ART EDUCATION AND NEW MEDIA: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLES OF ARTISTS AND EDUCATORS IN THE AGE OF IMMEDIACY

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an act of inquiry into the entangled relationship between new media and art and how art education should re-position itself towards the cultural, political, and social shifts brought on by new media. By positioning new media as an entity yet-to-be-understood, I drew upon Marshall McLuhan’s writings as well as diverse and intersecting views of new media from debates and discussions occurring in multiple fields of studies. These are offered in the hopes of providing various spaces in which we may think about what art and art education is and can be as well as to expose the complexity behind thinking about the relationships among the following terms: contemporary, new, media, art, and education. Questions raised in this study do not stem from a mode of resistance nor celebration, but rather from the positions of being an educator, an artist, and a researcher who seeks to critically and reflexively examine and make sense of her role and that of others in this creative ecology. Toward the end of this journey, it became more evident that new media indeed needs to be embraced and its potentials recognized if art education is to revitalize its curricula and pedagogies. However, to do so, I argue that we must approach new media through art first and foremost, and then new media, focusing on cultivating an environment within which new media is approached and understood from the perspective of artists.
PREFACE

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Anna Ryoo.
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DEDICATION

To my parents who taught me what trust means

To my sister without whom I would not be where I am today

And to Richie who held our family together and brought us into the light.

I miss you dearly.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The human sensorium has always been mediated... but over the past few decades that condition has greatly intensified. Amplified, shielded, channeled, prosthethized, simulated, stimulated, irritated – our sensorium is more mediated today than ever before. Yet it bothers us less. The cyborg model of the 1980s and the virtual dreams of the 1990s have evolved into a twenty-first century “comfort zone,” in which the prosthetic and supplemental are habitual. (Jones, 2006, p. 5)

Figure 1. Confession

When a new technology product, or a state of the art as they are often referred to, becomes available on the market, technology enthusiasts camp outside the stores to be the first ones to get their hands on them like the young diehard fans of celebrities minus the
screams and tears. These products are treated more and more as celebrities of its own kind like supermodels on billboards, complete with its own physical and virtual accessories.

The fast-paced development of technology is unprecedented. The iPad, first of its kind with touch interface, was débuted in 2010. It mesmerized us all because of its visuality, capability, portability, and most importantly, its large touch screen. It was an extension of ourselves like no other we had ever before. And then, of course, it soon became outdated when other devices entered the market, such as iPad 2, Tesco Hudl, Sony Xperia Tablet Z, Samsung Galaxy Tabs, ASUS, iPad Air, and Microsoft Surface Pro 3 to name a few. People using portable devices with touch screens have become a mundane sight, performing a wide variety of different tasks, constantly producing, consuming, and disseminating overabundant information un/consciously.

How do we make sense of vast digital explorations we are going through? New media has opened up numerous possibilities and opportunities in every aspect of our lives that most of us only imagined or saw others’ imaginations unfold on screens. Who would have thought that we would be able to Twit and chat live with Chris Hayfield, a Canadian astronaut who was the first to use the technology as a tool to educate the public in ways that no other astronauts have attempted before? There are now millions of online resources available with which anyone can easily access and customize without time or money constraints. We have become increasingly dependent of online resources and expect instant gratification through getting answers in milliseconds. We breathe with smartphones that have capabilities beyond what their name suggests, and they have evolved into almost living beings that stay awake, are constantly fed, and are connected to myriad virtual spaces. We live in an intensified, cacophonous, simultaneous environment in the age of immediacy where fabrication,
manipulation, distortion are seen as creative practices which are ready to be easily fabricated, manipulated, and distorted through new media again. Almost anything seems to be doable, achievable with a few clicks, taps, or swipes. It is not just our central nervous system as McLuhan (1964) stated in his time, but our whole being - body, psyche, consciousness, and more - is undergoing self-amputations unlike ever before. McLuhan used self-amputation as a metaphor to talk about how we co-op with living in such a world as this – an act of numbing as a way of surviving this world of fast changes and immediacy. Charles Garoian (2009) asks:

What does it mean to be connected, connected electronically; to consume, consume indiscriminately; to multitask, multitask neurotically; to exist and find purpose solely within the parameters of technologically mediated culture? What is the saturation point, the point at which the body is overwhelmed and anesthetized by technological efficiency; the point of unrelenting pleasure at the expense of criticality; at what point should the sublime ideology of technology be held in check? (p. viii)

Our “overwhelmed and anesthetized” bodies are all visibly and invisibly, consciously and unconsciously plugged in 24/7, and our endless quests for more and better is satisfied by continued creation of environments within which such technological inventions thrive to exist (Garoian, 2009; McLuhan, 1964). Ironically, we all seem to be heading towards making our environments even more technomediated. What should be a pedagogical response at a time like this?

While the possibilities and potentials of new media dazzle me, there is also underlying fear that resides deep within me towards new media. Why? It is because it has never been as powerful to create such an instantaneous global impact that could influence the world politically, economically, and socially all at once within a matter of seconds. The case of an amateur moviemaker, Nakoula Basseley Nakoula, who posted a trailer of his movie
“Innocence of Muslims” in 2012 depicting the Prophet Muhammad as a bloodthirsty, philandering womanizer and thug on YouTube may serve as an example. It is said that it may have played a major role in “provoking the terrorist assault on the American diplomatic mission in Benghazi, Libya, that killed the United States ambassador and three other Americans” as well as “protests across the globe, beginning in Cairo and spreading rapidly in September to Yemen, Morocco, Iran, Tunisia, Sudan, Iraq, Pakistan, Lebanon, Indonesia and Malaysia” (Kovaleski & Barnes, 2012).

Such a case as this illustrates the unimaginable impact brought on by new media; how easily one can create and disseminate a digital product, how one’s creative endeavor can be an explosive bomb literally and figuratively; how copies of the movie are still circulating on the Web despite its devastating effects, and how there are multiple number of cases similar to this that are changing and shaping this world. One of our most pressing concerns, therefore, should be to find pedagogical ways of making sense of what it is that we are experiencing at a time when the boundaries are quickly thinning out and disappearing.

1.2 Questions guiding my inquiry

This thesis sets out to examine the notion of new media as an entity that is yet-to-be-understood. As an educator, artist, and researcher, I wish to further examine the evolving characteristics of new media and its way of opening a new frame of mind in terms of thinking about what art and art education is and can be. The significance of this study may be to witness and expand understandings of new media and how we might consider the increasing number of cultural, political, and social shifts brought on by new media in thinking about our own pedagogical responses.
Technology-related terms and ideas often evoke a set of particular feelings and understandings, which have a tendency to close up openings for further inquiries. Therefore, diverse and intersecting views of new media will be drawn upon from debates and discussions occurring in multiple fields of studies: contemporary art, new media art, media education, and art education. My approach to the study is to move beyond the often media-centric approaches focusing on technology as object and toward an approach that focuses on new media within a cultural and social context. Drawing upon Marshall McLuhan’s writings on media theory set alongside an examination of contemporary artworks that work through and with new media, various terms for new media will be considered: new emerging technologies, communication medium, artistic medium, and as “extensions of our central nervous system” (Wolfe, 2003, pp. xv-xvi). As such, two questions that guide my inquiry are:

*How might we cultivate understandings of new media through the works of Marshall McLuhan and contemporary artists that work through, with, and/or about new media?*

*How do opportunities and possibilities created by new media support and contradict what art and art education is and can be?*

Marshall McLuhan is a media theorist and literary scholar who is often referred to as a man of prophecy for he foretold what we would experience now in the 21st century five decades earlier prior to the existence of the Internet (Wolfe, 2003). The style of his writing, especially the one he employed to write the *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964), envisages what new media is. It was written in resonance with how he perceived his world that was changing at a rapid speed. Another aspect about the style of his writing is that
there is a sense of immediacy in his telling of the future. I find it to be an artistic sensibility of McLuhan that is much like that of an artist. As any great work of art has been in the history of humankind, his work challenged people’s perceptions and the way of knowing the world. He was indeed an artist ahead of his time (Marchand, 1998).

One of his book reviewers, Christopher Ricks (1964), questioned how McLuhan could possibly use the medium of book in order to speak about the electrical instantaneous. He felt that McLuhan was enforcing the typographical attitudes, which McLuhan insisted are cramping Western man. I agree with Ricks and other critics in that his way of thinking and expressing thoughts appear to be overly simplistic and generalized at times with no references or index as an academic book should. It contains arguments that seem repetitive at times and was written in a format of a book that seems to go against what the book is about (Ricks, 1964). What is ironic perhaps is how I along with many other scholars, researchers, and educators included in this study are still using the medium of text to talk about new media five decades later.

McLuhan (2003) often claimed that he knows what he knows because he sought insights from the artists, such as Cezanne, Duchamp, and Joyce. He believed these artists were always concerned with future in their present (McLuhan, 1964). As I engage in this study, I will follow his footsteps by seeking guidance from those with an artistic mind and from the works of contemporary artists who are actively engaged in thinking and speaking about what we are experiencing in this present moment and beyond.

1.3  Overview of chapters

An overview of chapters lays out the overall structure of the thesis.
Chapter 1: Introduction presents why and how I seek to understand the nature of new media and its impact upon the world from a McLuhanian way of perceiving the world. It provides a brief background of this conceptual study and the questions guiding the inquiry.

Chapter 2: Art Education and Technology engages in multiple ways of understanding and negotiating the value of new media in the field of education. By critically examining the dominant claims made by the advocates of inclusion of technology and by problematizing the assumptions and ideological pedagogies underlie the advocacy of 21st Century Learning, I ask what should be pedagogical responses from the art education scholars and educators. While it is encouraging to witness a strong impetus to revitalize art curricula and pedagogies, more questions need to be asked not in the mode of resistance or celebration, but rather from a critically reflexive stance. This is to gain further understandings towards the impact new media has had on education and in our lives as well as the way in which it will continue to challenge all the established ideas, such as new, media, art, and education, independently and collectively. The significance of this chapter is to articulate conceptions and misconceptions of new media in the field of education in order to address the need for recognizing the constantly evolving characteristics of new media.

Chapter 3: Unpacking New Media Art attempts to understand what it means to place ‘new media’ in front of art education. By looking into varied ways in which new media is taken up by ‘new media’ artists, art critics, and curators, this chapter addresses how we may inquire through new media art to engage society and to ultimately, reconceptualize art education. Three new media artworks are discussed to illustrate how these works expand and challenge the notion of art as well as exposing the problematic dimensions of incorporating new media in art education. This will be further complicated through looking into the
multiple challenges the new media art community is facing. The aim of this chapter is not to promote direct engagement with new media art practices in art education, but to question ways in which discourses around new media art and its practices may create a space of artistic inquiry.

Chapter 4: Digital Divides focuses on an article titled “Digital Divide: Contemporary Art and New Media” written by Claire Bishop, an art historian at the Graduate Center of City University of New York, for the 50th anniversary issue of Artforum (2012). Her writing ignited impulsive answers by many readers, particularly the proponents of new media art. Their conversations foreground an analysis of where new media art is situated in the art world(s) today. To examine the root cause of these tensions around current understanding of new media art, I will first examine Bishop’s article, its subsequent online comments, and other follow-up discussions on various websites and blogs as well as Bishop’s reply in the letters page of the January 2013 issue of Artforum. This is to create an opening for thinking about differences in our own mis/conception of contemporary art, digital art, and new media art - how these fall into, overlap, and/or resist one another.

Then I will focus on core questions raised by Bishop that are pertinent to this study, which are:

While many artists use digital technology, how many really confront the question of what it means to think, see, and filter affect through the digital? How many thematize this, or reflect deeply on how we experience, and are altered by, the digitization of our existence? (2012, p. 436) [Italics original]

To do so, I will first discuss how new media art is defined and viewed by those in and outside the mainstream art world. Through sharing my own encounter with Touching Reality (2012) by Thomas Hirschhorn, a Swiss artist who conflates seeing and touching through his work, I will further inquire Bishop’s questions. The main subject matter of Hirschhorn’s work are
gruesome images of a war, which cannot be seen on television but, nevertheless, circulate on the Internet. What he problematizes is not only the censorship and availability of these images (and thus the cruel violence and continuing to live nameless dead bodies), but the ways in which new media and tools of new media (such as the touch screen) are reshaping the ways in which we engage with the subject matter and situate the audience in the mode of visceral reaction (de Bolla, 2001). His work deals with affect while capturing what has become mundane activity on our common portable electronic gadgets.

Finally, by drawing upon Dominic Quaranta’s call for approaching art from a postmedia perspective and the need for curators who can take on the role of “a good translator” (2013, p. 183), I will position art educators as teacher/curators who should inquire into the pedagogical implications for art education gained from multiple discussions offered in this chapter.

Delving into discussions among the art historians, new media theorists, new media artists, and museum curators, this chapter will attempt to establish and exemplify the unstable and conflicting understandings we have of new media and new media art, thereby raising new questions and attempts to answer them – how do our digitized or digitizing selves further contribute to creating and narrowing the digital divides? What should be of concern for art educators who teach students in this increasingly interconnected world?

Chapter 5: Conclusion will return to the questions guiding my inquiry and the ways in which I responded to them in the previous chapters. Revisiting and providing further explanations as to how these research questions have been approached and responded to will be yet another important aspect of this study. In speaking upon the impact new media has had on our lives and its likely continual impact, this thesis aims to illustrate how new media
indeed is an entity yet-to-be-understood through inquiring into a number of different on-going debates in the art world and in art education, while recognizing mis/representations of what new media and new media art is and can be.

I will also emphasize here in this chapter how I have turned to diverse sources in and beyond traditional educational scholarship from scholarly writings that are theoretical and research-based to mass media in print and online. This is to further illustrate how attempting to get a firmer grasp of the notion of new media necessitates such navigation and exploration. It is also my attempt to persuade others to move away from simply looking at new media from a binary position, but rather to ponder upon what has yet to be considered and to contemplate the significance of new understandings it may bring to the field of education, in particular, art education.

McLuhan emphasizes the role of artist in many of his writings. He contends that through artistic play artists discover what is actually happening, and thus appear to be ahead of their time. In this final chapter, I will elaborate more on this notion as I attempt to tie everything together and make suggestions for future studies.
CHAPTER 2: ART EDUCATION AND NEW MEDIA

So rapidly have we begun to feel the effects of the electronic revolution in presenting us with new configurations that all of us today are displaced persons living in a world that has little to do with the one in which we grew up. (McLuhan, 2003, p. 2)

2.1 Introduction

The advocacy for inclusion of technology in the field of education has never been as strong as it is today. There is a plethora of reasons why it should be and how it should be done from pure technocrats’ perspectives to those of socio-culturists. Numerous literature published in the past two decades claim the importance of integrating new technologies in the classrooms of the 21st century, which will make the curriculum more relevant for the youth today who are “screenagers” (Livingstone, 2011) or “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001). There are assumptions and ideological pedagogies that underlie this advocacy, and as such, the main aim of this chapter is to create a new opening for thinking about how opportunities and possibilities created by new media demand different educational approaches and re-orientation. Specifically for art education, I ask, what should be a pedagogical response from art education scholars and educators towards digital innovations in this crowded contemporary moment?

This chapter raises critical concerns in regards to dominant claims made in relation to restructuring education through technology, and thereby, calling the need for taking a more critical and reflexive stance. It also engages in multiple ways of negotiating the value of new media in the field of art education by looking into how it is shifting knowledge, perception, mediation, and representation of culture. Finally, it addresses the need for recognizing evolving characteristics of new media through the perception of artists.
Within the field of education, 21st Century Learning is seen as a solution in many developed parts of the world, such as the U.K., the U.S.A., and Canada, which as timely as it sounds, is not free of controversy. Many are still trying to get a firmer grasp on how it may affect students, teachers, and the education system as a whole, but there are many powerful resounding voices that support this movement. Governments and institutions often team up with corporations to carry out their agendas, for example, “Educate to Innovate” campaign launched by President Obama to improve the participation and performance of America’s students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) (The White House, n.d., para.1). For art educators, however, this implies further alienation of art education. Despite the fact that the development of 21st Century Learning is largely based on helping students to develop the 4Cs, i.e. Critical thinking and problem solving, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity and innovation (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011), which are some of the core values of art education, art education is not recognized as one of the core subjects. To reclaim the rightful status and value of art education, the term STEAM has been strongly advocated by inserting “Arts” in the mix (Bequette & Bequette, 2012). As well, other approaches have been examining and highlighting positive aspects of the use of technology, for instance, how the use of technology will enhance and foster creativity (Black & Browning, 2011; Tillander, 2011) and collaborative learning environment (Jenkins, Purushotma, Clinton, Weigel, & Robison, 2006; Jenkins, 2014).

Sonia Livingstone (2011), a media and communications researcher, raises some other critical concerns around the notion of digital learning and participation. One of them is Friedrich Krotz’ (2007) account of mediatization, i.e. historically and technologically shifting
processes of mediation, which he argues, “facilitates the problematic dimensions of consumerism, individualization, and globalization” (Livingstone, 2011, p. 3). She, along with other media educators (Buckingham, 2007; Jenkins, 2003; Seiter, 2005), agree with Krotz in that the commodification of learning has to be what those in the field of education should caution against as we move towards 21st Century Learning. Descriptive words such as ‘cutting-edge’ and ‘innovative thinking’ are commonly used when referring to the latest technology, and digitization of ‘old’ materials is equated with being convenient and 21st century modern. There is also an increasing list of courses and degrees offered online and a wide variety of educational technological tools are being developed everyday both in physical and virtual forms. Moreover, a variety of social media sites are promoted as another learning platform and as a way of increasing the interactivity and productivity, and there exists a gap between these sites of innovation with proliferation of new technological tools and sites of classroom learning (Castro, 2012, Knochel, 2013).

Livingstone (2011) also calls on researchers to have critical and reflexive commitments, especially towards dominant claims made using terms, such as digital youth, digital participation, digital generation, digital natives, and digital learning. She argues these should be problematized since these “[tend] to ask questions the wrong way round - as if the technology has brought into being a whole new species, a youth transformed, qualitatively distinct from anything that has gone before, an alien form whose habits researchers are tasked to understand” (Livingstone, 2011, p. 4). The newly drafted U.S. national media arts standards called “National Coalition for Core Arts (NCCAS): The Inclusion of Media Arts in Next Generation Arts Standards” in 2012 created by fourteen “Media Arts Investigation Members”, for example, is indicative of Livingstone’s concerns. In their rationale, they state
that media arts will “provide students with the ability to discriminate and manage higher orders of sensory balance and social harmonics, which will be vital in our technologically complex transitions” (Olsen, Burrows, Jensen, McCaffrey, Paulson, Rubino, Wilkerson, & Hill, 2012, p. 4). Then they go on to state that “[m]edia arts tools and methods will creatively and socially empower the entire spectrum of students within an increasingly mediacentered culture, [which] are important components of 21st Century learning” (p. 4). One of the problematic notions, that requires our attention to Livingstone’s argument, is how it appears to be drafted by technology enthusiasts who are overlooking the existence of multiple digital divides. It sounds promising to embrace the new opportunities presented by easier accessibility and affordability of technological apparatus that allow students to engage in playful exploration and creative enactment. However, there is, first of all, a lack of concerns with addressing realistic issues. Some of these issues are: not every student, let alone schools, has access to such apparatus (Collier, 2007), and once accessed involves the high cost of maintenance and updating software (Delacruz, 2009a), and a requirement for special training, a revision of teacher education programs, and more professional development (Bequette & Brennan, 2008; Delacruz, 2004; Roland, 2010; Taylor & Carpenter, 2007; Wood, 2004). Added to this is another divide that may “exacerbate knowledge gaps more than overcoming them and creating new forms of illiteracy as well as literacy” (Livingstone, 2011, p. 3). These raise important questions around future educational funding allocations and modification of policies and curricula.

Furthermore, the newly designed standards appear to be created with heavier emphasis on technical aspect of new media that relates to commercial skills, i.e. web design, game design, and mobile device applications. They place media arts as one that “can amplify
and integrate the four traditional art forms by incorporating the technological advances of the contemporary world with emerging skill sets available to students and teachers” (Olsen et al., 2012, p. 4). The most serious concern for art education that is pertinent to this study is how many of us are approaching new media technologies from an instrumental perspective, which generates an unconscious position in relation to our technological inventions. Making such a bold claim as “[m]edia arts tools and methods will creatively and socially empower the entire spectrum of students” is highly problematic (Olsen et al., 2012, p. 4). There is an underlying assumption that technology is the driving force of history (Feenberg, 1991; Fernending, 2007), and such technological determinism leads us to believe that we must adapt to changes since the power of technology leaves no room for alternative possibilities but to power over us. It appears to be drafted without much consideration of what the contemporary ‘new media’ artists have been engaged in for the last few decades. Had they done so, they may have not taken such a market-driven approach to devise the media arts standards that focus on “preparing youth academic and career success” (Olsen et al., 2012, p. 4). There is indeed a lack of attention towards raising the importance of understanding neither the impact of this course of action, and there exists short sightedness of employing technology simply as tools or skills to be learned.
It was a day when my grade 9 and 10 students were organizing their multiple video shoots they had taken prior to editing their videos for the first time. As I was walking around the computer lab, I spotted a 16-year-old male student who appeared to be apprehensive. He seemed like he was transferring his video files to the school desktop with his iPad cable plugged into the school desktop. In between helping out other students, I glanced over to see his progress along with other students', and noticed that his desktop monitor was displaying the same document folder window open as before. I walked over to him and asked, “why aren’t you transferring the files to your USB?” He responded, “well, I don’t know how. I’ve never done it before.” Then another male student next to him asked me, “Ms.Ryoo, what is pc?”

Just because they are teenagers living in an urban city in 2014, own latest portable devices, and use them to do tasks that many of us did not grow up with, it does not make them technologically competent individuals nor “digital natives” that seamlessly configure into, adopt to numerous changes that are occurring at an unprecedented rate.

I, too, am guilty of making an assumption that they know how to do what I consider to be a basic computer skill and knowledge. With the access to the Internet right in front of them, I also assumed that they will either rely too much on Google to a point where I may not be needed or that at least Google will be my non-human assistant in the classroom. While it was true for some students, especially those who got tired of waiting for me to come to them, some students still needed and wanted a human teacher.

Figure 3. Another confession
2.3 Curricular revitalization and challenges

From printmaking to installation art, every art form utilizes technology in some way during the planning, creating, exhibiting, documenting, and/or disseminating the work, some more heavily than others. How these works should be separately categorized or named is a highly contested issue, and it will be taken up in depth in the next two chapters. What will be addressed here is how the art of today as well as theories and ideologies that surround them are “of our time and they hold the possibility of informing us . . . about our contemporary lives[.] [T]hey probe and problematize contemporary society, and they raise issues pertaining to our values and our aspirations” (Wilson, 2003, p. 217). The most important question to ask then is in what ways can we become proactively cognizant of our contemporary experience and seek to perceive the world from a perspective of an artist?

The proponents of inclusion of digital technologies in art education recognize art’s long and inseparable relationship with technology, which has affected each other to evolve into something new, something else. In the last several decades, much debate within art education has centered around the notions of interdisciplinarity in an effort to move towards new pedagogical approaches. Some of the most recent ones are Discipline-based Art Education introduced in the 1980s (Lanier, 1985) and Visual Culture Art Education in the past two decades (Duncum, 2001; 2004; Freedman & Stuhr, 2004; Sweeny, 2009). Brent Wilson (2003) stated, “If [Discipline-based Art Education] succeeded in expanding the content of art education several fold, then visual culture has the prospect of expanding it several hundred fold” (p. 219). To this, I would add that keeping up with technologies, in other words, inclusion of new media would expand the “content” of art education a million fold. How then should art education approach such a challenge? Should we face the
challenge of adopting newer technologies by working towards keeping up with the pace of fast-paced changes head on (Delacruz, 2009a)? Should we focus on teacher education and professional development so that teachers are better equipped to understand the educational impact of development of technology and reconceptualize and expand their teaching arena (Bequette & Brennan, 2008)? Should we embrace the Internet’s democratic potential that offer increased participation, civic engagement, and social transformation (Castro, 2012)? Should we accept and utilize the rhizomatic nature of the Internet and visualize new ways of mapping this field (Wilson, 2003)? While these questions are all significant in revitalizing art education, the importance of understanding the field of new media is what may be one of the most important points to consider (Lovejoy, 2004).

Margot Lovejoy (2004) recognizes that artists working in this field are taking on the role of social communicator as new media continues to alter our everyday experiences. As did McLuhan, Lovejoy (2004) seeks guidance from the artists who are actively involved in thinking and working with new media as tool and medium, probing and exploring art and its relation to technology. Another is Robert Sweeny (2009) whose research deals with the topics of digital visual culture, new media art education, complexity theory, network culture, and the visuality of surveillance. He believes in the importance of recognizing the overwhelmingly complex contemporary experience that blurs boundaries within, of, and/or between physical and virtual spaces. He claims that developing technologies progressively provoke what we have known and should know (Sweeny, 2009). Using a contemporary artist Matthew Ritchie’s Proposition Player (2003) as an example, he argued that such networked artwork could inform and influence the teaching of art and act as a model of differentiation, interaction, self-organization, and emergent behavior (Sweeny, 2009). Rather than taking a
celebratory stance as many literatures do in an attempt to create a shift, such as by highlighting the positives in thinking about digital technology and education, he approaches it from both celebratory and critical stances as well as in the spaces between. This is exemplified by his selection of the title, which provides an inter/action/inter/section way of thinking about new media art. As the editor of the book *Inter/Actions/Inter/Sections: Art Education in a Digital Culture* (2011), he writes in the Introduction pages his explanation for his choice of the title. He first problematizes the word ‘interaction’ associated with the term ‘interactive’, which is commonly used in discussion of digital technology. He claims new media art simply offers more choices rather than being highly interactive. Moreover, “[w]hen presented as liberatory practice, new media work might be deceptive at best; at worst it can actually restrict or repress the user (p. xii).” Drawing from the notion of “machinic assemblages” by Deleuze and Guattari (1977), Sweeny suggests art educators should “think of the operations of digital technologies, as a continual process of combination and fracturing, deterritorialization and reterritorialization, consisting of both positive and negative, often simultaneously” in order to understand digital visual culture (2011, p. xii). For Sweeny, technology is not a savior; it is a “utopian possibility coupled with dystopian potential” (2013, p. xiii).

Ivan Illich (1971) suggested that we should close the schools since there is more information outside the schools than inside. Following his argument, our education system should be on the verge of collapse as “available information greatly exceeds our capacity to process it” (Mayo, 2007, p. 47). However, how we should consider it instead is “when the answers are outside, the time has come to put the questions inside the school rather than the answers,” and therefore, “[i]t is now possible to make the schools not a place for packaged
information, but a place for dialogue and discovery” (McLuhan, 2003, p. 203). To do so in art education, on the one hand, technologies should be explored to capitalize their peculiar characteristics – making possible new formal qualities, permitting the development of new connotative, representational, qualitative symbols, and stimulating new content for expression (Eisner, 1971). Eisner (1971) claimed that the available materials of time open up the realm of possibility and in so doing contribute to the expansion of our consciousness. Even though he was thinking from a material-based paradigm at the time, his insight is relevant and valuable for he recognized the need for transformation in school practices and the intricate relationship among art, life, and technology. On the other hand, as Garoian states:

> While learning to use new technologies is imperative to functioning in contemporary culture, equally important are emancipatory pedagogies that enable users to expose, examine, and critique the totalizing and oppressive assumptions of technology and its academic, institutional, and corporate mediations of the body. (2009, p. viii)

In other words, bringing new media into art classrooms should not be about placing art education on equal footing with other subjects or a means to an end. What we should be more preoccupied with is the specific and broad, short-term and long-term effects this inclusion may have on art education - how it affects our language and perception, thereby affecting our relationships to one another and to this world and understanding of ourselves. For example, what happens when we start questioning what seems to occur in a process of fluidity? We may observe that names of technological tools and social media, which are nouns, are all used as verbs, such as ‘I Photoshopped it’, ‘She Twitted me’, ‘Did you Facebook him?’, and ‘Just Google it.’ Such trend reflects new media’s ubiquitous nature in ways that no other technological revolutions in the previous centuries have.
2.4 Other cautionary tales – Art and then new media

More and more scholars are demanding changes in art education that it should: move away from traditional art teaching practices that focus on the elements and principles of design and instead look towards postmodern principles of contemporary art practices and beyond (Delacruz, 2009a; 2009b; Gude, 2004; O’Donoghue, 2011), bring in images and objects from everyday life (Freedman, 2003; Tavin, 2005), focus on digital visual culture that looks into youth online participatory culture and digital technologies (Knochel, 2013; Sweeny, 2004; Tillander, 2011), promote digital storytelling as a means of engaging with newer technologies (Chung, 2007; Podkalicka & Campbell, 2010), use an alternative virtual learning environment, such as Second Life (Han, 2011; Liao, 2008) and expand the notion of pedagogical site through social media (Castro, 2012), and help students develop various type of literacies, such as cybermedia literacy (Chung, 2010; Freire & McCarthy, 2014), multiliteracy (Duncum, 2004), visual literacy (Allen, 1994; Stankiewicz, 2003; 2004), media literacy (Buckingham, 2003; Capello, Felini & Hobbs, 2011; Chung & Kirby, 2009; Jenkins, 2014; Livingstone, 2011), digital literacy (Fernending, 2007; Gumble, 2012; Taylor & Carpenter, II, 2007), digital fluency (Gouzouasis, 2005), and 21st century literacies (Collier, 2007). In this process of ‘changing’, however, more emphasis is put on technology rather than ‘art literacy’ (Quaranta, 2012a). In an attempt to raise the value of art education by arguing its relevance and applicability across the disciplines in celebration of possibilities presented by technology (Bequette & Bequette, 2012; Peppler, 2010), there is a potential danger for art to become a handmaiden to other subjects and of re-enforcing the elements and principles of design with new media. We may be celebrating its seemingly infinite possibilities by equating new media as a suite of new tools and medium to be explored or a
theme to be tackled, and putting it on a new pedestal. We are perhaps re-emphasizing instrumentality or technique driven curriculum: a move that would set us back considerably. In order to avoid limiting our understanding of technology to commercialized usage and/or misbelieving that it will liberate the students, we need to start thinking through *art* first and foremost, and then new media.

What McLuhan (1964) wrote rings true - in the electric age, technology caught up with art in its ability to express and foresee, taking on the role of art in society. What this implies for art education is its inevitability of significantly higher engagement with technology than ever before, but we need to remind ourselves that it is through *art* that we understand and value *education*. Through *art*, we should make sense of all that is around us.

### 2.5 Summary

What may be considered encouraging for some about the field of art education today is that there is a strong impetus to enter into a new realm largely due to our fast changing technomediated culture. There seems to be less reluctance towards making changes or letting go of long held traditional values and practices of art education. Contrary to what can be found in recent literature where advocates of inclusion of technology seem to exhibit concerns towards art education’s need to keep pace with rapid changes and development in new media (Choi & Piro, 2009; Delacruz, 2009b; Peppler, 2010; Taylor, 2004), the newly drafted U.S. national standards for art education is indicative of the increased interest in embracing new media technologies in art education. But what should be of a critical concern?
To make art education more relevant to youth who are heavily engaged with digital technology, advocates argue new media technologies are needed to carry out curricular revitalization (Eisenhauer, 2006; Sweeney, 2004; 2013; Taylor, 2004; Taylor & Carpenter, II, 2007). It is, however, important to note that not all youth are digital savvy as many popularly used terms with ‘digital’ suggest. As such, the shift in curriculum must be conceptualized through critically examining the dominant claims, not as a mode of resistance, but as a mode of critically reflexive consideration.

As we move towards integrating more technologies into art classrooms, more questions need to be addressed as this move will affect and re-conceptualize every aspect of the field from the identity of a teacher to the identity of art education itself. This move has been and will continue to challenge all the established notions - new, visual, media, art, and education – on their own and in any combinations.

Regardless of how we approach it, one thing for certain is that no educators, especially art educators, should take a passive role. Art education must engage in a continual negotiation, exploiting how not only new media itself, but more importantly, the environment we are creating for new media is influencing the way we see, feel, and know.

What we should also be mindful of is that technology conceived of as the tools and medium that Eisner (1971) talked about more than forty decades ago has evolved into a yet-to-be-understood entity, pervading through all aspect of our lives in the midst of celebration and resistance. New media always is in a state of change, and this signifies the need for cultivating the perception of artists who have been interrogating its characteristics, qualities, and impact, which will be elaborated more in the next chapter.
While waiting in line at a check-out counter at Costco, I saw a toddler sitting in the shopping cart looking intensively into a smart phone while scrolling the screen with his small index finger. His dad looked anxious as he unloaded the items from the cart and waited for the man in front of him to make the transaction. His son, suddenly called out his dad and said, “daddy, can you help me get back on that screen? I don’t know how.” His small hand reached out to his dad who was now standing on the other side of the counter. He carefully took the phone from his son’s small hand, quickly swiped his large index finger, and handed it back to his son. The boy grabbed it, looked at the screen, and said, “I’ve done this one already. It’s not very good.”

Why does this sight make me squirm?

2013. 9.
CHAPTER 3: UNPACKING NEW MEDIA ART

_The serious artist is the only person able to encounter technology with impunity, just because he is an expert aware of the changes in sense perception._ (McLuhan, 1964, p. 18)

3.1 Introduction

In the midst of using terms such as 21\textsuperscript{st} art education, new media art education, art education for a new millennium, digital visual culture art education, and contemporary art education, there is a scarcity of literature that looks into accounts of art critics, art historians, curators, and artists who have been heavily engaged with ‘new media art’. The aim of this chapter is not about promoting direct engagement with contemporary ‘new media’ art practices in art education. Rather, its focus is on looking at the varied ways in which new media – as medium, tool, and theme – is taken up through an artistic inquiry and on questioning what such an enactment offers for thinking about art curricula and pedagogies. The chapter specifically addresses the following questions: what does it mean to inquire through new media art in current times? What are the possibilities and potentials offered, and on the other hand, what are the challenges to overcome?

The term ‘new media art’ became the established label for the broad range of artistic practices that are created or in some way deal with new media technologies in the late nineties and the first decade of this century (Quaranta, 2012a). Christiane Paul (2008) identifies the lowest common denominator for defining new media art to be its computational quality and being based on algorithms. Relatedly, Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook (2010) describe it as “art that is made using electronic media technology and that displays any or all of the three behaviors of interactivity, connectivity, and computability in any combination”
Unpacking new media art, however, must involve moving beyond thinking about it in terms of technical and medium-based definition and instead involve the sociological complexity of new media art (Quaranta, 2012a; 2012b; 2013).

One of the ways to approach such complexity is by examining it through a perspective of an artist. Thus, I first highlight three works of new media artists to provide a framework for situating new media art. They are: My Boyfriend Came Back from the War (1996) by Olia Lialina, Dream of Beauty 2.0 (1999) by Kirsten Geisler, and Domestic Tension (2007) by Wafaa Bilal. Afterward, the curatorial aspect of new media art is taken up as a way of understanding what and where new media art is by examining different ways in which it has been understood, schematized, and/or categorized by the practitioners, critics, curators, and/or historians. In the following discussion, I illustrate how these works expand and challenge the notion of art which on one hand, exposes the problematic dimensions of incorporating new media in art education, and on the other, exhibits relevance and necessity of taking such a step to advance art education.

### 3.2 ‘New media art’

#### 3.2.1 *My Boyfriend Came Back from the War (1996) by Olia Lialina*

Olia Lialina is a Russian artist who created one of the first engaging hypertext net art, *My Boyfriend Came Back from the War* (1996). This work is narrative in nature in that the viewer unfolds the story by clicking on multiple black-and-white hyperlinked images and texts. They progressively fragment into multiple frames through which the artist expresses her experience of being in a relationship. Even though there are many paths that seemingly
give away a total control to the viewer, the authorship is arguably mapped out since every path leads to the same result.

![Image](https://www.flickr.com/photos/treborscholz/3171296220/, CCBY-NC-SA 2.0)

**Figure 5.** Olia Lialina, detail from *My Boyfriend Came Back from the War*, 1996. https://www.flickr.com/photos/treborscholz/3171296220/, CCBY-NC-SA 2.0

As a film critic and film curator at the time, Lialina originally wanted to represent film on the net (Bosma, 1997). As she continued to explore the characteristics and capabilities of the net, however, she later realized she could instead put a filmic way of thinking on the net by combining film and “net.language” (Bosma, 1997, para. 8). One of the most interesting aspects of this work is how her work has been recycled, appropriated, re-appropriated, and remixed by many others in various versions from PowerPoint to video to blog. What is more, the artist herself has maintained the list of these works on her website. Her work in this way is emblematic of how one’s digital artwork can be others’ sources of
inspiration and artistic medium while at the same time illustrates how such a work contributes in blurring the lines as to what is or is not considered art.

In a 2006 interview with Valeska Buehrer, Lialina raises an important aspect of her work that is of a concern to many of the new media artists, particularly the net artists - how the experience of the work significantly has changed as a result of the change in a technological context and also how it questions the difficulty of archiving new media art (Connor, 2013). In the case of My Boyfriend Came Back from the War, the work was created at a time when the Internet was much slower, which allowed delays in between phrases while waiting for images and texts to pop up. Although nothing else changed, i.e. web address, files, and links, the speed of the Internet took away her authorship because the obscurity and the lack of seamlessness she intended are completely gone. The work is still original, but it has lost its ‘originality’.

3.2.2 Dream of Beauty 2.0 (1999) by Kirsten Geisler

This image has been removed due to copyright. It was an image of a gallery visitor viewing Dream of Beauty 2.0. The image can be found at http://www.kirstengeisler.com/werke/

Figure 6. Kirsten Geisler, Installation view of Dream of Beauty 2.0, 1999.
A German artist Kirsten Geisler’s *Dream of Beauty 2.0* (1999) was part of a series of interactive installations called *Virtual Beauties*. The pictorial motive of the series is a digitally generated close-up image of an attractive female face with shaved head that says, “Talk to me,” at various intervals. This work was a large-scale video projection framed on the wall and a phone on the opposite side with instructions for the viewers to ask questions that are less than ten words long. The image of the woman does not respond to the questions asked, and instead, gives various forms of gestures, such as blink, wink, smile, and laugh. It is then the viewers realize she is in fact not interactive since she is trapped in the video format, reflecting the tension of the employed technology (Preece, 1999).

For Falk Heinrich (2014), Geisler’s work is about female beauty as the image appears to have a perfect symmetry and proportion along with spotless, seamless skin. He, therefore, proposes that Geisler’s work “can and should be interpreted as a criticism of an unobtainable and impersonalized ideal of beauty in the age of digital technologies and mass media depicting millions of beautiful young female nudes modeled upon a mathematically synthesized beauty” (p. vii). Mark Hansen (2003; 2004), on the other hand, uses her work along with other contemporary new media artworks that focus on the digitized image of the face to propose affect as a medium, which he names affective interfacing or digital-facial-image (DFI). He argues the aim of DFI is to “catalyze the production of affect as an interface between the domain of information (the digital) and embodied human experience” (Hansen, 2003, p. 209). Kirsten Geisler’s work is an example of interactive participatory art that employs new media to explore technical possibilities to blur the boundaries between the material and the immaterial, the virtual and the real.
In the artwork *Domestic Tension*, an Iraqi artist Wafaa Bilal deals with trauma of losing his brother and father who were killed by an unmanned U.S. drone in Kufa, Iraq in 2004 (Bilal & Lydersen, 2008; Rice, 2012). This work was “a life art installation” (Bilal & Lydersen, 2008) that ran for 31 days and took place within a 32 by 15 foot space in the gallery while being connected to the viewers through a paintball gun mounted with a web camera throughout the duration of the exhibition. In the interview with Shelly Rice (2012), he explains how he overcame the difficulties of dealing with his losses and of communicating his trauma through art to the public when he saw an interview with an American soldier
sitting in Colorado directing drone planes using a computer console that bomb people in Iraq in 2007. Upon witnessing how the soldier showed complete disconnect from his targets both psychologically and physically, he realized his work needed to involve a live target and media, and give control to the viewers in the same manner (Bilal & Lydersen, 2008). By the end of this live event, more than 65,000 shots had been fired from 136 countries (Rice, 2012).

Figure 8. Wafaa Bilal, detail from Domestic Tension, performance, 2007. Copyright Wafaa Bilal. Courtesy Driscoll Babcock Galleries.

He originally wanted to title his work *Shoot an Iraqi*, but proven to be too provocative, changed to *Domestic Tension* (Bilal & Lydersen, 2008; Rice, 2012). For his recently published book co-authored by Kari Lydersen, however, he used the original title,
Shoot an Iraqi: Art, Life, and Resistance Under the Gun (2008). This book is intended to act as yet another form of an archive of his artwork created from daily journals, videotapes, media coverage, interviews, and other collected data during the live performance. Wafaa Bilal is one of many contemporary ‘new media’ artists who needs new media to talk about what he wants to say and to focus on dynamic encounters by using a gallery space as a physical platform, but ultimately needing digital connectivity as the medium itself (Rice, 2012). This work addresses the dichotomy of the virtual vs. the real, transforming the normally passive experience of viewing art into an active participation by giving the viewers ability to watch and shoot him as well as interact with him via chat room and in person (Bilal, n. d.; Bilal & Lydersen, 2008).

3.2.4 Pedagogical offerings

Works by Lialina, Geisler, and Bilal are interactive artworks that deal with social, cultural, and/or political aspects of our society that necessitate viewers’ participation. What is suggested here is that it is insufficient to simply look at how each artist employed digital technologies as tools nor getting students to emulate what these artists have created. Rather, the most significant pedagogical implication from these works of art should be that they were conceived, produced, and viewed through the creative act of inquiry which in turn provided an opportunity for the viewers to question and pay attention to what they may have otherwise dismissed or never encountered.

Furthermore, Lialina’s work and those of other artists’ that have created varied forms of her work suggest a new way of understanding what creativity, copyright, artistic medium, and art are in the digital age. These artworks do not require traditional white walls to be
considered art nor a sign of aging process. They are also ephemeral as well as permanent depending on when they were created and in what context; they are not created as an object.

Last but not least, these screen based interactive artworks are largely dependent on the contexts of the viewer and that of the work, i.e. the size of the screen, the speed of the Internet, and where and with whom a viewer encounters the work. New media art in these ways blur the traditional boundaries in multiple ways while simultaneously pushing them out further.

3.3 Challenges & Obstacles

3.3.1 The Internet connectivity

There are, of course, challenges and other problematic notions as much as there are possibilities and potentials when it comes to new media art. Books and essays written by curators in the past two decades (who were involved in curating new media artworks whether in the museums, galleries, or festivals) illustrate their own struggles with changes brought on by new media, particularly the Web (Graham & Cook, 2010; Paul, 2008; Quaranta, 2013). Foremost, their work has problematized and put into question all three hotly contested words - new, media, and art - and as a result, new media art is experiencing its own identity crisis as the term ‘new media art’ is no longer suitable to describe what it is and will be due to new media’s constantly evolving nature (Quaranta, 2013).

As cited above, for Lialina, the connection speed of the Internet changed the nature of her work completely. Even though her work was not meant to critique the slow modem speed nor meant to be experienced slowly, viewers can no longer encounter the same experience she originally intended unless Lialina alters her work. Bilal’s work, on the other hand, relied
on the fast connection speed and ability to handle a lot of online traffic as this was a live-streamed event. Without these conditions, *Domestic Tension* would not have received such an immense attention as it did by the participants as well as the media. The daily video diary he uploaded to YouTube, the chat room, the gun, and the web cam, which are all integral part of his performance needed to work effectively to bring his idea to life. His gun failed to work several times due to heavy traffic, problems with compressed-air canister, and running out of paintballs. In his case, Bilal was able to add another layer of meaning to this unexpected moment of his artwork – how the swishing sound of the empty rifle as it moved back and forth and the constant firing of the trigger further intensified the feeling of being captured under a constant surveillance (Bilal & Lydersen, 2008).

### 3.3.2 Other obstacles perceived through curating new media art

First of all, there is a fundamental difference in perception of new media between new media artists and that of contemporary art critics and curators, such as Nicolas Bourriaud. While these artists use and conceptualize new media as an artistic medium, for Bourriaud, new media is one that indirectly influences art and artist’s way of working that opens a new frame of mind and new possibility of thinking and representing the world, but is not a medium in itself (Art Basel, 2013). In his recent publication, *Beyond New Media Art* (2013), Quaranta problematizes such a definition as well as that of Graham and Cook’s (2010). He claims what new media art really describes is “art that is produced, discussed, critiqued and viewed in a specific “art world”” (Quaranta, 2013, p. 35), and therefore, the way in which curators are contextualizing new media art through creating a niche inside the contemporary art world is highly problematic.
Secondly, there is also the issue of new media art being regarded as marginal and sometimes even problematic (Gere, 2005). While Steve Dietz, a curator and theorist, attributes the main cause to be that of the lack of a critical discourse, Gere believes it is due to the fact that such a critical discourse is happening mostly within those who are involved (Gere, 2005). He denotes how such a task should be taken up through the pre-digital medium of the book that does not simply offer taxonomies and historical precedents, but “engages philosophically with the meaning of new media and, by extension, how our experience of the world is mediated by new technologies” (Gere, 2005, p. 8).

Thirdly, there are some realistic issues at hand that need to be addressed as Christiane Paul’s (2008) book title, *New Media in the White Cube and Beyond: Curatorial Models for Digital Art*, suggests. Many of the art institutions are faced with issues of archiving and exhibiting these works since most are those that cannot be easily categorized, stored, nor necessitate traditional white walls. Moreover, not every museum or gallery is equipped to deal with technologically sophisticated artworks whether it may be parts, equipment, or software for outmoded and advanced works involving technology. Added to this fact is how curators are often inadequately trained to properly handle and curate new media artworks as these works prompt new ways of curating. Quaranta (2013) argues that this should serve as one of the main reasons for new media art to exist in its own world so that the artists working within this arena may freely explore, uninhibited by space, funding, political sanctions, and other traditional boundaries, to name a few.

Last but not least, the use of the term ‘new media art’ is as problematic as other terminologies used in place of new media art, i.e. electronic art, virtual art, media art, software art, multimedia art, computer art, interactive art, sound art, and digital art. First of
all, the term ‘new media’ itself is inherently unstable and has a multi-referential usage. As for ‘new media art’, Paul (2008) writes, it resists to be categorized or be static “since the technological and conceptual territory occupied by this art form is constantly being reconfigured” (p. 3). She attributes this as one of the main assets and reasons why an increasing number of people are attracted to so called new media art. A celebratory stance towards new media art, however, needs to be critically questioned since what used to set these artists apart in the past is becoming blurred as many artists use digital technology in some way or another, and most do not work in one discipline or with one medium. Therefore, despite the new media art community’s initial, and on-going effort to “evade definitions”, it does not seem possible to avoid being “categorize[d], institutionalize[d], and commodif[ied]” (Paul, 2008, p. 3) which will be further explored in the following chapter.

3.4 Summary

Deploying new media in art classrooms should be coupled with an understanding of the ‘medium as message’ (McLuhan, 1964) and with the aim of creating a space of inquiry through art. To teach/pursue media arts or new media art education, or even naming the next art education as such, one needs to become cognizant of the potentials as well as the challenges presented by new media and of those faced by the new media art community. As these curators note, ‘new media’ in new media art does not simply signify new technologies contrary to how people often interpret. Creating works using digital versions of analog media, such as digital photography, or those that have science or technology as a theme, is insufficient in thinking about what it means to creatively engage in artistic process in this contemporaneous moment (Graham & Cook, 2010). Sarah Cook, a curator, writer, and co-
founder of CRUMB (Curatorial Resource for Upstart Media Bliss) writes, “New media art currently sits somewhere between its emergence and historicization – a period that has been shrinking” (2008, p. 32), but it is also “in an almost constant state of emergence because of its use of new technologies, leading it to be described “new” or “avant-garde”” (Graham & Cook, 2010, p. 284). Unpacking new media art, thus presents significant challenges.

Furthermore, new media art practices tend to require beyond the means of what most art institutions can afford financially and otherwise, which is the main reason for the existence of special arenas, such as Furtherfield, Rhizome, and Link Center for the Arts of the Information Age. While their growing influence and relevance are reflected in these as well as more recent establishments, such as ArtScience Museum in Singapore and degree offerings in higher education, K to 12 art education should carefully consider to what extent it should attempt to incorporate ‘new media’ in art education by examining the multiple challenges that the new media art community is facing. In the following chapter, some of these issues will be taken up further and deeper in order to situate new media art in the art world today, and more importantly, identify what role art education should play within the larger ecology of creative culture.
CHAPTER 4: DIGITAL DIVIDES

Most art today deploys new technology at one if not most stages of its production, dissemination, and consumption . . . So why do I have a sense that the appearance and content of contemporary art have been curiously unresponsive to the total upheaval in our labor and leisure inaugurated by the digital revolution? While many artists use digital technology, how many really confront the question of what it means to think, see, and filter affect through the digital? How many thematize this, or reflect deeply on how we experience, and are altered by, the digitization of our existence? (Bishop, 2012, p. 436)

4.1 Introduction

There are several aims for this chapter. One of them is to create an opening for thinking about our own mis/conceptions of contemporary art, digital art, and new media art and how these fall into, overlap, and/or resist one another. Another is to examine how these mis/conceptions determine what should be of primary concern in dealing with the art of the present, and therefore, ‘art’ in art education. I first examine Claire Bishop’s (2012) article titled “Digital Divide: Contemporary Art and New Media” published in the 50th anniversary issue of Artforum, which serves as yet another significant part of this study. Its subsequent online comments, and other follow-up discussions on various websites and blogs as well as Bishop’s reply in the letters page of the January 2013 issue of Artforum are taken up further to complicate the discourses around new media art. This is to illustrate how there are clear tensions in current understandings of new media art as exemplified by the positions taken by Bishop and other proponents of new media art in the aftermath of publication of this article.

The next section addresses one of the core questions raised by Bishop that is pertinent to this study. She asks, “While many artists use digital technology, how many really confront the question of what it means to think, see, and filter affect through the digital? How many
themmatize this, or reflect deeply on how we experience, and are altered by, the digitization of our existence?” (p. 436) Through sharing my own encounter with Thomas Hirschhorn’s *Touching Reality* (2012), I further inquire into her questions.

Then I focus on the title of Bishop’s article, “Digital Divide: Contemporary Art and New Media” by responding to the following questions: what is to be understood about the term contemporary art in relation to new media? In what ways does it share a similar dilemma with new media art? In what ways should digital divide be addressed?

Finally, in the last section, I position art educators as teacher/curators. I draw upon Dominic Quaranta’s call for approaching art from a postmedia perspective and the need for curators who can take on the role of “a good translator” (2013, p. 183). This chapter then concludes with pedagogical implications for art education gained from multiple discussions offered in this chapter.

### 4.2 Mis/conceptions

The main aim of Bishop was to criticize the dominant tendencies in mainstream art as found in museums, galleries, and biennials in its disavowal of digital media through its ongoing fixation with the analog, the archival, the obsolete, and pre-digital modes of communication and presence (Bishop, 2012; 2013). She argues that despite the infiltration of new technology in contemporary art, only a handful of contemporary artwork addresses how “forms and languages of new media have altered our relationship to perception, history, language, and social relations” (Bishop, 2012, p. 435). She attributes the root cause to be the way in which the mainstream art is holding onto commercial viability rather than exploring revolutionary aesthetics and influences brought on by new technologies. However, instead of
the mainstream art world, the proponents of new media art felt the attack, feeling disregarded and further “marginalized” (Bishop, 2013; Gere, 2005).

They harshly responded back to Bishop’s writing for a number of different reasons. One of them is the way in which they felt she dismissed the last two decades of expansion and development of new media art. At the onset of the article, she first begins with the question: “Whatever happened to digital art?” (2012, p. 436). For Bishop, contemporary artworks within the mainstream, such as multichannel video installations, digital images and files, are all indeed digital art, but they do not adequately speak about the digitized condition of our lives. In fact, she states, “I find it strange that I can count on one hand” (2012, p. 436) the names of only three contemporary artworks as those that fulfill such a criteria: *My Best Thing* by Frances Stark (2011), *Touching Reality* by Thomas Hirschhorn (2012), and *K-Corea Inc. K [Section A]* by Ryan Trecartin (2009).

For the proponents, her question seems to reflect how she is unaware of the continuous progress new media art has made through “its own festivals like ISEA, Ars Electronica, FILE, Transmediale, and journals that service it, like LEONARDO, Media-N, Intelligent Agent, Neural, Mute, and so many others” (patlichy, 2013). She sounds uninformed of many art institutions rebuilding their web platforms and restructuring their archival policies and publishing departments (Cornell & Droitcour, 2013) in recognition of the value and relevance of new media art in the 21st century.

What was perhaps most troubling for the proponents of new media art was how she overtly excluded them in her essay by making this remark: “There is, of course, an entire sphere of “new media” art, but this is a specialized field of its own: it rarely overlaps with the mainstream art world” (p. 436). For them, such a dismissal from a well-known contemporary
art critic was disheartening as well as outrageous since her remark implies that she indeed is segregating new media art from the kind of digital art she seeks to see more of in the mainstream.

Bishop (2013) claims in her response to their online comments in the letters page of January 2013 issue of *Artforum* that the focus of the article was not about new media or digital art, but rather a critique of the dominant tendencies in contemporary art. Moreover, she writes:

> [A]s long as there is a mainstream art world that is still invested in the analog, the archival impulse, and “dead tech” and that is slow to invent new vocabularies with which to talk about perception in the digital era, there will have to be a self-marginalizing alternative called new media art that asserts its own relevance for the future. One is obsessed with the technology of the past, the other with the technology of the present; they are mutually constitutive products of similarly blinkered thinking. (2013, p. 38)

While this is an extremely valuable insight for both the mainstream art world and the new media art world to reevaluate each of their current position, the way in which she overtly generalizes the two worlds of art is highly problematic as there is a growing number of contemporary new media artists working inside and outside of the mainstream. As well, if new media is indeed an entity-yet-to-be-understood, new media art communities perhaps have no other alternative but be obsessed with the present technology. “The only way to produce a techno-culture of debate at the speed of technological innovation itself,” states Caroline A. Jones, “is to take up these technologies in the service of aesthetic . . . [These artists] locate how bodies are interacting with technologies at the present moment, and provide a site for questioning those locations” (2006, p. 1). In other words, new media is used as an artistic medium through which these artists, in their own terms, are making sense of the
present condition, writing the detailed history of what we are experiencing and may experience (McLuhan, 1964).

She also criticizes the mainstream art world for not actively “invent[ing] new vocabularies with which to talk about perception in the digital era” (Bishop, 2013, p. 38). An alternative argument by the new media art community might be that the mainstream should look into the discourse that already has been developed around new media art and the progress this field has made. If Bishop had indeed further explored what contemporary new media artists are doing, she may have taken a very different stance. Bishop (2013) claims new media art is not her expertise, and that is why she did not go in depth in her article. However, one cannot but wonder how a major art critic decides to write an article titled, “Digital Divide: Contemporary Art and New Media”, lamenting on the lack of effort on creating a condition for art that speaks about the current condition while ironically she does it all the same.

4.3 Affect

What is most pertinent to this study, however, is one of the most critical questions Bishop raises in her article: “While many artists use digital technology, how many really confront the question of what it means to think, see, and filter affect through the digital?” (2012, p. 436). Bishop is not implying that there is a lack of digital initiatives in museums and galleries, or that artists should utilize latest high tech equipment, the Internet, or new software. I would argue that she is instead fundamentally asking if the artists are being artists, fulfilling their roles as artists to provoke us to think, to ask questions, to feel the affect of the environment we have created (McLuhan, 1964). As McLuhan states (2003), there is:
always a danger of becoming a robot, of becoming well-adjusted or conditioned like a man paddling a canoe . . . The job of the artist is dislocation of sensibility to prevent us from becoming adjusted to total environments, and to becoming the servant and robots of those environments . . . The job of the artist is to upset all the senses, and thus to provide new vision and new powers of adjusting to and relating to new situations. (p. 223)

What McLuhan alluded to here echoes what Bishop is seeking to see more artists do. Art should not be created as a privileged diet for the elite through the overuse of analogue media centralizing commercial viability as Bishop argues (2012; 2013), but rather be offered as a means of indispensable perceptual training that gets us jolted out of insensitivity and numbness to technology (McLuhan, 1964, p. x).

4.3.1 Touching reality (2012) by Thomas Hirschhorn

Figure 9. Thomas Hirschhorn. Touching Reality, 2012, Color video, silent, 4 min. 45 s. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.
*Touching Reality* (2012) by a Swiss artist, Thomas Hirschhorn, is essentially a simple short video of fingers scrolling across iPad screen as its user looks through what appears to be cellphone shot photographs of dismembered bodies of war casualties. Despite the simplicity of the work, the viewers are put in a state of mutism – a total bodily aesthetic experience of artwork that puts the viewer into a state of shock (de Bolla, 2001). It certainly caused immediate visceral reaction in my first encounter with the piece even though I was viewing an amateur video shot of the work by a gallery visitor on my computer screen. Perhaps it made the encounter even more real, because I was viewing it in my own ‘safe’ space using my own device. Was it the shocking graphic images or the presence of eerie silence that caused such bodily sensation? Or was it the recognition of my own powerlessness over the index finger and a thumb that comfortably zoom in and out of images? As I watched the perverted behaviour aesthetically unfold before me, a surge of questions surfaced once I remembered to breathe again: Is this real? Who are these dead people? Are they victims or criminals? Where were these taken? Are these professional or amateur photos? Are humans this vulnerable? Why didn’t anyone bother to close the eyes of these lifeless victims? Why did the photographer take these photos instead of doing something about the situation? What am I seeing? Feeling?

What particularly disturbed me with his work was the distribution of private acts made public through one’s own device and the fact that these images, which are censored in mass media, are actually publically available. They float in the virtual world ready for anyone to make them personalized, private, and more public (Cotter, 2013). Such is the condition we are living in today, which is mind numbing to say the least. *Touching Reality*
(2012) in this way undertakes the task of “confront[ing] the question of what it means to think, see, and filter affect though the digital” (Bishop, 2012, p. 436).

Figure 10. Thomas Hirschhorn. Touching Reality, 2012, Color video, silent, 4 min. 45 s. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.

His work also evokes Garoian’s (2008) article in which he proposes prosthetic epistemology and prosthetic ontology, an embodied form of knowing and being in the world that challenges the disabling, oppressive prosthetics of mass mediation, its gaze of normality. Garoian writes:

[w]hat has been localized in the zone of battle is then hypothesized and globalized through the apparatus of the mass media in every corner of the world: in bars and restaurants, in our living rooms and bedrooms, and now we have the ability to download the war on to our iPods™ and cell phones, which we carry in our pockets or attach to our bodies wherever we go. Ironically, while as cyborgs we are connected and experience the war virtually and vicariously through mass mediation systems, there are those in actual battle who are physically being disconnected of their limbs and losing their lives. (2008, p. 219)

Garoian explores the notion of prosthesis as a metaphor of embodiment to challenge the utopian myth of wholeness and normality in art and the human body. He states that the
viewers are conditioned to, and therefore, expect to see the totality rather than something that lacks coherence and is fragmented. Making a reference to modernist and postmodernist artworks of “bricolage[,] that is, the improvisational dis-assembling, exchanging, and re-assembling of images, ideas, and objects in ways that they were not originally designed” (Garoian, 2008, p. 221), he suggests that images and ideas always exist in prosthetic relation to other images and ideas, being prosthetically co-dependent, due to their unstable nature (Garoian, 2008; Willis, 1995). He goes on to suggest that the viewers tend to turn away from, reject modern and contemporary postmodern abstract art since they do not fit viewers’ assumptions and understandings of totalized bodies, and that in this regard, these art forms and amputated bodies both constitute an irritant. It is through such art forms we recognize Narcissus selves, recognizing the amputated, imperfect body (McLuhan, 1964), that “we are always already disabled in one form or another: amputated, fragmented, and in a mutable relationship with a technological world that requires constant placements, displacement, and replacements” (Garoian, 2008, p. 225).

As such, both Hirschhorn’s intense visual work and Garoian’s words create a space for us to “reflect deeply on how we experience, and are altered by, the digitization of our existence” (Bishop, 2012, p. 436). They problematize how new media technologies, such as the mobile phones that capture images, the Internet that enable their dissemination, and the touch screen viewing apparatus that let us ‘touch’ war, reshape the ways in which we engage with the subject matter, in this case, images of the nameless decapitated and dismembered bodies that circulate on the Internet. We consume these gruesome images, “a pornography of violence” (Bishop, 2013, para. 4), using a device that we use to listen to music and capture our special moments by constantly dipping our hand into the “data liquid” pool (Lopez, 2008,
p. 58). In this way *Touching Reality* makes us become cognizant of how such traumatic events are so easily, at times carelessly, localized, hypothesized, globalized, personalized, and re-globalized again.

Furthermore, *Touching Reality* questions: “how we consume images and alternatively how they consume us”, the loss of materiality through screen interfaces, global connectivity celebrated by technology enthusiasts that seem to both bring everyone closer and distance one another, and the notion of censorship that seems to be on the verge of disappearance (Bishop, 2013, para. 4). His work exemplifies arguably the most fundamental quality of an artwork and that of the artist - to probe and stir through artistic inquiry exposing and challenging our seeing and understanding (McLuhan, 1964). Hirschhorn can be said to be taking on the role of “public intellectuals” (Kushins, 2006) that brings out the want-to-be-forgotten reality to the fore. The question that remains for the proponents of new media within the field of art education is whether or not they are ready to take up these works of art that interrogate the current condition of our world rather than simply embracing potentials presented by new media.

4.4 **Digital divide(s) in art and art education**

In the recently published book edited by Alexander Dumbadze and Suzanne Hudson called *Contemporary Art: 1989 to Present* (2013), Terry Smith (2013) cites Jean-Luc Nancy’s reasons for using “Art Today” as the title of his lecture instead of “Contemporary Art” when Nancy was invited to speak about contemporary art. He first started out with what Smith refers to as “usual reasons”:

contemporary art is an art historical category still in formation; in ordinary usage “contemporary” means the past twenty or thirty years; because it excludes art being
made today but in pre-contemporary modes, it cannot encompass all current art; and, finally, when it is used to name kinds of art[,] it “violates” not only the traditional categories of the practice-based (plastic) arts but also more recent ones, such as “performance art.” (p. 19)

Nancy first laid out what appears to be a restrictive, narrowed down definition of contemporary art, but he problematized the word ‘contemporary’ further by asking the following questions:

[How]ow is it that we have adopted a category that does not designate any particular aesthetic modality the way we would, once, describe hyperrealism, cubism, or even ‘body art’ or ‘land art,’ but a category that simply bears the name ‘contemporary’? … What … is so special about the kind of art that is designated “contemporary”? Or, better, what qualities with regard to worlding might a work of contemporary art be said to possess? (p. 20)

Contemporary art, as such, is not a term that can be effortlessly defined nor should it be used carelessly as it comes with its own ongoing historicity. On the one hand, new media art shares the similar dilemma due to its constantly changing characteristics and multi-referential usage of the term *new media* like *contemporary*. For new media, however, its intensifying omnipresence on a global scale, its unknown full capacity, and the way in which it is “inherently process-oriented, time-based, dynamic, interactive, collaborative, customizable, and variable” (Paul, 2008, p. 1) make it even more challenging to neatly define it. In addition, the term ‘media’ refers to mass communication as well as artistic media. As such, viewers are asked to consider both aspects of the word ‘media’: as one that which is used in Communication Studies - McLuhan’s any extensions of ourselves and that of Clement Greenberg’s interpretation as an artistic medium (Quaranta, 2013). Hence, new media art requires media literacy (Paul, 2008; Quaranta, 2013). What is more, the two words, ‘new media’, themselves further complicate the meaning and usage of the term. As Michelle Kuo (2012) writes, new media always becomes old since it is constantly preceded by what comes
right after. New media is never completely new for it always uses old media as its content (McLuhan, 1964). Thus, it is, as is contemporary art, an inadequate, unfortunate term that describes the art of the present.

Quaranta (2013) suggests that art practices perhaps should be approached from a postmedia perspective beyond the dichotomy of new media art and contemporary art, not as a starting point, but as a point of departure for what has yet to occur. This signifies the importance of recognizing the impact of digital revolution has had on production and circulation of art thereby changing how we experience, discuss, and own art today. He writes:

[T]he art that is most aware of cultural, social and political consequences of the new media is in line for a position of key importance and unexpectedly reacquires a social function: to combat the flattening of culture with complexity, numbness with sensation and standardization with critical thought. (2013, p. 205)

Here we see Quaranta echoing Bishop’s calling for art that speaks about the digitizing condition of our lives. What we can observe is that their understanding of art of the present day is similar if not the same at its core. Written from critically reflexive stance towards contemporary art and new media art, Quaranta (2012a; 2013) offers multiple spaces from which we may think about the new direction for art education. Foremost, if art education were to properly, adequately, responsibly respond to the invasive, yet necessary conditions brought on by new media, the field has to be more critically engaged with raising and understanding the significance of ‘art’ in art education. To do this means moving away from instrumentalism that bounds art education in the outmoded way of thinking about art and art education that promotes a formulaic, linear approach. Deploying new technologies or implementing new media art practices is, therefore, an inadequate way of responding pedagogically.
Quaranta points out the need to “move the stress onward on the "art" part of the "new media art" label” (2012b, para. 3). What he is inferring to is the fact that more emphasis has been put on ‘new media’ instead of ‘art’ as the titles of books written about new media art suggest, for example, *Curating New Media* (Cook, Graham, & Martin, 2002), *New Media in the White Cube and Beyond: Curatorial Models for Digital Art* (Paul, 2008), and *Rethinking Curating: Art after New Media* (Graham & Cook, 2010). He is cautioning against the possibility of falling prey to the pitfalls of new media art, such as heavily concentrating on new technologies and/or self-referencing (Quaranta, 2013), as well as the possibility of these titles and names changing the perception of all and anything that is said with them (Quaranta, 2012b).

Furthermore, Quaranta denotes the need for “a curator who can be the mediator or the translator between the two worlds” (2012a, para. 14) and lists a number of different criteria for curators who are ready to take on the translation work between contemporary art and new media art. As the translation work requires “import[ing] works born elsewhere into the world of contemporary art”, a good translator should be mindful of one’s own limits as well as the ideological stances and the culture of one’s readers (Quaranta, 2013, p. 182). He identifies being both “bilingual and bicultural” in contemporary art and new media art to be the most important aspect of being a good translator (2013, p. 186) as well as being “open to new languages” and having “a good level of media literacy” (2012a, para. 14).

**4.5 Summary**

The exchanges between Claire Bishop and the respondents of her essay illustrate how ‘new media art’ is indeed still in formation. Despite the expansive progress made by the
proponents of new media art through increased presence on the web, in various institutions, through festivals, and publications, Bishop suggests, art world has yet to “invent new vocabularies with which to talk about perception in the digital era” through which we may “speak meaningfully about our contemporary experience of the digital” (2013, para. 5).

Bishop’s positioning of new media art certainly offended its community, which seemed to display ignorance or lack of knowledge towards a growing number of contemporary new media artists working inside and outside of the mainstream. However, it can be also argued that they have missed the centrality of her argument. Her criticism was directed more towards the mainstream art world that continues to focus on the object, traditions, and commercial viability, which might in fact drive them to a state of obsolete much like the dead technology (Bishop, 2012; 2013). As such, this article in a way was her plea to those in the mainstream art world to really engage in speaking about what we are experiencing, seeing, feeling, and being affected by new media with or without the use of new media technologies.

What she may have overlooked by centralizing her argument in such a line of thinking, however, is that in the age of regurgitation and immediation capable of instant communication of all information and any image anywhere (Smith, 2013), artists perhaps need to be obsessed with the technology of the present to talk about its impact (Bishop, 2013). Looking back over several centuries of art history alone, artists have always been ahead of their time: they have been engaged in writing a detailed history of the future as they are the only ones aware of the nature of present (McLuhan, 1964). When works, such as those of Marcel Duchamp and Roy Rauschenberg initially came to the surface, the art critics, historians, or the public did not readily accept them. But as we are now aware, only when we caught up with what the artists had foreseen, we were then able to appreciate and marvel at
their perceptiveness (McLuhan, 2003). Art, in its physical or virtual form, takes time to be understood. It is this quality of art that coincides with that of new media in its bare form. Contrary to what Bishop claims, it could be argued that new media art is rightly “assert[ing] its own relevance for the future” (Bishop, 2013).

*Touching Reality* by Hirschhorn and *Shoot an Iraqi* by Bilal in/directly speak about the impact of digital technology on our bodies, psyches, consciousness, relationships, society, and global economy. While the latter more explicitly and effusively utilizes new media than the first, and also more political in its subject matter, they both illustrate “technological prostheses, which augment and supplement the materiality of the body with tools that enable its facilitation of the world” (Garoian, 2008, p. 232). The quality of affect that these works bring to the fore in regards to the mind numbing world that we live today is the central concern for Bishop, and so too, is mine.

Quaranta (2013) also shares the same concern and calls for a postmedia perspective approach that looks beyond the binary conception of contemporary and new media art. To do so, however, he argues there is a need for curators who are capable of doing translation work. This, he suggests, is a way of bridging the divide and recognizing the new media art as “what is formerly known as new media art” (Quaranta, 2013, p. 216), which enables us to look beyond the dichotomy. Through this insight, what we may gather is that despite the difficulty of integrating seemingly separate discipline that seeks to assert its own disciplinary autonomy, new media art should negotiate a place within art education.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Return to the research questions

The term ‘new media’ is often interpreted as new digital technologies, however, by positioning it as an entity-yet-to-be-understood, I sought to uncover what other possible ways I may explore its impact and implications. The overarching aim of this study, therefore, was to further expand our understandings of the evolving characteristics of new media in thinking about our own pedagogical responses and to consider the increasing number of cultural, political, and social shifts brought on by new media. To take an approach that focuses on new media within these shifts, I drew upon Marshall McLuhan’s writings as well as diverse and intersecting views on new media in multiple fields of studies: contemporary art, new media art, media education, and art education.

There is a strong impetus in the field of education to utilize more technology stimulated by the government, industry, and community interest in policy-driven research as well as by the scholars and educators’ fascination with the potential of new media (Livingstone, 2011). In the midst of a celebratory stance towards digital education, as an art educator, artist, and researcher, I had to ask if art education is heading towards the right direction under the names of new media art education, 21st Century art education, contemporary art education, and digital visual culture art education. While I welcome the shift this field is experiencing as it revitalizes its curricula and pedagogies, I also recognized that there are some critical concerns to be raised and questions to be asked.

_How does new media demand critically reflexive pedagogical responses from the scholars and educators?_ Foremost, new media needs to be understood beyond a media
centric approach. In Chapter two, I first raised a number of critical concerns regarding 21st Century Learning and the use of the term ‘digital’. The significance of this section was not only to provide an overall understanding of how new media is understood in the field of education, but also to examine the ways in which it has been mis/conceptualized and to reconsider the assumptions and ideological pedagogies that underlie this advocacy. Then I looked into the recent discourses around new media in art education. The survey of scholarship in art education showed that in the midst of strong advocacy towards greater engagement with technology as a way of responding to the need for revitalizing art curricula and pedagogies, more emphasis is placed on new media rather than art. While such an impetus is required to bring about necessary changes to move away from centralizing ‘traditional’ art practices and embrace contemporary art practices, new media is perceived more as tools to be deployed: as a repertoire of practices, only this time, in digital format (Bishop, 2013). New media needs to be understood beyond a technology centric approach, beyond a materialistic paradigm.

*What does it mean then to be an art educator in this overwhelmingly complex contemporary world?* What does it mean to inquire through new media art in current times? What are the possibilities and potentials offered, and on the other hand, what are the challenges to overcome? There indeed are numerous ways in which this question could have been taken up, but I followed what McLuhan did throughout his career – seeking insights from the artists. I also sought insights from those who are actively engaged with art today namely art historians, curators, artists, and critics in order to further problematize the use of the term ‘new media’ in art. It was a reactionary approach upon realizing that there is a
scarcity of literature in art education that looks into accounts of art critics, art historians, curators, and artists who have been heavily engaged with ‘new media art’.

The term ‘new media art’ became the established label for the broad range of artistic practices that are created or in some way deal with new media technologies in the late nineties and the first decade of this century (Quaranta, 2012a). As such, the three works of art I focused on in Chapter 3 were My Boyfriend Came Back from the War (1996) by Olia Lialina, Dream of Beauty 2.0 (1999) by Kirsten Geisler, and Domestic Tension (2007) by Wafaa Bilal. These were chosen to create a framework for situating ‘new media’ art, to discuss challenges faced by the artists and curators, and most importantly, to denote pedagogical implications for art education.

One of the most significant understandings gained from this chapter is the way in which their work make us question what creativity, authorship, and art are; they suggest technical possibilities to blur multiple boundaries through varied ways of inquiring through art using new media as both artistic medium and communication medium (Quaranta, 2013). Another insight gained in this chapter is how engaging with new media in art education has to involve facing the difficulty of unpacking new media art. The difficulty lies in the fact that new media art is “currently sit[ting] somewhere between its emergence and historicization” (Cook, 2008, p. 32) and “in an almost constant state of emergence because of its use of new technologies” (Graham & Cook, 2010, p. 284). Art education must become cognizant of the potentials as well as the challenges presented by new media and faced by the new media art community in order to create a space for artistic inquiry that responds to the crowded moment that we live in today. Art educators have the responsibility of creating a space within
which students may generate a conscious position towards using new media as a tool, theme, and medium as well as its mediation of the body.

In Chapter 4, Claire Bishop’s article, “Digital Divide: Contemporary Art and New Media” for the 50th anniversary issue of *Artforum* (2012), and its aftermath were taken up to further expose the complexity behind thinking about the relationships among the following terms: contemporary, new, media, art, and education. There are clear tensions in current understanding of new media art as exemplified by the positions taken by Bishop and the proponents of new media art in the subsequent online comments, and other follow-up discussions on various websites and blogs as well as Bishop’s reply in the letters page of the January 2013 issue of *Artforum*. Her criticism was directed towards mainstream art world, the way in which it is holding onto commercial viability rather than exploring revolutionary aesthetics and influences brought on by new technologies (Bishop, 2012). Furthermore, Bishop asserted that the art world has yet to “invent new vocabularies with which to talk about perception in the digital era” through which we may “speak meaningfully about our contemporary experience of the digital” (2013, para. 5). The proponents of new media felt the attack instead because for them, Bishop is not acknowledging the expansive progress they have undergone in the past few decades through the increased presence on the web and through festivals and publications. However, it can be argued that they have missed her main argument. For Bishop, it was not the lack of presence of digital or new media art, but rather, the lack of works of art that deal with affect, ones that interrogatively looks into the digitized condition of our lives, (Bishop, 2012; 2013), works that are poetically conceived and deal with dialogic space of relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 2002), and that speak to our core putting us into a state of mutism (de Bolla, 2001).
Conceptualizing this need through discussing my first encounter with Hirschhorn’s *Touching Reality* (2012) was, therefore, pertinent to this study. It does not neatly fit the definition of new media art nor can the artist be referred to as a new media artist. However, the way in which he puts at the center of our attention a mundane sight of fingers strolling across a touch screen to view censored images of a war captured by amateur photographers speaks about the mind-numbing world that we live in today. His work exemplifies arguably the most fundamental quality of an artwork and that of the artist - to probe and stir through artistic inquiry exposing and challenging our seeing and understanding (Garoian, 2010; McLuhan, 1964). They “habitually encounter and report on the new present” to speak about the possible future (McLuhan, 2003, p. 153). Smith (2013) claims we live in contemporaneity - the experience which “at once subjective and objective, individual yet shared, entirely particular while being inescapable for all – of being immersed, to an unprecedented degree, in a world marked by an unprecedented diversity and depth of difference” (p. 17). Within such a world, for Nancy, art today is “the opening of a form that is above all a question, the form of a question”; it should be “interrogatory” (Smith, 2013, p. 20), and “a fundamental gesture, one that puts us in direct communication with the creation of the world . . . an act that manifests being, which brings worlds into being” (Smith, 2013, p. 21). The question that remains for art education is whether or not we are ready to take up these works of art that interrogate the current condition of our world rather than simply embracing potentials presented by new media.

We live in a world where the definition of art and the role of artist are being redefined and challenged like never before. Historically the act of exploration of materials and ideas as art media, as new language, or as new knowledge has always been what an artist does. With
inherent characteristics of new media, however, such playful experimentation is taken up by an increasing number of general public with access to digital technology. What was once reserved for the artists is exercised and accessed by many through “[t]he art-like activity of the millions throughout the world who are immersed in social media instantiat[ing] this state of spectacular pointlessness” (Smith, 2013, p. 24). This is augmented by the availability of increasingly user friendly and affordable design software and devices, which further promotes the prosumer culture that encourages participation via online platforms (Jenkins et al., 2006; Toffler, 1980).

It is important to recognize that it is within this buzzing world of activities that contemporary ‘new media’ artists press for edgier awareness of the implications of this new technosensual comfort zone, making sense of the present in future terms and conditions (Jones, 2006). Artists position themselves as “public intellectuals, educators who provide insights and raise questions about the world” (Kushins, 2006). For art education, there is a need for expanding the notion of new media through artistic inquiry rather than deploying new media technologies or directly implementing contemporary art practices for the sake of moving into 21st century art curricula and pedagogies. Art education should further consider in what ways is ‘new media’ shifting our perceptions, our roles, and the notions that surround new media. One of the ways in which a divide between contemporary art and new media art may be bridged is through bilingual, bicultural curators who can take on the translation work (Quaranta, 2013). As art education aims to revitalize its curricula and pedagogies, what we perhaps should aim for is cultivating art educators who can take on the role of teacher/curator.
5.2 Reflections and limitations

McLuhan, most importantly, was a keen observer of change in society. Contrary to the popular belief, he was not a big fan of technological development nor a heavy user of technology, but once he caught sight of his six children engaged with multiple electronic media, such as watching television, listening to radio, talking on the phone, and playing phonograph records simultaneously, he became fascinated with the changed environment in which his children were living in and neurological disparity between the two generations (Wolfe, 2003). More than five decades have passed since then, and I find myself feeling as though I am living across several generations all at once, constantly being shocked and numbed by an intensifying pace of changes. What led me to this study was perhaps my deep desire to pause, question, and make sense of what is it that we are experiencing. If McLuhan were alive today, what would he say? As Lev Manovich (2001) proposes, McLuhan might state that the present context for new media is a different breed of its own compared to radio or television because these are integrated and interconnected in a way previously unknown and require a new kind of media theory (p. 48). Above all, McLuhan would be most surprised to see how screens have become the main frames of seeing the world.

Despite my original effort and attempt to synthesize the impromptu jazz-like style of McLuhan’s writing, or as Janine Marchessault (2005) described it, “non-linear and experimental forms of writing and thinking” (p. xviii), I soon realized such a creative endeavor can only be achieved by one who is extremely knowledgeable in multiple fields of study, uniquely rhythmic in one’s way of forming knowledge, and is as open-minded as much as strong-headed in taking one’s position. Upon this realization, I embraced the writing process as an endless pursuit of reflective processes while trying to provide what McLuhan
called “Do-it-yourself” (1958, p. 17). Claiming how Edgar Allan Poe invented two new techniques of communication in literature - the symbolist poem and the detective story, which provides readers with “a series of clues, and a series of parts with instructions, hints, and suggestions and the general overall instruction” (p. 17), McLuhan (1958) wrote how these forms of writing changed the role of audience to co-author or co-creator, putting them in a creative role previously held as a monopoly by the writer. While this thesis is far from being a detective story or a poem, topic of ‘new media’ necessitates the readers to stretch and expand what they have previously known about the term to arrive at a new point of understanding. As such, instead of aiming to arrive at conclusive answers, I approached and engaged in this study as a journey to be explored with multiple destinations.

Throughout the process of writing this thesis, I have encountered a number of obstacles. One of them is talking about something, i.e. new media, which is being investigated and discussed in almost every field of study at this present moment as well as the fact that the term ‘new media’ brings up familiarity and alienation at the same time. Therefore, it was not an easy task to overcome a fear of writing about that which is unstable and multi-referential into a recognizable form as well as to find a point that can act as a new opening to inquire about what may seem redundant for some, that is, technology and art education. What is more, inquiring about ‘new media’ in this study had to involve dealing with enormous terms, such as contemporary, new, media, art, and education, which are terms that can be taken up separately or together in different pairings. To find ways to not simply balance, but to give recognition to each term and to offer a new insight, I engaged in multiple discussions as my solution to overcoming these obstacles.
In the process of writing the last chapter, I saw myself in Bishop. I realized that I am critiquing the world I belong to in the hopes of what I conceive to be a way of moving towards a meaningful and timely path. While I embrace the changes art education seeks to undergo, there is a need for curricula and pedagogies that are as much about the exploration of technologies and ideas as ones that put emphasis on situating ourselves and others in relation to the world through art. Therefore, every discussion I engaged in this study, particularly the last chapter was to offer the field of art education yet another space to consider what it means to inquire through artistic means and what should be of a central concern as the field embraces new media. I re-presented an analysis of new media art by situating it in relation to the contemporary mainstream art and positioned both of them as that which are still in the process of formation.

5.3 **A new turn: Future research suggestions/implications**

Shifting the focus of art curricula and pedagogies towards contemporary ‘new media’ art comes with uncertainty. It does not come with mounds of resources to fall back upon nor is it proven or accepted to be works of ‘the masters’ worldwide. It also requires the learning environment to be adequately set up, but more importantly, asks the educators to be media literate in ways that most of them were not trained for. Furthermore, there is the issue of dealing with subject matters that are often considered as taboo. To place ‘affect’ at the center, however, art curricula must engage in pedagogical means of attending to uncertainties and challenges that come with it. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that the role of teacher/curator as a translator comes with the responsibility of his/her on-going effort to explore and comprehend what comes along the way. S/he needs to be engaged in life-long
learning that stems from understanding the responsibilities bestowed on him/her. To be an art educator of today, I believe one needs to be active about becoming more media literate not just in the sense of familiarizing oneself with technologies, but recognizing that art has always asked us to be media literate (Quaranta, 2013). This is not a new responsibility; rather, the need has become simply more visible because technology has caught up with what art always does (McLuhan, 1964; 2003).

I imagine art classrooms as beyond white cubes (Paul, 2008), as pedagogical spaces, that position teachers as curators taking on the ‘traditional’ role of teaching/curating while forging dialogues with the students/artists who seek to explore and create what may yet to be included in the art ‘book manual’. This is not an act of replacement or abandonment of what has been defined as art education, but to acknowledge the changing times and the need to foster divergent thinking and enacting within the space of inquiry.

There has always been shifts in the very concepts of art and artists throughout the history, but one of the particular functions of art and artists has guaranteed their continued positions: “turning our eyes and mind toward meaning of things habitually ignored” (Hausman, 1963, p. 87). McLuhan believed art provides protection against numbness and narcosis, but proposed that electric media have caught up with the artists and perform the same function of making structure of perceptual modalities visible, enabling integrated instant and total field awareness (Marchessault, 2005; McLuhan, 1964). This is not to say that we no longer need artists, but rather, that in such an environment, artists should function as prophetic “early alarm system” (McLuhan, 1964, p. x), and be trusted to chart the course for society for they generate forms of knowledge that may help guide the society (Marchessault, 2005; McLuhan, 1964).
The future research in thinking and expanding our knowledge about new media and art education must move away from compartmentalized and instrumental ways of thinking. More importantly, we must work towards creating a condition within which gaining and maintaining the perception of artists becomes a central focus. We have to recognize the need to re-define, re-develop, and deepen our relationship with the art in art education at this moment in time. It should be an act of treasuring, honoring what it stands for. We need to remind ourselves that it is through art that we understand and value education and make sense of all that is around us. We also need to recognize how as we experience the blurring boundaries between art and nature, business and culture, and school and society, there is a stronger need for cultivating articulate awareness in the field (McLuhan, 2003). Any attempt to retain old prerogatives would be to disregard the new role that is asked of educators (McLuhan, 1958). We must strive to experience “wide-awakeness” (Greene, 1977; 1995) for “[i]t is an honor and a responsibility to be a teacher” (Greene, 2005, p. 80) to prepare students for what has yet to come. We must be wide-awake to the complexities facing all of us and work towards confronting what is possible by our capacity to teach and open ourselves and our students to imagination, curiosity, and dialogue through our efforts to create a space of becoming (Greene, 1995; 2007).
BIBLIOGRAPHY


