic of emergence must be applied not only to knowledge, but to human subjectivity as well. Drawing on the work of Hannah Arendt, they conclude that the ‘space of emergence’ for knowledge and subjectivity requires that differences amongst participants be maintained in the classroom. This suggests that the responsibility of the teacher is to enable students to become more unique and to “complicate the scene” (2008, p. 325). Applying these understandings to my own work, performative pedagogy and performative learning may require letting go of any preconceived notions of who we are in terms of artist, teacher, or learner in order to engage in an ongoing process of relational inquiry.

**Rhizomatic Potential**

Since complex processes do not have a discrete origin, end point or linear trajectory from which it is possible to calculate the logical rules or laws that drive them, it is necessary to understand such processes in terms of a non-object-based (or non-linear) form of logic. (Osberg & Biesta, 2010, p. 598)

Multiplicity are defined by the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight….The idea for a book would be to lay everything out on a plane of exteriority of this kind, on a single page, the same sheet… (Deleuze & Guittari, 1987, p. 9)

In Chapter 2, when discussing decentralized systems of learning and teaching and examining the notion of network as emergent, I described the experiential process as rhizomatic. As mentioned earlier, rhizome is a philosophical concept developed by Deleuze and Guittari (1987) to describe theory and research that is “always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo” (p. 25). It is based on how certain plants grow and multiply, not in a linear way that divides into smaller stems, but, instead, favouring a nomadic movement that forms a multiplicity
in itself. Deleuze & Guittari describe it as a “transversal movement that sweeps one and the other way, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle” (1987, p. 25, italics in original). My experience of this research process has been, simply put, rhizomatic.

As an artist who does not hold previous university degrees in the Social Sciences, I have spent the last five years finding my way as a researcher in the field of Art Education while constantly questioning the procedures of qualitative research. My research interests often lead me to questions that do not require arts-based methodologies, even though the content I explore usually involves creative practices in one way or another. The main difference I have discovered between my completion of a Master in Fine Arts and my current pursuit of a PhD in Education is the structure of research procedures and methods. When engaged with my art as research, I work within a back and forth process between my chosen media or creative methods and the ideas and questions that interest me. I am not required to articulate my research in the form of an overarching question, rather I can allow myself to “get lost” (Lather, 2007) in the process. Through this creative practice I work towards making visible what I may not have perceived at the beginning in order to later arrive at something new. With my social science research, and most of my academic writing in general, I feel I need to have more of a set structure in place to be able to effectively articulate my intentions and my required research question in advance. This question then takes a prominent role in how I work through my research and writing.

At the beginning of this chapter I reflected on my main research questions that I examined in this dissertation and described how, through my inquiry, they required more of a networked understanding to successfully explore and answer. I discussed needing to engage in the active co-inquiry with my participants in order to acknowledge the rhizomatic pathways that emerged. I also wrote about starting off with too many questions before being guided to define my main question. Because

---

83 Drawing from feminist methodology disciplines and deconstruction, Lather (2007) writes about the significance of “getting lost” in research whereby the impossibilities of a project can become its possibilities.
of this beginning struggle that I often endure with my research, which perhaps could be explained as a rhizomatic way of thinking, I think I am “always in the middle” even when I am technically at the beginning or the end. Fortunately, the theory and content of this research calls for a rhizomatic way of thinking on the part of the researcher; however, I felt it important to represent and communicate these complex ideas in a clear and understandable way that would make sense for my readers. The network art practices and approaches to pedagogy found within this research have been presented in an organized manner, yet they exist in everyday life as dynamic and messy connections and characteristics interweaved between art and pedagogy practices.

In determining a way to organize and present this research, I thought about not only the observed thematic connections between the participants’ art and pedagogy practices (which I also perceive as relational characteristics of their art and teaching), but the types of networks that each of these themes or characteristics might align themselves with:

(Nathaniel, Jon, Alison) Dialogical = Network as Exchange
(Simon, Jessica, Adam) Collaborative = Network as Assembling
(Mark) Performative = Network as Situation
(All) Dialogical + Collaborative + Performative = Network as Emergent

Upon reflection, I realized these ‘match ups’ stemmed from how I had already begun to form the research in my mind based on prominent themes found in the data, and based on the dissertation format that I felt was most appropriate for this research. I imagined alternate ways of ‘mixing up’ the arrangements in a networked form that depended on interaction from the reader. Then I asked myself, What if I was not restricted to the form of a dissertation? What if I were to incorporate hypertext, or better yet, take this beyond a text document? What if the text could become extended to multimedia and guided by the networked research itself? What if an artistic and relational form emerged as part of the analysis without any planned
direction in advance? Although these creative ways of pursuing, not just representing, the research content interested me, I thought about my research questions and my projected date for completion. I arrived at the conclusion that an artistic approach to the dissertation format would not necessarily strengthen the research. I felt a personal need to work through the research in writing first, and that the creative ideas were more suitable for a future project that extended from the interview focus of this study; a project that could explore more of an experimental and interactive process that inquired further into network art practices, perhaps in a networked way in which I could “get lost again” (Lather, 2008).

As readers contemplate the ideas presented in this dissertation, the art and pedagogy connections/characteristics found in this study (dialogical, collaborative, performative) and the notions of network described (exchange, assembling, situation, emergent), should be considered in relation to one another in addition to all of the other network components. In doing so, new ideas and interpretations of each are expected to emerge in the process. Ideally, these specific interpretations should emerge through reader relationship (your participation, your interaction) with the work that I have presented.

During the early stages of this project, I found myself caught in an in-between space between what I needed to do to complete this project within a certain timeline and the rhizomatic potential I could foresee. For the purposes of this dissertation, defined throughout these chapters, I chose an organized structure that helped me navigate through and analyse the data. As mentioned above, in the future I may choose to experiment with other forms, other ways of working with ideas that extend from this research in order to capture differently the rhizomatic and complex nature.

---

84 This is an example of a rhizomatic moment in which my artist and researcher identities merged.
85 During a 2008 lecture, Lather talks about the process of “getting lost again” and the importance of writing multiple projects from research, for academic audiences and also for non-academic communities: “Maybe this idea of getting lost again would have something to do with moving in and out of a project across varying voices and varying contexts.” When describing the relationship between “getting lost” and “getting lost again,” she stated: “You get lost and then you have to get found… You have to make it stand still long enough to be able to write about it… even knowing all the problems of writing about it… Getting lost again might mean the next project” (Lather, 2008, video).
of the theory and processes involved. For now, that rhizome is paused and made still, and left open to the imagination of my readers (Figure 8.1).

*Figure 8.1*. Illustration of a random rhizomatic moment of network art/pedagogy research, by Heidi May
CHAPTER 9 – CONCLUSION

As contemporary art staggers from visual spectacle to relational aesthetics to politics to beauty and back again, it is worth asking what the emergent category of networked art can add to what is already happening elsewhere within visual and live art practices. (Kimbell, 2006, p. 155)

Kimbell (2006) asks what the emergent category of networked art can add to what is already happening within visual and live art practices. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, network/ed art can be understood as art that is not based on objects, nor digital media, but on the relationships and processes that occur between the multiple components and individuals that contribute to the work (Bazichelli, 2008; Corby, 2006; Saper, 2001). This dissertation shows that network art can provide new ways of thinking about pedagogy and learning, which can in turn be applied to art education and the teaching of artists in post-secondary institutions. With this project I set out to examine the ways in which network artists make art and approach pedagogy, and how these practices align with the university and college art programs in which they teach. I conducted interviews with a selection of network artists and educators that involved active co-inquiry between myself and each participant. This methodology coincides with a theoretical framework drawn from complexity thinking and a constructivist and temporal understanding of knowledge. During my research analysis I found strong dialogical, collaborative, and performative connections between the art and pedagogical practices of these network artists. The main connecting element between the artists’ ways of making art and their ways of approaching pedagogy was a process of relational learning that emerged with/in a network of dialogical, collaborative, performative processes. This research suggests that network art and relational learning be considered as potential approaches to contemporary pedagogy.

Similar to the research of Fouquet (2007), the artists examined in this dissertation present perspectives that challenge traditional pedagogical structures of post-secondary art programs that maintain traditional segregated studio disciplines. Although the participants of this study produce artworks that involve technical skill
and proficient use of media, they do not place the development of technical skills at the core of their work either as artists or educators. They see these skills as necessary components to a post-secondary art education but not without the skills of knowing how to engage in dialogue and how to learn with others. With the range of art practices and interdisciplinary creative projects in current cultural production, this research is important for art educators in understanding the dialogical, collaborative, and performative components that not only make up the current art world but that are already part of certain artists’ approaches to teaching and learning art.

Artists’ production methods today have become complex and artists know how important collaboration is to current art practices; however, even though efforts have been made in post-secondary art programs to respond to this, the pedagogical model within the larger university system is not structured in a way for it to evolve with the changing art world. Many of the collaborative, and dialogical and performative, practices described throughout this dissertation allow for personalized learning to emerge within moments of uncertainty. As Baldacchino (2008) asserted, art and education cannot exist together unless art’s practices are seen as open-ended and not predetermined: “(n)o possibilities for art or learning could ever emerge unless a radically different set of conditions give way to a state of affairs where knowledge is a matter to be discovered but never determined…” (p. 241-242, italics in original). Following on Fouquet (2007) and Baldacchino (2008), I propose that the relational processes of network art become a part of the pedagogy, curriculum, and the disciplinary structure of studio art programs at the post-secondary level. The research in this dissertation has shown that artists involved with network practices, spanning a range of media that incorporate digital technologies and which often intersect with non-art disciplines, are approaching art pedagogy in ways similar to how they approach their art production. The post-secondary art education system needs to accommodate for these more open-ended and networked ways of working by implementing decentralized art curricula that promote alternative approaches to pedagogy. By presenting conversations with a selection of network artists, and an analysis of their ways of working as artists and
educators, it is intended that this research will provide examples for determining new ways of thinking about the post-secondary art pedagogical model.

**Summary of Significance**

Not long ago people talked a lot about the virtual, but today it’s clear that the people in flesh and blood are the destiny of the network and not just machines. (de Kerckhove, 2008, p. 11)

Non-compliant learning is what learning can sometimes become when we aren’t channeling it into “training,” or when we entice it to inaugurate something new and previously unthought. (Ellsworth, 2011, ¶ 20)

By employing a broad understanding of the notion of network within my analysis of network artists’ practices as artists and educators, this research is intended to provide deeper understandings of the relationship between art today and network culture, and the potential knowledge that can be created from this relationship. This research aims to address aspects of network culture in terms of it being a sociocultural shift that is not limited to developments in digital technology (Varnelis, 2009) and in which reflexive awareness can emerge through art, learning, and teaching. Although not the main focus, this research provides examples of how artists are using the Internet and social media practices as part of their artistic research and production. Rather than exploring digital characteristics alone, it explores what emerges in and between the multiple practices that contribute to the production and dissemination of art today. Critical research in this area is lacking and documentation of the range of network art practices, particularly their connection to teaching and learning, is very limited.

The most surprising aspects of this research that continue to resonate with me are: 1) the level of importance that collaboration plays in the artists’ perception of their work and how they see themselves as artists and educators, and 2) the understandings of what performative art/pedagogy are in relation to the notion of emergent knowledge. Going into this project I knew that collaboration would most likely appear in this research, but I did not realize the extent to which it would play out in the artist identities revealed during our co-inquiry process. My research in
particular with Jessica Westbrook and Adam Trowbridge, in conjunction with Mark Amerika’s writings, provided insight into the changing role of authorship in art and design. Amerika (2007), following the path of many hypertext theorists writing in the 1990s, wrote that authorship is being “reconfigured into a more fluid, often collaborative networking experience” (p. 171), expressing a desire to move away from the ‘individual artist as genius’ model toward a more collaboratively generated “network of artist-researchers model” (p. 171). The topic of authorship was picked up again in my conversations with Jessica and Adam when discussing their thoughts on collaboration and how it impacts their art, teaching, and life. Adam stated in an interview that he is no longer interested in obtaining individual authorship in his working relationship with Jessica. In a later email conversation in which Jessica was talking about their roles as educators, she wrote that they are “co-authors” with their students, “of the experience of interpreting and learning.” After pairing these understandings with an analysis of decentralization in teaching and learning, I suggest that the collaborative model of art, or the “network of artist-researchers model,” can contribute to educational research that is examining the role of authority and power in the teacher-student relationship. I suggest we look further into the pedagogical/learning feedback loop I observed within the collaborative duo of Jon Thomson and Alison Craighead, which they described as a working process that allows them to look at their artwork more objectively. In summary, research of collaborative and shared processes of making network art should be viewed in relation to research of collaborative and shared processes of teaching and learning.

I first discussed the notion of performative in Chapter 2, when discussing the notion of network in art as situation. Within that chapter I discussed artworks, influenced by Fluxus practices, which are participatory in nature and in which the work becomes performative merely by being experienced within a specific situation or framework (pp. 32-36). In other words, it is the particular combination of events and relations that produce the performative artwork. Later in Chapter 7, I began to find connections between Mark Amerika’s performative processes of art-making and the performative elements of his pedagogy, in that his pedagogy becomes performative through the framework of his “intersubjective jamming process.” While
analysing all of the data, I observed performative aspects within all of the participants’ art and pedagogy practices. By zeroing in on the notion of performative, I was able to engage with their art and pedagogy side by side and in relation to one another. This particular understanding of performative allowed me to think about the potential for emergent learning and I began to see a feedback loop between the three main understandings of this research – dialogical, collaborative, performative – interacting with one another in a network of dynamic movement. In keeping with Osberg, Biesta & Cilliers (2008), I argue that emergent learning can be understood also as performative learning, in the understanding that knowledge is something to locate oneself within rather than something to acquire. I feel this notion of performative might add to understandings of emergence in that the idea of knowledge is something that becomes performative and something that is constructed within our situational experiences. Osberg, Biesta, & Cilliers (2008) argue for curricular thinking to move towards questions about engagement and response, and I suggest that inquiry into performative learning through art and pedagogy might lead to even more insight in this area.

In addition to advancing understandings of the concept of emergent knowledge, this dissertation is intended to contribute a vital perspective to research that explores intersections between art, education, technology, and culture. As researchers and educators, we need to continue to develop interdisciplinary projects that will allow us to examine our relationships to and with network culture: “Today connection is more important than division. In contrast to digital culture, under network culture information is less the product of discrete processing units than of the outcome of the networked relations between them, of links between people, between machines, and between machines and people” (Varnelis, 2008, ¶ 4). As our understandings of network culture evolve, so should our understandings of art and education.

The artists examined in this dissertation continue to develop projects that overlap networks of art and pedagogy. They are exploring through their art and research aspects of what I have laid out in this dissertation. In the next section I
reflect on how this research has impacted my own practice as an artist and educator.

**Personal Impact: Becoming Network(ing)**

A becoming is neither one nor two, nor the relation of the two; it is the in-between... Becoming is the movement by which the line frees itself from the point, and renders points indiscernible: the rhizome... (Deleuze & Guittari, 1987, p. 293-294)

What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes. (Deleuze & Guittari, 1987, p. 238)

I began this dissertation acknowledging that I am an artist and an educator teaching art at the university level. What I didn’t disclose is that I have an ongoing fascination with the philosophy of the self, particularly in relation to understanding the self as a “plurality of simultaneous representations... a multitude of mutually contradicting yet addressed-to-each other statements” (Sidorkin, 1999, p. 43). This undoubtedly informed my choosing an interview research project that not only examines the content of knowledge but also “foregrounds issues of encountering the self through the otherness of knowledge” (Pitt & Britzman, 2003, p. 755). However, this research not only created moments where participants encountered themselves, it allowed me to contemplate my own multiple identities as a researcher, artist, and educator whose practices are similar to my participants. This further complicated the rhizomatic research process and potential described earlier, as I was simultaneously working on other projects that consisted of teaching, writing, art, and research. Through this dissertation research I have learned how to embrace the notion of ‘becoming’ and the value of moving ‘in-between’ multiple projects and

---

86 Perhaps a subject of future inquiry is: To what extent did the reflective co-inquiry and active interview (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, 2004) process have on the participants’ understandings of their artist-educator identities? Did the research process enable them to expand and/or articulate differently this knowledge? In the spirit of “getting lost again” (Lather, 2008), it would be interesting to interview the participants once again and reflect on this through “hermeneutic conversations” (Freeman, 2007), inspired by research that acknowledges the emergence of self and identity within interviews (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004; Wortham, 2000; Aoki, 2003/2005).
multiple identities of researcher, artist, teacher, collaborator, facilitator, networker, and learner. I have chosen to make real, at least for myself, a becoming-network(ing) of these identities in movement, by implementing the understandings of this research in ways that I never have before. As explained in the previous chapter, adapting to a networking practice of ‘becoming the medium’ requires a willingness to let go of preconceived notions of what an artist is and what a teacher is, and to live in the middle… but, always in process and always becoming, and for me it is a process of ongoing inquiry. This is important to the future of art education, and therefore I must live it.

I first introduced the concept of ‘becoming’ when discussing the work of Mark Amerika in Chapter 7, as this is a word he also uses in his own writings about art and pedagogy, and in relation to the notion of artist-medium. Deleuze and Guittari (1987) describe becoming as the in-between or the middle, further emphasizing that this is not merely about the relation of the two points. Because of this research, I feel that my networked practice as an artist/educator/researcher has evolved more towards a state of becoming, or networking. I feel motivated to “answer with my own life for what I have experienced and understood” (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 1) in my research.

Throughout the research process opportunities emerged in my art and teaching that allowed me to put the understanding of this research into practice. Instead of merely looking for relationships, I chose to experience the becoming, at times without set points of destination. Most recently, I find myself in a new country and in a rare teaching position that requires me to teach courses in traditional drawing and courses in digital media, yet I choose to challenge students with network and participatory projects using dialogical and collaborative means. I am also attempting to bring these new understandings into administrative tasks that are related to the development of a collaborative arts technology center, by providing an alternative voice to a ‘technology first’ financial approach to new developments taking place within a university College of the Arts. Previous to my current teaching position, I was involved in a collaborative art/pedagogy exhibition project that allowed me to really experience the network relationships between dialogical,
collaborative and performative understandings, which I was only beginning to recognize as being the main components to this research. Below I describe this particular art/pedagogy project I worked on – a network art project that unexpectedly emerged while completing this research.

**QR_U (an open school): Questions, Responses & Unofficial Conversations**

(see Figure 9.1, at the end of this chapter) was a relational and network art project that I created with fellow artists Lois Klassen, Elisa Yon, and Adam Stenbridge. The project/exhibition existed as a 10-day school-within-a-school at Emily Carr University of Art & Design, in Vancouver, Canada, during December, 2011. The project presented participants with a series of questions about their relationships with the arts, learning, and technology in order to generate dialogue through conversation, imagery, video, and text. The range of questions and ideas stemmed from three overarching themes: What is the new school of the arts? Where does learning happen? and, How can we learn to learn?

Participants could contribute to the ongoing dialogue in the ‘virtual school’ at [http://qruopenschool.ca](http://qruopenschool.ca) and within the physical space of the gallery by taking part in a series of events. The media and events in the gallery space were instigated by questions and responses generated at the QR_U virtual school, which continues to exist online indefinitely at the website listed above.

‘QR’ in the project title is a play on the abbreviated form of QR code, which actually stands for Quick Response. This project aimed to create an occasion for experimenting with and moving beyond the quick response. Participants were invited to access the website questions in the gallery by using the computer stations and by scanning the small and large QR codes (Figure 9.2). Each day during the 10-day

---

87 See [http://www.heidimay.ca/QR_U.html](http://www.heidimay.ca/QR_U.html) for a brief illustrated overview. To get a better sense of the network aspects of this project, in terms of the dialogical, collaborative, and performative components, it should be interacted with at [http://qruopenschool.ca](http://qruopenschool.ca)
exhibition images submitted to the website were mounted on the gallery walls. If a visitor scanned its adjacent QR code, he or she would be taken to the question that the image responded to. That individual could then choose to post a response.

Figure 9.2. Participant scanning QR code.

We intended to make visible the inside of an open school and to build a culture of exchange and dialogue – with multiple entry and exit points. Analysing it now in the context of this dissertation, the term ‘open school’ was used as a way of initiating an ongoing process of network relations that could be understood as an overlapping experience of art, teaching, and learning. The public gallery space was transformed into three open classrooms where events and discussions situated the project’s larger questions. QR_U brought together experimental approaches to teaching and learning and art practices that explore processes of knowledge, which contributed to the dialogical, collaborative and performative events that emerged. The project aimed to create an occasion and a setting to think about the future of the art school, in conjunction with and response to the ELIA international symposium hosted at Emily Carr University.88 QR_U (an open school) can be understood as an intervention in that it occupied the public gallery space of the school in a completely different way than previous uses – aesthetically, conceptually, and socially – and in the way it counteracted the hierarchical structure of the ELIA symposium located on the same campus. It was a social experiment and “a really transformative way of providing context for debate…It became a place where people stopped and listened” (Burnett in Uehi & Solomon, 2012, p. 5, ¶ 6).

88 The European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA) held the 5th ELIA Leadership Symposium: W/Here: Contesting Knowledge in the 21st Century at the Emily Carr University of Art and Design from December 7-9, 2011. More information about the symposium can be found at: http://elia.ecuad.ca/2011-symposium
**QR_U Exhibition Classroom**

A schedule of the Noon Time and open classroom events were displayed on a large painted chalkboard at the entrance into the exhibition space (Figure 9.3). This allowed staff, students, and the public to easily see the current events and acted as a set of reminders for people who were passing through. A bank of computers allowed visitors without smart mobile devices to engage with the virtual exhibition, inviting responses and questions to the content on our website as well as access to the living archive of videos and photo documentation.

**QR_U Virtual Classroom**

Our website, qruopenschool.ca, became a living archive as the exhibition evolved. We utilized several social media platforms to engage participants and to document the events and conversations. These included a self-publishing video platform (Vimeo), an open source image depository (Flickr), and Facebook and Twitter to keep virtual audiences updated with news and events (Figure 9.4).

**QR_U Off-Site Classroom**

A few of the QR_U exhibition events took place outside of the main student exhibition space that included the Emily Carr library for an event entitled: Reading Aloud with Dr. Randy L. Cutler and guest lecturer Magnolia Pauker. The noontime event engaged visitors, students, and faculty in an open reading and dialogue (Figure 9.5).

During the weeks leading up to the exhibition, video interviews were conducted with graduate students and members of the faculty. A series of questions concerning the broad themes of the symposium were asked and discussed amongst
students and staff. These interviews were edited and uploaded onto our video sharing platform (Vimeo), then linked to our website (Figure 9.6). The videos were also made accessible from the flat screen monitors and QR codes within the exhibition space.

The components of QR_U existed as a combination of social, aesthetic, and durational forms arranged to create an embodied discourse around art and education. The intervention of the gallery space challenged the traditional notion of an exhibition by producing a networked space of relational learning. The physical spaces were constantly rearranged to elicit conversation and dialogue amongst participants. Questions and responses to the virtual conversations were transmitted back to the physical space in a successive manner, ultimately producing a feedback loop between the captured responses on display and knowledges obtained and contested.
The QR_U project was conceived over several months of conversations with fellow artists and was never intended to be analysed in direct relation to this dissertation yet, while simultaneously working on both, I was always mindful of my being/becoming in the middle. With QR_U I was able to let go of a required research model and become engaged in the process of network art as a medium of relational learning and pedagogy. Through analysing the research of this dissertation, however, I was able to better comprehend the dialogical, collaborative, and performative aspects of network art/learning/teaching that involves art and technology in ways that move beyond digital.

Figure 9.5. Reading Aloud event.

Figure 9.6. Screenshot of video page on QR_U website.
Suggestions for Future Research

This research can potentially be applied to various contexts in the fields of art and education. I foresee possibilities for future art exhibitions, themed conference panels, and innovative online projects (networks in relation to one another) that aim to incorporate and examine relationships between network art and pedagogical projects – perhaps including reflexive inquiry of the dialogical, collaborative, and performative aspects of each.

I suggest that creative collaborative practices be examined alongside or together with educational research in an attempt to better understand network and shared processes of teaching and learning. Inquiring further into today’s art practices might advance educational research that is guided by theories of complexity thinking. Research such as this could also be used to inform or inspire future research in art teacher education programs, by perhaps having teacher candidates engage in both art and pedagogy projects that consist of dialogical, collaborative, and performative components.

In this dissertation I only touched the surface of the concept of performative learning; I am inspired by other research that examines notions of performative that I encountered in the process. I would like to do more work with the concept of performative learning in relation to network and interdisciplinary art practices. I intend for this research to contribute to future research projects that involve methodologies of active co-inquiry, narrative inquiry, and practice-led research. I feel there is space for pairing of this research with certain methodologies that push beyond narrow limitations, in an attempt to generate new understandings. Just as the content and theory of this research is based on knowledge understood as

89 In particular, I am inspired by and motivated to further examine three examples: 1) an interdisciplinary research project connected to the Tate, “Performance and Performativity,” that examined the “entwined concepts of performance art and performativity, and their application in the field of contemporary art and culture” http://www.tate.org.uk/about/projects/performance-and-performativity; 2) the work of performance artist and artist-educator Charles Garoian that deals with performance art pedagogy (1999a, 1999b) and prosthetic spaces of art and pedagogy (2013); and, 3) the research of Bolter et al. (2013) with the “performative character of digital media” (p. 330).

90 For example, Somerville (2007) proposed elements of a research methodology which she defined as “postmodern emergence,” where she applies the terms wondering, becoming, and generating as alternative ways of thinking (wondering) about ontology (becoming) and epistemology (generative).
processes of discovery and emergence, I imagine a future for research such as this that extends beyond theories of plausibility and possibility to potentiality (Triggs, Irwin & O’Donoghue, in press). In “Following A/r/tography in Practice: From Possibility to Potential,” Triggs, et al. (in press) with reference to Massumi (2002) argue that the concept of “potential may offer more helpful criteria for research objectives that do not want to narrow results to what is reproducible or to the bounds of what is possible.”

Similar to the rhizomatic potential of the format of this dissertation, discussed in the previous chapter, I foresee creative ways of engaging with the inquiry process itself that feeds off of the dynamic networks in the art and pedagogy practices examined. For instance, this research could be opened up to participatory projects that merge art and pedagogy, in which artists, educators and students engage in network and relational learning, perhaps in a similar format to Simon Levin’s Code.lab project. In his 2009 dissertation, Nathaniel Stern, also drawing upon Massumi (2002), conceptualized “potentialized art” as work that invests in or explores interactivity, relationality, and performance, even though audience interactivity is not essential to their existence. Stern’s intention was to offer new conceptual and material possibilities for understanding interactivity and embodiment in art. I suggest that the network art examined within this dissertation is perhaps another type of art that can exist within a “potentialized context” (Stern, 2009), wherein relational or performative learning may occur. A possible direction for future research in this area would be to explore the following question: How might the “performative character of digital media” (Bolter et al., 2013) be further explored in the spaces between art and learning, in ways that move the experience beyond digital?

The research for this dissertation has led me to understand the network relationships between art, learning, and pedagogy in a more complex manner. By examining the network artists’ ways of approaching art and teaching, I have learned that relational learning is at the core of each. It is my hope that network notions of both art and learning be considered as pedagogical models for post-secondary art programs and art education as a whole, and that this endeavor allow for expanded
understandings of the disciplines and media we teach. I suggest we inquire further into the networked sensibilities and ways of working/living that the artists in this research demonstrate; their ability to collaborate and move between multiple interdisciplinary projects wherein they are involved in ongoing learning.

Through this research I have become engaged in the process of ‘becoming network(ing)’ and have realized the value of moving in-between the multiple projects, experiences, and identities that make up one’s existence. I have learned that it is through these networked moments of becoming that one encounters the ephemeral self, whether in multiple form or as a subtle trace. Deleuze & Guittari (1987) described becoming as “neither one nor two, nor the relation of the two,” (p. 293) rather it is the movement in-between that defines this state, this way of being, becoming. I believe that ‘becoming the medium’ of our practices allows for an opening up of the spaces that exist between the various ways we work and live. When moving in-between spaces, always in process and always becoming, there is potential for ongoing inquiry to emerge – inquiry into media, objects, ideas, relationships, ourselves, etc. Becoming network(ing) is about living in a space made of up in-between spaces whereby one is involved in a constant state of “living inquiry” (Irwin, 2004) with his or her multiple networks. It is about embracing the movement and learning to see the potential for connections in between the networked processes.

It is with this knowledge that I move forward in an ongoing process of living in a space of becoming-network(ing). As I continue to embrace the movement and appreciate the networks already in formation, I intend to be open to what might emerge in the process and to the potential of the unknown.
Figure 9.1. QR_U (an open school): Questions, Responses & Unofficial Conversations, created by Lois Klassen, Heidi May, Adam Stenhouse, and Elisa Yon, 2011 (virtual school ongoing at http://qruopenschool.ca). All photos courtesy of the artists.
References


Krauss, R. (1976). Video, the aesthetics of narcissism. October 1, Spring, 50-64.


intersections of art, science, technology and culture (pp. 85-110). Chicago, IL: Intellect Books Ltd.


Appendix: Mailing List Correspondence

The mailing list of the Institute for Distributed Creativity (iDC)
www.distributedcreativity.org

The research of the Institute for Distributed Creativity (iDC) focuses on collaboration in media art, technology, and theory with an emphasis on social contexts

* iDC has a Creative Commons license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/1.0/) and the content below is available online to the public at: http://blog.gmane.org/gmane.culture.media.idc

******

Excerpts from December 2010 and January 2011 mailing list threads:

From:xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
Date: December 16, 2010 12:32:56 PM EST
To:xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
Subject: iDC Digest, Vol 71, Issue 8

Today's Topics:
1. Off Topic: Defining networked art (Heidi May)
2. Re: Off Topic: Defining networked art (Brian Holmes)
3. Re: Off Topic: Defining networked art xxxxxxxxxxxx
4. Re: Off Topic: Defining networked art (Jesse Drew)

Message: 1
Date: Wed, 15 Dec 2010 22:18:15 -0800
From: Heidi May <xxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
Subject: [iDC] Off Topic: Defining networked art

What is network and/ or networked art?
The main question is quite simple, but as you will see I have been delving into philosophy and art history to get to a better understanding of the meaning of "network" in art:

For the past several months I have been thinking deeply about this. I spent the summer working on comprehensive exam papers for my current PhD program, in which I defined for myself a definition of networked art that I felt was perhaps a challenge to the mainstream notion of “network”. Without getting too much into the literature I based this on (ie. Jean-Luc Nancy), I argued that by using the word network, the Internet itself is predominant over any other associations we might have (see Sack, 2007 on “network aesthetics”) and that if artist educators focus more on what emerges within the relations and processes of a network, such as with Internet art, then we can perhaps gain new understandings of network culture that reflect more the sociocultural aspects as opposed to just the technological aspects. I refer to Fluxus practices, most specifically mail art, and the ideas explored by George Maciunas and Robert Filliou, connecting this to later relational art and participatory art practices. My interests pertain to aspects of what I am calling “relational learning,” thus I see these networked forms of art to be significant...yet not just in terms of individuals collaborating, but most importantly on the emergent knowledge that occurs in these processes.

Within my recent writing, I suggest that we need to expand our understanding of networked art in order to obtain new understandings of network culture. I have been defining “networked art” as the following:

“...practices not based on art objects, nor digital instruments, but on the relationships and processes that occur between individuals (Bazzichelli, 2008; Kimbell, 2006; Saper, 2001)....Networked art, sometimes described as participation art (Frielinger, Pellico, & Zimbardo, 2008), consists of multiple connections made
through generative processes, often, but not always, incorporating digital technology. In many cases, the production and dissemination processes become the artwork itself."

"....New understandings of network culture may require us to understand that technology enables social and economic activities, as opposed to something that determines society (Castells, 2001). This research will examine how art addresses aspects of network culture, in terms of it being a sociocultural shift that is not limited to digital technology (Varnelis, 2008)...By employing a broader understanding of the notion of network within analysis of networked art, this research aims to provide deeper understandings of network culture...

But after sitting with these ideas for awhile now and being confronted with needing to write a research proposal, I'm in the doubting phase that I think all graduate students go through. Is it really possible to use the term "networked art" in the way I would like to without it immediately conjuring up digital practices alone? (even though I acknowledge this in my argument) Am I just confusing things by saying that I am indeed interested in Internet art practices but only aspects I have defined above, and particularly in cases of artists who are interdisciplinary vs. strictly “digital”? Do people think about the differences between “network art” and networked art? the same way they might have distinguished between “net art” and “net.art”? In my past writing, I have opted to go with “networked” over “network” because there is more emphasis on being within a process (verb. vs. noun), but now I'm starting to regret that, thinking that “networked” might clearly imply dependence on an electronic system whereas a "network" might allow for more human connection. (For those who are familiar....I am a bit torn between Craig Saper's (2001) use of the term “networked art” and Tom Corby's (2006) use of the term “network art”)

To make matters somewhat worse, I've been told by someone I respect in this area that the notion of "network" is not heavily dependent on "internet," considering the long history of network associations before the internet. But this is someone who is quite knowledgeable of network notions in academia and English literature, and I question if those outside of academia feel the same way today. Speaking as an artist who teaching art at universities and college, I feel that "networked art" is immediately associated with digital and new media.

Thoughts? Opinions?

thanks,
Heidi May

HEIDI MAY
http://heidimay.ca
Instructor, Emily Carr University of Art + Design. http://www.ecuad.ca/people/profile/14163
PhD student, University of British Columbia. http://edcp.educ.ubc.ca/

Message: 2
Date: Thu, 16 Dec 2010 09:53:53 -0600
From: Brian Holmes <xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
Subject: Re: [iDC] Off Topic: Defining networked art

I like this genealogical definition of network art very much, particularly its roots in the work of Robert Filliou and the mail artists. Imho it's the untold prehistory of the organizational forms and intrinsic sociability of the information age. I always wanted to write about such topics in the exquisite detail that you're clearly headed towards, but all I got in the end was the third section of an omnibus essay about, well, everything under the sun (plus vampires in the conclusion):

http://brianholmes.wordpress.com/2007/02/26/the-absent-rival

If you look in that third section you'll see that in 1992 the mail artist Vittorio Baroni made "networking" into the trunk of his "Organic Tree" of multiply authored art forms. The "ing" may be the way for you to go, Heidi. To my ear and eye, "networked" is ineradicably associated with a slew of cables running under the
Pacific and Atlantic oceans. At this point it is difficult to even remind people that there was history before Facebook, so you're right, there's an issue with the vocabulary. I would vote for "networking," "networking art," "networking practices in art," and so on, with copious allusions to Filliou's "Eternal Network." But with any luck you will now get a rush of distributed creativity on this question, and when all the advice has been sifted you can tranquilly continue what looks like a great great project!

best of luck with it, Brian

Message: 3
Date: Thu, 16 Dec 2010 05:19:11 -0800 (PST)
From: xxxxxxxxxxxxx
Subject: Re: [iDC] Off Topic: Defining networked art

I don't consider it a useful distinction (other than to briefly procure insider institutional status); it's merely akin to older, unfashionable terms like "video art" and "photographic art."

/:
PROXY Gallery
global islands project:
http://bbrace.net/id.html

Message: 4
Date: Thu, 16 Dec 2010 09:29:56 -0800
From: Jesse Drew <xxxxxxxxxxxxx>
Subject: Re: [iDC] Off Topic: Defining networked art
To: Heidi May <xxxxxxxxxxxxx>

I assume you've seen this collection?
At A Distance: Precursors to Art and Activism on the Internet, edited by Annmarie Chandler and Norie Neumark (2005, MIT Press).

-Jesse Drew
Jesse Drew, Ph.D.
Director, Technocultural Studies
University of California at Davis

End of iDC Digest, Vol 71, Issue 8
**************************

From: xxxxxxxxxxxxx
Date: December 17, 2010 7:00:01 AM EST
To: xxxxxxxxxxxxx
Subject: iDC Digest, Vol 71, Issue 9

Today's Topics:
1. Re: Off Topic: Defining networked art (Snafu)
2. Re: Off Topic: Defining networked art (jonCates)
__________________________________________________________

Message: 1
Date: Thu, 16 Dec 2010 13:37:52 -0500
From: xxxxxxxxxxxxx
Subject: Re: [iDC] Off Topic: Defining networked art

Heidi,
I agree with you and Brian, there is no way of bypassing mail art when you tell the history of network(ed) art.
In a book I co-authored in Italian a while ago I defined net.art (with the dot) as an Internet-based art which
is simultaneously an art of networking. Conversely, net art would define an art that relied on the Internet mainly as a distribution channel, with no intention to set in motion circuits of exchange. This definition was largely based on debates that took place on nettime in the mid-1990s, Andreas Broeckman's definition of the aesthetics of the machinic, and some of the networking practices you are describing below.

Now, it is certainly true that the term "networked art" is mostly associated with the Internet. However, there are way of expanding the connotative field of the term by expanding the definition of "what is a network" beyond the Internet. For instance, in this essay (http://deseriis.networkedbook.org) I tried to expand on Samuel Weber's suggestion that what holds a network together are the narratives and stories that people tells. Drawing on Arquilla and Ronfeldt's notorious essay on Netwar, in Target of Opportunities Weber conflates military, religious, and Internet-based networks to suggest that narratives come to play a crucial cohesive function when a center lacks a center or a leader. This is particularly true when we start thinking of networks in a diachronic rather than merely synchronic fashion. Simply put, if monotheistic religions have survived well beyond the life and death of their prophets it is because their words were translated into messianic narratives that were powerful enough to be handed down over centuries. Likewise, I believe that as a credo free software will survive the Richard Stallmans and Linus Torvalds only if besides producing reliable software the Free Software movement will be able to produce stories that inspire generation to come. (Steven Levy's Hackers: Heroes of the Computer Revolution is an important contribution in that direction, imho).

All of this is to say that once we provide an inter-generational definition of what is a network, a networked art can be understood as an art that is handed down from node-to-node and link-to-link. So I would personally not worry too much over how the term is generally understood, but rather how you define your term(s) and whether you make clear that your definition of networked art exceeds the boundaries of techno-determinism.

best,  
Marco Deseriis

Message: 2  
Date: Thu, 16 Dec 2010 14:05:57 -0600  
From: jonCates <xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx >  
Subject: Re: [iDC] Off Topic: Defining networked art

Marco Deseriis xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx wrote:

"Conversely, net art would define an art that relied on the Internet mainly as a distribution channel, with no intention to set in motion circuits of exchange."

this is currently discussed in sum New Media Art circles as "internet aware art" i.e. via Guthrie Lonergan, Parker Ito, Samuel D. York, etc... for sum connections to that see:
http://122909a.com/?p=62
http://www.artfagcity.com/2008/06/12/net-aesthetics-20-the-long-of-it/

etc...

i simply use phrases such as web-based, code-based, screen-based, time-based, etc to express specificities in terms of those types of lens/frames. i find that to be enough clarification in most cases

+ i would also vote w/Brian on "networking art" or "networking theory practices" b/c (as is obvious) this moves the description away from the problematic of a technical medium specificity that { brad brace } refers to when he raises the issue of the category/name of Video Art

// jonCates  
Associate Professor  
Film, Video, New Media & Animation dept
I think a similar approach to yours was tried by Simon Pope when he curated the travelling exhibition Art for Networks in 2002. You can find a review here: [http://www.a-n.co.uk/interface/reviews/single/67732](http://www.a-n.co.uk/interface/reviews/single/67732) It has been quite a while ago and I don't want to misrepresent Simon's views (you can find an interview here where he explains his intentions [http://sites.google.com/site/ambulantscience/Index/texts](http://sites.google.com/site/ambulantscience/Index/texts)) but as far as I understood he wanted to establish a richer and technology neutral understanding of networks; this at a time just a few years after some artists who were seen at the time to be leading net.artists had very publicly resigned.

In my catalogue contribution I consciously focused on wireless free community networks to highlight the physicality and reality of networks and that building networks can be concomitant with building communities (which is very different from saying that networks foster communities which was one of the tropes of the 1990s).

The problem with a technology-neutral view of networks and highlighting just the processes and communications is that you are engaging only with one specific layer, the top layer of symbolic exchanges and human understandable meanings. Below that however are several other layers which shape those communications insofar as they make possible certain things and disallow others. By ignoring all those layers they become a technological subconscious, a repressed which will return, demand its right to be recognised. It is like you want to talk about the beauty of mobility culture, i.e. cars without acknowledging that they are a disaster for the environment in quite many ways.

Similar to see mail art as a predecessor for net art is all well in a certain sense but in another way it is a bit misleading. networks are now near ubiquitous, you have them on your phone and on your computer, you have them even in quite remote areas. networks and computation are still the major driving engine of economic growth - which is something you cant say of the postal networks of the 1960s-70s. For instance, reading an article on Google recently in the FT the author pointed out how it was Google's strategy to use the mobile phone operating system Android to also get into people's homes, to become part of the infrastructure of networked households. Now that's a viral strategy which is absolutely really stunning as it is based on a dialectics between being very small, very viral, just a piece of software, a widget voluntarily installed by people on their own phones, and this being brought together at the back end in giant data warehouses which harvest ever more knowledge about people and their relationships.

Now those net-entrepreneurs still understand the net much better than any artists and theorists which is
unfortunate because what they are planning is both admirably smart and really evil and goes on unchecked if people like us focus on producing beautiful ideas on the symbolic layer alone. Castells made a big effort to understand the net but his assessment is too optimistic and he fetishises the network form, so in the end he is deterministic. Maybe the question will soon be how we defend ourselves against networks, you know, skynet and all that; -)

regards
Armin

Message: 2
Date: Thu, 16 Dec 2010 22:55:47 -0800
From: Heidi May <xxxxxxxxxxxxx>
Subject: Re: [iDC] Off Topic: Defining networked art

Brian:
Thanks very much for the input, I appreciate all the encouragement I can get! I'll take a look at your blog as soon as I can. I think you are on to something with the "ing" and I had been thinking about this before so I'm really glad you brought it up - aligns with other research I have down about noun/verb and being "in process" and related to my theoretical framework of a temporal epistemology (not fixed, but knowledge in flux). Plus...one of my favourite resources that I am sticking by (Bazzichelli, 2008) is actually titled "Networking: The Net as Artwork" - which you can download here: http://www.networkingart.eu/english.html

I think why I was resistant to it at first was the same reason I am sometimes resistant to both "network" and "networked," being that they all conjure associations of business and marketing, and I'm trying to focus more on the abstract processes of the components that produce the artworks. [By the way, the Bazzichelli book references Barona a fair bit I think]

Brad:
I actually don't consider it a useful distinction either, which is why I want to challenge and unpack the terminology in order to allow for better understandings of what "network/ed/ing" in art could potentially be. I also don't like "video art" and many other labels as it is restrictive and not representative of the work. I actually am even more resistant when these labels are placed next to "artist" since I find that even more restrictive and dated for art today.

Jesse:
Yes, thanks....but glad you brought it up since a couple of other people have mentioned it recently and I will need to return back to it more thoroughly.

Message: 3
Date: Fri, 17 Dec 2010 00:06:12 -0800
From: Heidi May <xxxxxxxxxxxxx>
Subject: Re: [iDC] Off Topic: Defining networked art

Armin,
Thanks for your thoughts. I will have to read over your links and think more about all of this. I really appreciate your input.

For now though, I do want to clarify that I don't intend to take a technology-neutral view of networks, I just don't want to over-emphasize the technology of the networks. And in order to do, I feel that certain theories of being (ie. Jean-Luc Nancy) might better inform a fuller and broader understanding of the notion of network and network culture. I'm also influenced by Kazys Varnelis's writing "The Immediated Now: Network Culture and the Poetics of Reality" http://varnelis.networkedbook.org/the-immediated-now-network-culture-and-the-poetics-of-reality/

I am now wondering if there was something in what I wrote that gave you that impression (I will have to examine that more, maybe there is something I don't see in how I am communicating my interests). It could be that I didn't clearly express what I perhaps take for granted with my work, in that this is a critical inquiry into the role technology plays in our lives. For me, it is quite obvious what the advantages are and
I think people see this quite clearly, and perhaps they see clearly the strong disadvantages. However, I'm interested in exploring the complexity and what is not made visible. Yes, in some cases, this may be the abstract qualities and the symbolic exchanges and the potential for learning. But...the theories of learning I refer to discuss how we often actually learn through conflict and difference, through situations of tension.

ARMIN: "Similar to see mail art as a predecessor for net art is all well in a certain sense but in another way it is a bit misleading. networks are now near ubiquitous, you have them on your phone and on your computer, you have them even in quite remote areas. networks and computation are still the major driving engine of economic growth - which is something you cant say of the postal networks of the 1960s-70s."

HEIDI: -- Yes, I'm glad you are pointing these things out as it is keeping me in check with the complexity of my research.

ARMIN: "Now those net-entrepreneurs still understand the net much better than many artists and theorists which is unfortunate because what they are planning is both admirably smart and really evil and goes on unchecked if people like us focus on producing beautiful ideas on the symbolic layer alone. Castells made a big effort to understand the net but his assessment is too optimistic and he fetishises the network form, so in the end he is deterministic."

HEIDI: -- I definitely don't want to rely on Castells, or any one theorist. So, I'm wondering if there is anything you feel, based on your experience with thinking about all of this, that artists and educators of artists should be doing in this area (in the ideal situation of course). Speaking as an artist educator, how should we be incorporating this subject matter into the projects we assign to art students at universities and colleges? How can we push artists and theorists forward to participate more with understandings of the net? Do you see ANY value at all in revisiting pre-digital network practices and perhaps extending some of that thinking/working into explorations of current networks, and the relationships that transpire and exit with/in the networks? Is philosophical thinking of us AS the network helpful in any way and, if so, how can we integrate this into art education?

Things to think about if you have the time....and hopefully you do!

Heidi

End of IDC Digest, Vol 71, Issue 10

******************************************************************************

From: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
Date: December 18, 2010 7:00:02 AM EST
Subject: IDC Digest, Vol 71, Issue 11
Today's Topics:
1. Re: Off Topic: Defining networked art (Andreas Schiffler)
******************************************************************************

Message: 1
Date: Fri, 17 Dec 2010 08:44:09 -0800
From: Andreas Schiffler <xxxxxxxxxxx>
Subject: Re: [IDC] Off Topic: Defining networked art

In technological networks one distinguishes the following dimensions for example:
- topology: star, ring, mesh
- scale: local, wide, global, virtual/overlay
- connection: wired, wireless, RF, IR
plus other factors such as security or speed.

These "tags" do - at least to some degree - apply to most digital art, but are not synonymous with "the net" (aka Internet) as they are much more abstract. While technical in nature, they may also be transferable to non-digital artifacts and art allowing some of the technical analysis to be transposed out if its common use. For example the "star network" has - technically speaking - some advantageous properties (good performance, node isolation, simplicity) as well as disadvantages (hub dependence, size limitation,
expensive network). I believe that it would be quite interesting to apply such concepts outside its normal engineering space to gain insights into the networked artistic processes and might help add to your work on a "definition".

--Andreas

End of iDC Digest, Vol 71, Issue 11
********************************************************************************

From: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
Date: December 19, 2010 11:29:31 AM EST
To: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
Subject: iDC Digest, Vol 71, Issue 12

Today's Topics:
1. Re: Off Topic: Defining networked art
2. Re: Off Topic: Defining networked art (Radhika Gajjala)
–

Message: 1
Date: Sun, 19 Dec 2010 00:02:14 +0000
From: <xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
Subject: Re: [iDC] Off Topic: Defining networked art

Hi Heidi and all,

I do, like Brian, think you are researching a very very interesting subject. However reading through the posts a question came up. Can it be that the very interesting struggles/questions you are having are precisely because art you refer to resists definitions based on materiality, media, concepts, political stance, locality, etc..?

All the best!

Aharon
xx

Message: 2
Date: Sun, 19 Dec 2010 09:44:43 -0500
From: Radhika Gajjala <xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
Subject: Re: [iDC] Off Topic: Defining networked art

Good point Aharon.
might be a good idea to start doing a search for locative media (art) as well... and see how it connects/relates to the notion of networked art

Dale Hudson and Patricia Zimmerman have some work about Locative media where they talk about the spatio-temporal reconfiguring that that reflects...


also - I don’t know how many of you are also on the Air-l list proc – but recently there was an exchange about MMORPGS and Virtual worlds and someone fwded a link to a thesis that does an interesting critique that in my reading dislodges the ever continuing binary of virtual and real in the way that we articulate our research projects... (see http://info.tse.fi/julkaisut/vk/Ae11_2009.pdf )

--
Message: 1
Date: Sun, 19 Dec 2010 16:08:07 -0600
From: Brian Holmes <xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
Subject: Re: [iDC] Off Topic? Not really...

On 12/16/2010 12:37 PM, Snafu wrote:
I tried to expand on Samuel Weber's suggestion that what holds a network together are the narratives and stories that people tells. Drawing on Arquilla and Ronfeldt's notorious essay on Netwar, in Target of Opportunities Weber conflates military, religious, and Internet-based networks to suggest that narratives come to play a crucial cohesive function when a center lacks a center or a leader. This is particularly true when we start thinking of networks in a diachronic rather than merely synchronic fashion. This thread ended Micha's earlier one about how to start a movement in an alienating environment like University of California at San Diego. But I'd say the two are intimately linked, around the question of social cohesion that Snafu is raising. How to build intense and lasting political relations in a society that aims to individualize you, to careeerize you, to map out your desires the way biologists used to stick a butterfly on a pin? How to pass those relational forms down over time and even over generations?

Of course I totally agree with my companero Armin Medosch's idea that there is no technologically neutral network. In fact my "Absent Rival" text (linked in a previous mail) centers on the industrial production of exactly the kinds of electronic widgets that Armin describes, memory aids and relationship devices, with their strategies for getting inside your house and getting under your skin. These industrially produced devices are what Bernard Stiegler, following Foucault, describes as "hypomnemata," technologies for exteriorizing subjective experience and thereby engaging in shared (but also massively imposed) practices of collective self-fashioning. How to rival with those technopolitical strategies, how to propose a different way of creating yourself in relation to other people?

If the mail art genealogy for counter-cultural networking practices is important, is because it reveals some of the forms of sociability that predated the Internet and allowed for early subversive uses, in what was essentially a passage of generations. Luther Blisset, an Italian group of subversively networked literary production that Heidi surely knows quite well, was probably the clearest example of a mediation between the older mail art culture and the new forms of social experimentation that developed in activist circles in the 1990s. But the very possibility of this generational mediation was not an accident. To understand the Internet and how it took on its social form, you also have to realize that an open communications system was ardently desired by many people in the innovative, rebellious and chaotic years of the 1960s and 70s: that was exactly the message of Pynchon's fantastic little book on an alternative postal system, The Crying of Lot 49. The hacker narratives that Snafu points to are another kind of mediation, this time between Cold War military culture and a new sort of networked public sphere: we can see the amazing fruit they are bearing today, with the advent of WikiLeaks and its like. How do such subversive groups arise? Through specific techniques of subjectivation in rivalry with dominant functions.
A piece of mail art can, at least sometimes, quite literally be a “story”: but it is also a visual input, a practice of making, a protocol of addressing, a habit of receiving and even a way to break one's own habits, to keep open a form of experimentation. To the extent that mail art pieces are unfinished and ask for modification, they are temporal objects unfolding in time. The rhythm of exchange keeps open a relation between senders-receivers. But this malleability of the transitional medium, according to Karen Knorr Cetina, is exactly the characteristic of an "epistemic object," whether it's a continuously updated piece of software (like the Linux OS on which I write), a stream of financial information, a feed of words or images etc. You "consume" such unfolding objects by intervening in the temporal flow at an opportune moment, making an adjustment, placing a bet, injecting a twist on the message: and such interventions have become one of the primary modes of work-activity in the semiotic economy. The political question is how to set up forms and rhythms of exchange that twist away from the dominant patterns of social interaction that isolate people, that wall them up in their poverty or their privileges?

Like Snafu (and I guess, Samuel Webber) I wrote a text about that, focusing not so much on stories per se (though I agree they are important) as on the visual cues, machinic protocols, ethical principles and philosophical/metaphysical horizons that structure a networking relation and keep it coherent over distance and time. Drawing on Knorr Cetina's work among others, I wanted to suggest that there have been and will continue to be rival strategies for collective self-fashioning in the informational era:

http://brianholmes.wordpress.com/2007/07/21/swarmachine

Armin is totally right to point to the dialectical relationship between the software app Android nestling in an individual's palm, and the massive data-warehousing of information on the habits, desires and dreams of entire populations. But if the relationship is dialectical, then the struggle is over what its contradiction will produce, where the significant antithesis will emerge. Clearly we can all be reduced to zombies by this stuff: that is the message of The Matrix. And we can dangle our very selves on the hierarchical desire to become superior manipulators: that is the message of untold thousands of "golden boy" narratives in the high-end world of corporate consultants and financial traders. But there are also cultures of subversion and revolt and transformation, however fragile they may be and however scary for some. Often these cultures go unnoticed for years and generations, there is no response, no interlocutor, no visible rivalry, as was usually the case with tactical media interventions like those of the Yes Men. Today, WikiLeaks has opened an explicit breach in the media system. I think we need many more, on different scales and of different kinds. Let a thousand subversive networks bloom.

best, Brian

---

End of iDC Digest, Vol 71, Issue 14

From:  
Date: December 21, 2010 7:00:02 AM EST  
To:  
Subject: iDC Digest, Vol 71, Issue 15

Today's Topics:
1. Re: Off Topic? Not really... (jonCates)
2. Re: Off Topic: Defining networked art (Simon Biggs)

Message: 1
Date: Sun, 19 Dec 2010 22:47:31 -0600
From: jonCates <jonCates@xxxxxxxxxxx>
Subject: Re: [iDC] Off Topic? Not really...
yes, let thousands of countless subversive networks leak
// jonCates, Associate Professor
Film, Video, New Media & Animation dept
The School of the Art Institute of Chicago
http://systemsapproach.net
Hi Seeta

It's important that somebody is writing these pieces. We lost Carl Loeffler a few years ago and Judith Hoffberg last year, key people in La Mamelle and the mail-art and art-zine scene in San Francisco through the 70's and 80's. History's are harder to write without primary sources. It's also important to recognise that this scene, whilst often geo-localised, had nodes all over the world. Santiago de Chile and Adelaide, Australia (my original hometown) were two that were very active - I think a sense of isolation was a driver in the early artistic engagement with communications media, along with personalities. The people involved in this area were geographically scattered but worked hard to establish connections in what seemed a generally indifferent, if not hostile, climate.

Whilst some of this activity is recognised as part of the pre-history of contemporary networked art practices much of it remains below the radar. For example, one of the major figures of that time was Eugenio Dittborn. He remains a respected but rather obscure artist, not part of mainstream discourse on the arts. His thing was airmail paintings, produced as a direct response to the political turmoil in Chile during the 70's and 80's and the daily censorship he had to deal with. With growing political censorship of the internet becoming the norm (China and Australia are two examples, but the UK government has today announced its intention to introduce blanket internet content filtering - it already runs light-touch filtering to take out kiddy-porn) it would seem that interest in the work of artists such as Dittborn may revive, as it serves as an indicative precursor for others.

Best

Simon Biggs

http://www.littlepig.org.uk/
http://www.elmcip.net/
http://www.eca.ac.uk/circle/

End of iDC Digest, Vol 71, Issue 15

----------------------------------------------------------------------
Message: 1
Date: Thu, 30 Dec 2010 15:33:26 -0500
From: Sean Justice
Subject: Re: [iDC] Net & Network :: Off Topic? Not really... (Sean Justice)

Hi Heidi and all who've joined this thread.
I'm afraid that the year-end insanity kept me away from this conversation almost entirely, but I was listening as much as I could. Even though I'm so very late, perhaps there's time for one further thought before the clock ticks over and wipes the slate clean.

The question about network art resonates strongly for me. But from the perspective of art education, the
issue of definitions and art products can sometimes tangent away from the day to day work we do, and the conversations we have, with students. In my work with undergraduate and graduate students, both in art schools and in education schools, the focus on ‘what something is’ gets in the way (sometimes) of ‘why we care’ or ‘why we think we care’....admittedly this is a thin slice on something much larger, and the subtleties are going to get lost, so this note is just a brief tweak on the already thick exchange of the last few weeks.

For instance, as an introduction for how we get into the work of connecting with our own social (exterior) and individual (interior) processes, I’m lately proposing that students position their thinking along several interrelated vectors of intentionality? one of which is “net” (i.e., not “network”). Yes it appears as a simple semantic shift, but it opens the conversation to relationality that the word “network” might miss (because it’s so tightly linked with “internet”, as has been discussed). So, for example, whether or not a mail art project or an internet project (or etc.) is the formal outcome, if the artist’s impulse is connection and relationships, and if the form of the work evolves through a nodular structure of shared experience, then the motivation of the work can be positioned as “net” -- and in class and in the lab we can map our individual work into a larger context that can be productive and enlightening.

Two examples I point to are Hiroshi Sunairi’s Tree Project (http://treeproject.blogspot.com/) and Jordan Seiler’s Public Ad Campaign (http://www.publicadcampaign.com/index.php). Yes, they both include the web in their formal arrangements, but that’s a narrow and potentially misleading way to define what these projects are about. That is, to focus on the “network” aspect of the formal structure of either of these projects would be to potentially miss the issues of community, history, public space, etc., that the artists are engaging. And to focus on defining “network art” as a category would potentially overlook both of these projects altogether.

In seminars these days I find that young BFA and older MFA folks respond well to the notion that we don’t have to begin our conversation by talking about what something ‘is’ -- and I’m surprised, actually, that this is new to them, because ‘process’ as a way of working is already so firmly established in our academies.

But I guess I’m trying to interweave the ‘concept’ that informs the output, with the ‘output’ itself, and to bring that relation to the forefront. The dynamic starts to become visible (sometimes) when we position ourselves within a relational history of objects, materials, forms, and the new arrangements of them that continue to emerge. The conversation works well when students can acknowledge that the stuff they’re making might not yet have crystallized as a ‘thing’ in the language we use to describe it. It’s a conundrum, for sure. But the conversation about ‘net’ is way to start.

(The other vectors on this matrix of intentionality-mapping, by the way, are surface, lens, and code....and I wish I had an essay to link on it, but I don’t. Rather it’s still an evolving conversation in the seminar and lab, etc., though most likely the sources and informants are probably already visible to folks on this list... )

Anyway, speaking as an artist and art educator, the conversation around these new forms helps us all (students, instructors, artists, audiences) map the boundaries that hold us apart from each other; and, by illuminating those boundaries, points us toward new ways to transgress them. That might be naively optimistic. But these ideas and expansions help revive me for the new term to come.

Thanks again for all the links and ideas posted on this topic the last several weeks; and thanks again to Heidi for opening the thread with the question about network art in the first place.

Happy new year to all~~~

Sean Justice
--
Sean Justice
Photographer | Artist | Educator
Columbia University Teachers College
Arts & Art Education
Doctoral Student & Instructor
New Media Art Education
From: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
Date: January 11, 2011 7:00:03 AM EST
To: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
Subject: iDC Digest, Vol 72, Issue 1

Today's Topics:
1. Re: Net & Network :: Off Topic? Not really... (Heidi May)

Message: 1
Date: Mon, 10 Jan 2011 17:32:23 -0800
From: Heidi May <xxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
Subject: Re: [iDC] Net & Network :: Off Topic? Not really...

Hi Sean,

I'm just getting back to being able to review this conversation in-depth, now that I'm working on my research proposal again. To be honest, I was quite surprised that my question received so many responses considered the busy time of year for everyone. I anticipated less reaction but was at that point when I really needed to hear/read what others thought...

I really appreciate your response....it has given me even more to think about... It seems we have very similar interests in the power/control that language can have on our perception of meaning and experience. I like your use of the word 'net' and how you are using it with students. However, (and mainly to keep this level of critical discussion going with language/perception) if the purpose is to open the conversations to relationality than why use 'net' at all, why not connect, join, link, etc. Then again, perhaps this is the direction where the discussion and/or artwork moves towards within the classroom, considering you are approaching this with a pedagogic mind. Right now, for my own purposes, I am examining this language in the context of scholarly research, however, if I were designing it for a student audience, particularly an art student audience in which I intended teaching and learning to emerge, than I might take a different approach. But now you've got me thinking....

My immediate reaction to your posting was that, in my opinion, 'net' has very similar connotations to 'network'...in terms of the internet. But maybe that's just me, someone has spent too much time thinking about semantics. I've been influenced by the writing of Ted Aoki the past year, and I bring his name up since you are in the education field so are likely familiar with his work with curriculum theory. Aoki wrote that we are habituated to dwell in a noun-oriented world and encouraged us to examine the seemingly insignificant words (and, with, or, etc.) and the linguistic pauses (.../ ; / , / - ) between nouns and things, in order to be aware of that which exists alongside and in relation to the elements - elements that often include ourselves.

I think the bottom line, which was covered by several respondents to this thread, is perhaps not to concern ourselves too much with the exact word but to provide enough clarification through phrase and context in our language. Part of me still worries about this though, since language is always reduced. And, I totally agree with you about not limiting things to words...

thanks again for the input,
Heidi

End of iDC Digest, Vol 72, Issue 1
******************************************************************************