# MUSEUMS & NEW MEDIA ART

**Susan Morris**

# SUSAN MORRIS

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# INTRODUCTION

*[New Media art] questions everything, the most fundamental assumptions: What is a work? How do you collect? What is preservation? What is ownership? All of those things that museums are based upon and structured upon are pretty much thrown open to question.*
Jeremy Strick, director, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles

Recently, a number of key U.S. museums have begun to commission new media art. While contemporary art museums have been commissioning art since at least the 1970s—expanding on their traditional mission to collect, preserve, and interpret works—the intangible, variable, interactive, and reproducible nature of new media has highlighted fundamental questions concerning the museum's role and purview.

This report is based on conversations with curators, museum directors, artists, and new media professionals to help understand this development in the United States. Why do museums commission new media art? Who is receiving commissions and what is being commissioned? Does new media art need these commissions to flourish? What are the legal issues at stake, including copyright, ownership, and artists' rights? Although this report attempts to provide answers, many questions remain.

Not everyone agrees that museum commissioning of new media art is a good idea. Should museums be involved with the newest, most cutting edge art? "It depends on the mission of the museum, and digital and new media art have pushed the issue, and may force the hand of the museums," says Benjamin Weil, curator at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. His former colleague, Aaron Betsky, thinks it is inappropriate because "museums, by their very nature, are conservative institutions. They are about finding work that has been made, showing it, and allowing it to be seen by future generations. Should experimentation happen in an art museum? No, not necessarily. Art museums are, by their very nature, half a step behind. And that's absolutely fine."

Others observe the contradiction between new media culture and museum culture. In Artforum, writer Mary Dery mused, "I thought the cultural dynamics of the digital age—decentralizing, destratifying, and demassifying—were supposed to take a wrecking ball to magisterial institutions like the museum."

Nonetheless, art museums have entered into the new media fray. In the short history of digital art, one observer charted museums' participation as five years of denial, followed by a year of deferral, which ended when the genie came out of the bottle at the 2000 Whitney Biennial, which included new media art.

The possible roles art museums can take with new media art include: 1) Commissioner, 2) Portal, and 3) Collector. The thrust of this report is about option 1) Commissioner. The report is divided into two sections: 1) *Museums and New Media Art,* which includes definitions, philosophical and ethical issues, and museum practice, followed by 2) *Business and Dissemination,* with sections on funding, audience, portals and consortia.

*Methodology*
In this investigation, I had conversations with four groups: museum curators; museum directors or administrators, for an institutional overview; commissioned artists; and new media professionals and researchers. I have concentrated largely on the major U.S. art museums, bricks-and-mortar institutions with permanent collections (excluding university art museums) that have made a commitment to

patronizing new media art.  These include The Dia Center for Art, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Walker Art Center.  In addition, I spoke with the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (MOCA LA), the Smithsonian Institution's American Museum of Art, the International Center of Photography (ICP), and the Tate—the only institution outside the U.S. I investigated—plus selected individuals who are steeped in this world, including Mark Tribe, Rhizome; Kathy Brew, Thundergulch; Anne Pasternak, Creative Time; and graduate students at Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI Arc) in Los Angeles and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago who are investigating aspects of museum involvement (see full list in Appendix).  I have also read museum press releases, catalogues, magazine article s, and online sources such as Rhizome and Crumb.

I have allowed the museums to define what they mean by new media or digital art. For example, Matthew Gansallo, in his Tate commissions, differentiated among Web design, art on the Web, and Web art. Others make a distinction between online and offline work.

The timing was crucial.  During the period of my investigation in early 2001, several exhibitions opened: *010101* at SFMOMA, *Bitstreams* and *Data Dynamics* at the Whitney, and *Telematic Connections* was in circulation by Independent Curators International (ICI). *TimeStream* by Tony Oursler premiered at MoMA, as did the Smithsonian's three on-line projects, and MOCA LA commissioned its first work, John Baldessari's *Still Life: Choosing and Arranging*. In addition, the Guggenheim held *Preserving the Immaterial: A Conference on Variable Media,* which addressed issues of new media preservation and brought together many of the field's key individuals. A number of museum consortia were announced, some of which are portals to online art, while others are either co-ventures or collaborations to share technology, equipment, and services.

In another sense, the timing is reflective of the fluidity of the field. Administratively, new media is in a state of flux within museums. Curators are not necessarily stationed in their own New Media department. Rather, some are in Film/Video/Media Arts, others in Painting and Sculpture, some in Contemporary, others in Architecture and Design. Others involved can be found in Education, Marketing, Publishing, Design, and more. The backgrounds of the current crop of curators is varied: Christiane Paul at the Whitney studied literature and came to new media via hypertext; Steve Dietz studied art and was involved in publishing photography books, and so forth. This, too will soon solidify.

Since the research for this report was completed, the following staff changes have occurred: Aaron Betsky from SFMOMA became the director of the Netherlands Architecture Institute in Rotterdam; Matthew Drutt left the Guggenheim to became chief curator of the Menil Collection in Houston; Steve Dietz's title changed from director of New Media Initiatives at the Walker to curator; David Ross stepped down as director of SFMOMA; and Patterson Sims departed MoMA to assume the directorship of the Montclair Art Museum.

**Part One**


**MUSEUMS AND NEW MEDIA ART**

## I. BACKGROUND – History of Museum Commissions

Patronage of new art has been practiced by the church, the state, and private individuals probably since ancient times. It was a practice exercised throughout early modern Europe, notably during the Renaissance when both the arts and the stature of the patron flourished.

A dynamic exists between patron and artist, balancing what patrons desire and what artists wish to do. The current museum patronage of new media art is perhaps just a new chapter; with museums even being referred to as the 20th century "church of art."

Traditionally, the mission of museums has been to collect, preserve, and interpret works of art. The International Council of Museums (ICOM) uses this definition: "A museum is a non-profit-making, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment."

In the 20th century, museums engaged in contemporary art began to expand this brief. At the Whitney, for example, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney sought to support innovative artists by creating a place to show works, and making them available for sale. The museum has commissioned new artworks for the Whitney Biennial since its inception 70 years ago.

Another museum that ventured into new territory was The Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, Connecticut, under Director A. Everett (Chick) Austin, Jr. He commissioned Gertrude Stein, Virgil Thomson, and Florine Stettheimer's opera *Four Saints in Three Acts*, which premiered in 1934. Austin recognized that by using the imprimatur of the institution in the creation of a new work, museums assumed a new role.

Installation art entered the contemporary scene in the late 20th century, and electronic and digital technologies continue to expand the form's possibilities. If contemporary art museums wished to follow the art of their time, then they had to expand their mission in order to show site-specific installations. Unlike displaying painting or sculpture, which can be relatively easily transported and installed, installation art is created or customized for a specific site. Therefore, either a new work or re-installation of a previous work needed to be commissioned from the artist. The other venues and patrons for installation art were the international art fairs like the Venice Biennale in Italy, Documenta in Kassel, Germany, Sao Paolo in Brazil; not-for-profit spaces like PS1 in Queens, NY; LACE in Los Angeles; and Hallwalls in Buffalo, New York; not-for-profit producers such as Creative Time in New York and ArtAngel in London; and galleries (which had the added challenge of selling the work).

In the 1960s, some museum curators also found ways to commission moving-image media art. Unlike the current patronage of new media art, earlier commissioning was undertaken without much fanfare since the art was off the critical radar. As a result, curators at the Everson Museum in Syracuse, NY, the Whitney Museum, and MoMA in particular were able to take risks in video and multi-media without much notice.

In the 1970s, museum patronage became more formalized. The Hartford Athenaeum was again a pioneer with its *Matrix* program of contemporary exhibitions and performances, much of which was commissioned. A similar program, the *Projects* series, was undertaken by MoMA in 1971. This format of an experimental, contemporary art space within a museum has been widely imitated with approximately 50 versions in U.S. museums.

*Brandon: A One-Year Narrative Project in Installments* by Shu Lea Cheang at the Guggenheim, in collaboration with Society for Old and New Media, the Institute on the Arts and Civic Dialogue, and the Banff Center for the Arts, is cited as the first commission of an online artwork by a museum. Launched in 1998 with support from The Rockefeller Foundation, *Brandon* unfolded over the course of a year with artists' participation and public intervention, and it can still be found on the Guggenheim Web site.

## II.  DEFINITIONS of New Media

*Many net artworks don't have a form; they're interactive and ever changing. So you're not really commissioning a thing, you're commissioning an experience. And it's ludicrous to have too much property attachment to that.*
Larry Rinder, Whitney Museum of American Art

While there is no single definition of new media art, there are some common characteristics: fluidity, intangibility, "liveness," variability, replicability, connectivity, interactivity, computability, and chance.

Interviewees included the following forms under the category of new media art:

- **Net art.**  Art that is made using the Internet. Some of the manifestations are browser-based art; email art; real-time performances that synthesize voice, video, and data; hypertext and hypermedia. The exhibition of Net-based pieces generally does not require resources beyond an off-the-shelf computer and Internet connection.

- **Virtual Reality**.  Synthetic environments that might utilize head-mounted display or glove-input devices worn by the viewer. The user can interact with this synthetic world and directly manipulate objects within it.

- **Robotics and agents**.  3-D robots (telerobotics are remotely operated), software robots, or computer virus art.

- **Artificial life forms.**  Using genetic engineering and bioengineering to make art.

- **Digital art**.  This term can either be all-encompassing to include all the arts that use digital means, or can refer to physical manifestations such as prints and photographs rendered digitally, and flat-screen art.

- The term **plurimedia** has been used to describe the use of more than one medium in the same piece, essentially the crossovers and combinations of media.

In their commissioning of new media art, museums have looked to several familiar ways of categorizing art: 1) an original, unique work of art, 2) an edition, or 3) a performance. The adoption of one of these three models indicates varying interpretations of what the art is and the approach to commissioning.

1) If a museum thinks about new media art as an original work, it is approached as a single, finite work that is not to be replicated. Therefore, it has a sole owner and venue, and a single iteration.

2) If a museum thinks of new media art as an edition, it is viewed similar to photography, prints, and film and video. Generally, there is a limited number of works made by the artist, and each is nearly identical.

3) The third model views new media like a live performance. It is ephemeral, exists as an experience in time which vanishes after completion, unless recorded for posterity. Whitney curator Christiane Paul says new media art is like performance because "the artwork has been transformed into a structure that relies on a constant flux of information and engages the viewer/collaborator the way a performance might."

Artist Mark Napier says new media art is definitely like a performance because "software is like that, something you basically perform on your machine."

Still others define and describe new media art by making analogies to other art forms, or even life forms. David Ross, Director of SFMOMA, thinks of it like a zoo with live animals. Some compare new media art to Fluxus, the 1960s avant-garde art movement because both are time-based work that include an element of unpredictability. People are divided on its similarities to video: it is similar since both can be screen- and time-based, but different because video is finite, whereas new media can seem infinite. Several noted the example of artist Sol LeWitt's wall drawings, which reflect his belief that the concept is paramount, and reject the notion of art as a unique and precious object; the wall drawings follow simple directions executed by others rather than the artist himself. Others point to conceptual art, which holds that "form is less important if only because it may be evolving. What we are gradually learning from unstable media is that form may not be as important as content."

## III. MUSEUMS' ROLE IN NEW MEDIA

*According to the sociologist Jean Baudrillard, `Museums often play the role of banker in the political economy of paintings.' But crucially, with the net it has had to abandon the gold standard that its reserve is founded upon. Individual authorship; good provenance of works; uniqueness of objects; the 'autonomy' of art; are all usurped by... work on the web.*
Tate Web site

*For an institution showing contemporary work, to omit new media practice, I won't say irresponsible, but it's ignorant.*
Honor Harger, Tate

Museum participation in new media art has fallen into three categories: 1) Commissioner, 2) a Portal, or 3) Collector. This report focuses on option 1) Commissioner.

The benefits of, and rationale for, museum commissioning of new media art include:

• **TO BE BOLD**. Interviewees expressed the desire to take a stand, break the mold, and be at the forefront of contemporary art with a new medium at its earliest stages. Commissioning this work can give a museum the opportunity to stretch farther and try something new, and possibly to "direct history," by having a major impact on the field. Some did not want to be as cautious as they had been with other recent art movements, where they missed out on acquiring important works near to the time they were created. Glenn Lowry of MoMA said, "In the sixties and seventies, and even the eighties, we resisted some of the directions contemporary art was moving. We missed Warhol in the '60s. We avoided collecting the art stars of the '80s. But we came to realize that we had been foolish, so we played catch up. And what I don't want to do is play catch up here."

• **TO SUPPORT THE FIELD.** It was important for museums to be supportive of work that would not necessarily emerge otherwise, in part because of difficulties in salability of the work, or because the work can be difficult to understand. There was an expression of altruism, of providing a service to give artists visibility and promote their work. For curators, the ability to work directly with selected artists was a draw. The desire to make a contribution to the art community and to "give back" was expressed. Jon Ippolito of the Guggenheim pointed out that the "gift economy" is part of the new media ethos, otherwise "if the museum gets the cachet of having these artists associated with it, it doesn't have to spend any money to do it, it's not contributing. And the presumption of the gift economy is that you have to give back."

• **TO EXPAND THE MUSEUM'S BRIEF.** Involvement with new media art allows a museum to build on its traditional functions and strengths—collection, preservation, research, and display—to be disseminators, educators, and promoters of art. As a result, this can place museums in a key position in the information age. Involvement with new media art can add energy and, possibly, money, and extend the museum's imprimatur. Max Anderson says, "I tend to ask three questions about an art museum: Who's it serving? What do they need? And what can we do to serve their need? And we haven't done that in this field."

## COMPLICATIONS
### • Questions of Control & Policy

*Is this a license to have it in our server? Have it up? On our site or have a link? Do we have to maintain it? Or do we maintain it even if we don't own it? There are so many issues that remain unresolved. There is no policy about this.*
Lilian Tone, MoMA

Whether discussing commissions or collection, the issues of ownership, copyright, leasing, duplication, maintenance, and support are all under discussion. Museums are grappling with their rights and responsibilities. For example, museums are asking: what does it mean to commission a work that does not result in a tangible product or material residue? What paradigm do they create to honor the fact that they do not own the work or the intellectual property for the work? Artists speak about thorns inherent in making the work collectible, and the ease of bootlegging, hacking, and copying.

### • Conservation Raises Questions

*We have yet to see how these questions are going to play out both in terms of variable media (Jeremy Blake's work could be both a flat-screen piece or a projected piece), and in terms of how these things will last and whether eventually we will have to go back to the original programs to recreate them. That is going to depend on conservation issues. If it turns out that the most important thing is the digital file, then the museum is going to have to y change how portfolios are distributed to accommodate that.*
Larry Rinder, Whitney

Many basic questions have been raised by conservation. For example, SFMOMA's *010101* commission of *The Telephone Call*, Janet Cardiff's hand-held video and audio walkabout where visitors watch the screen of a camcorder while following the artist's directions through the museum's galleries, raises the question of what the work is. A performance? A sculpture? A video? For the future, what is important to conserve? Is it important that the work be viewed on the same camera as it was created? Another artist's work that appeared in *010101* and *Bitstreams* at the Whitney is Jeremy Blake's flat-screen computerized "paintings," which are currently seen on digital video, but the raw format is a QuickTime computer file. Which does a museum save? Is the size important since it can be projected at any scale? Could it be viewed as a wall fresco as easily as a framed work? Mark Napier's work *Feed* appropriates the raw material of the Web and scrambles it to produce "anti-information." Is the art the computer code and interface? But without the appropriated images, there is no artwork.

### • Display

There is a debate within museums about how to display new media work. Must work be shown in the physical gallery space of the museum, or can it be exclusively online? Most museums have played it both ways. The exceptions are Dia and the Walker, which have elected to have online presences only. However, this policy could change when their new buildings in Beacon, NY, and Minneapolis, MN, respectively, are opened.

Object-based display harks back to existing museum exhibition models. At MoMA, Tony Oursler's *TimeStream* was intended for the Web, but it was deemed important to make it available for the museum visitor. However, a kiosk was considered dull, so Oursler created a special installation using materials mostly not seen on the Web site. "Since each image is not identified, it's like entering into Tony's head as he's creating," observes Barbara London, MoMA's curator in charge of the project.

*Data Dynamics* at the Whitney involved all artists in the gallery presentation of their work, several of which have online components. Curator Christiane Paul encouraged the artists to go beyond the broadly accepted interface to computers: the mouse, keyboard, and monitor. One solution was to enable viewers' activities at their home computer to affect visitors' experiences in the museum by interacting with the sites in real time.

We are reminded that in this field, the technology changes at lightning speed. The Whitney's Max Anderson suggests that "the current rage is for flat screens, which may melt away into free space, and then it will be a leticular experience or a retinal scan.  We used to be concerned with wiring buildings but now it's wireless; why would art be any less malleable?"


• **Museum as Filter**
Some museums provide links to new media art sites, related theoretical writing, or a place for interactive dialogue with the public. However, others think these services are unnecessary in part because the museum's role is to take a more removed stance, rather than simply pointing to the next new thing. Alternative sources for this information, such as Mute magazine and its online sister, Metamute, and Rhizome present the work of artists, critic s, and curators, foster critical dialogue, and preserve new media art for the future. http://www.metamute.com/   http://www.rhizome.org

## IV. THE ROLE OF THE CURATOR

*I would guess that people who were dealing with Duchamp or any of the other avant gardists, were involved in conversations about the presentation of work that verged on contributions to the production of the work. I think there is a history of this k ind of thing when one is dealing with creative living artists in a museum context — at least going back to things like the* Matrix *Program at the Wadsworth Atheneum.*
Larry Rinder, Whitney

Just as museums have expanded their roles in the 20th century, so too have curators. The enlargement of the original role of "keeper" of objects has enabled the curator to be an active participant in the commissioning and creation of new artwork. This development coincided with the rise of site-specific installation art, and has continued with new media art.

Among the hats that curators wear are portfolio curator, administrative curator, critic curator, producer curator, and commissioner curator. I have also heard the term exhibition- or display-maker, particularly in reference to the people who head international art fairs.

In my conversations, the term "producer" came up most frequently, and people talked about being collaborators, enablers, and nurturers. Some worried about the trend away from the selection of artists and projects, and toward "co-creation" with artists. We should remember that museums are not the only venues where new media art curation takes place; many artists are now curators of their own Web sites, as are organizations like Rhizome. Tasks commonplace in new media such as annotating links, mapping territory, and navigating a route can be seen as curatorial functions.

- **Controversy and Confusion Highlighted by New Media**
New media art highlights questions about this expanded role of the contemporary curator.   Issues include omniscient authority, accusations of gate-keeping, and the difficulty of communicating complex ideas to a broad audience.

Within museums, the lines can sometimes blur in relation to who carries out curatorial functions in new media.  For example, at MoMA, a graphic designer functioned as a curator of the Web site without that official mandate. "He was making decisions about a formatted presentation that reaches a large public," said Patterson Sims. "The questions arose: How do we edit it? Who are the right people to edit it? How do we decide what gets onto it?"

- **The Curatorial Process: Hands on or Hands Off**
When a work is being commissioned, curators usually behave in one of two ways: hands-on or hands-off. Either way, the Tate's Matthew Gansallo cautions curators to understand that "you're not the artist here; they are."

   *Voices:*
- *Hands-on*
   Jon Ippolito, Guggenheim:  "I like to be close to the process. Ultimately I'm accountable, and I want to make sure that the artists put their best foot forward. I also want to make sure that I don't doom the enterprise of online art by putting a lousy piece in a prominent location. I find that it helps to have someone to bounce off against, and I think of myself as simultaneously very fussy and very open minded."

   Mark Napier, artist: "Jon Ippolito is very eager to get involved. He really wants to know: `What's the concept? Can I see a demo? Can I see another demo? I'm going to the board today and I'm going to

explain this to them.' He is very involved in the dialogue, in terms of what the work means. I do think for me that the work has been shaped by that conversation."

- *Hands-off*
  Jeana Foley, Smithsonian American Museum of Art. "We didn't have much involvement at all, actually. The artists submitted their proposals for their site, which were selected by a jury. And then the winning proposals were what their works were based on. There was technical communication, but other than those parameters, they were pretty much off on their own."

  Mark Napier, artist. SFMOMA "was very straightforward. They sent an e-mail saying, `We want to do a commission; here's the amount, and you're invited.' They planned well in advance, almost a year. During the creation, Benjamin [Weil] was very hands off. My impression of him is that he believes the artists do what the artists do, and it's not his job to instruct or to manage artists. There was no conversation about: `Is this appropriate?' or `What do you mean by this?'"

- **Risk**
Commissioning work implies an inherent risk: the work does not yet exist so you do not know what will result. Some curators embrace this uncertainty, while others attempt to minimize the risk or subvert it. Factors vary depending on the passion of the curator, the faith of the museum, the tone set by the director, the curator's relationship with the artist, and the curator's relationship to or independence from the institution. John Weber of SFMOMA says, "It depends on personal passion. You get these curators who really want to do these projects, and they drag their institutions along, either kicking and screaming or enthusiastically, depending on the kind of energy that the director has. If you have a director who fundamentally likes doing new things and likes artists and is willing to take chances… here, that's what we're about; David [Ross] says, let's do it."

- **Administration**
*[Museums] have involved whole new categories of personnel that don't fit conveniently into conventional exhibition functions such as registrar or preparator.*
Steve Dietz, Walker

*It's not something I would want to vulcanize in a department. Because art doesn't exist that way.*
Max Anderson, Whitney

How new media curators will fit into the museum's administrative structure is still being negotiated. It remains to be seen if new media will be incorporated into existing museum divisions such as Media, Contemporary Art, Photography, and so forth, or remain a distinct division called New Media.

Some believe new media should remain a distinct entity to avoid being swallowed up or marginalized. It has been ventured that a distinct new media department would be structured differently than other departments fixed by medium, because of new media's interdisciplinary nature. At the moment, many museums have left matters "departmentally blind," so that any curator who has an interest is encouraged to participate. Many are relishing in the openness that exists right now. The boundaries of professionalism have not been firmly established, so different parts of the museum staff are brought in because they have an interest, talent, or knowledge and use them in new ways.

New media personnel come from a variety of sources. Since the field of new media is so new, the current crop of curators who have expertise in the field have come from unusual backgrounds—some from "old" media such as video and photography, others from literature (knowledge of hyptertext), and others from being on the ground floor of new media production and dissemination outside the museum structure. In addition, curators work with other staff members on new media commissions, and that has highlighted the

"blur" factor, where lines are crossed.  A number of museum directors spoke about the new jobs that would be created, from an all-encompassing head of digital programs to curator for new media.

Because of this multidisciplinary approach, the curator serves as go-between. One described negotiating between the artist and the marketing department, which managed this museum's Web site. He worked to make marketing understand that new media artists have the same rights as painters, sculptors, or any other artist invited to make work.

## V. ARTISTS SELECTED FOR MUSEUM COMMISSIONS

Museums have a choice about what type of artists to commission to make new media art—artists who have specialized in new media or artists who work in more traditional media (including media arts). Some institutions have chosen a single category, while others have a hybrid approach.  Inevitably, the artwork that emerges depends on the selection of artists. With the limited number of works that get commissioned by museums, how this is played out is critical.

• **THE CHOICE OF NON-NEW MEDIA ARTISTS**

*Dia Center for the Arts*
To date, Dia has commissioned artists who come from more traditional disciplines who are interested in exploring the aesthetic and conceptual potentials of the new media. Dia has a history of working with a core group of artists, and of creating a locus for interdisciplinary art and criticism. A stated mission is to facilitate direct and unmediated experiences between the audience and the artwork, and Web-based projects fit this brief perfectly.
http://www.diacenter.org/rooftop/webproj/index.html

• **Reasons and precedents for this choice**
A prime reason to select a known artist from another field is to bring a polish and, some would argue, validation to net art. Some curators have a commitment to certain artists with whom they have worked previously.

A precedent is the master printers who have encouraged artists previously uninvolved with the form—painters, poets, etc.—to try their hand at print-making. Prominent examples include Crown Point Press, which enlisted artists Sol LeWitt, Brice Marden, Vito Acconci, Chris Burden, and John Cage; and Universal Limited Art Editions, under the stewardship of Tanya Grosman, who worked with Robert Rauschenberg, Jim Dine, Helen Frankenthaler, Jasper Johns, and Robert Motherwell. Patterson Sims of MoMA notes, "Jasper [Johns] became, arguably, *the* greatest printmaker of the latter 20th century — though he never intended to make prints until Ms. Grosman gave him the plates."

• **Arguments against this approach.**
One artist used the analogy of segregation, bussing the good artists into the bad neighborhood. One curator sees an inherent problem in using artists who work in film, video, and even painting because, he argues, they are accustomed to  "fixing the medium" rather than adapting themselves to the fluidity and uncertainty of new media.

• **THE CHOICE OF NEW MEDIA ARTISTS**

*Smithsonian American Museum of Art*
Merry Foresta, the photography curator, originally wanted the Smithsonian's *New Media/New Century Award* to be an opportunity for photographers to expand their horizons. "But then it seemed that was not the best idea, that we might be missing out on people who were not necessarily defined as photographers, but, media artists who use photography and other tools in their work. So we decided to go for a general call," according to curator Jeana Foley.

One of the award-winners, Patrick Lichty, notes that the call for works was put out to places like Rhizome, so there was a distinct effort to cultivate new media practitioners.
http://nmaa-ryder.si.edu/collections/exhibits/helios/newmedia/index.html

*The Walker*
Under Steve Dietz, the Walker's focus is primarily on artists who are committed to digital, net, or multi-media.
http://www.walkerart.org/gallery9/


- **CHOOSING BOTH—NON-NEW MEDIA & NEW MEDIA ARTISTS**

*Guggenheim*
Jon Ippolito believes "the Guggenheim is a really prominent venue, and one that people are looking to scrutinize: Is this online art really worth it? I've had to choose artists who have established track records, and whose work I really admire. When I'm a guest curator somewhere else, I tend to be much more experimental. I tend to bet on horses that I don't know as well."  Currently, Mark Napier, John Simon, Jr., and Adrianne Wortzel, all new media artists, are working on Guggenheim commissions under Ippolito's curatorship.

In contrast, Matthew Drutt has tended to work with artists who have not worked in new media before— people who work in sculpture, photography, conceptual art, architecture, design, and the moving image. He then matches up artists with technologists.
http://www.guggenheim.org/exhibitions/virtual/index.html

*MOCA - LA*
Jeremy Strick says, "As far as commissioning, we're doing two things. There are a number of digital artists who are working in this medium, and certainly, that work will be represented. But we also want to engage artists who haven't worked in this before.  So one of our first commissions is going to be John Baldessari," whose first experience with new media is this piece, which premiered in June 2001.
http://www.moca.org/museum/digital_gallery.php

*MoMA*
MoMA started by patronizing the artists who would ordinarily exhibit in or be collected by the museum, but it is open to new media artists.  Glenn Lowry began by asking what artists think.  "You've got artists on the one hand— like Ellsworth [Kelly] and Jasper [Johns]— for whom this may be very distant territory; other artists, like Bill Viola, who is very savvy about technology, but whose mature work really isn't dependent on the Web; and then a much younger generation of artists for whom perhaps the Web is the place."  MoMA invited selected artists already engaged in museum projects to do Web components. "We started asking artists whether they were interested in extending what they were doing in the galleries onto the Web. The first Web project we did, almost five years ago, was Peter Halley's *Exploding the Cell*. From Peter we bought a digital file that is a program he developed in which you engage with the artist, and you make your own work of art — it's interactive. You press a button and out comes a color print that's signed by Peter and by you. We began to commission artists to do projects for us on the Web in an ad hoc way. And at a certain moment, we stepped back and said, `Well, if we're doing that, and we don't want it to be a mirror of the museum—that is, to simply translate onto the Internet the programs we have in the museum—why don't we actively work with artists who are interested in developing Web projects for us?' Which is what we've started doing." The first project was Tony Oursler's *TimeStream.*
http://www.moma.org/docs/onlineprojects/index.htm


*SFMOMA*
For the exhibition *010101*, which had both a gallery presence and an extensive Web site, SFMOMA commissioned both new media and non-new media artists.  The Web-only pieces were largely new media artists, but not exclusively.

http://www.sfmoma.org/exhibitions/exhib_detail/01_exhib_010101.html

*Tate*
Matthew Gansallo, referring to the Tate's first two commissions: "I tell people that I have a virgin and a gypsy. I commissioned an artist who we can call a traditional artist who makes work that we can readily identify as fine art (painting, sculpture, representation)—Simon Patterson, an already relatively well-known artist, and one in the Tate's collection—as a way to hold the hand of your extant, traditional audience and bring them online; and also one from the other community whose work has always been entrenched in new media, Graham Harwood."
http://www.tate.org.uk/webart/default.htm

*Whitney*
Director Max Anderson is committed to "following the artists." Larry Rinder, curator of Contemporary Art, has concentrated on a range of artists who work in variety of media. Christiane Paul, adjunct curator of New Media, is committed to commissioning digital artists.
http://whitney.org/artport/
http://www.whitney.org/bitstreams/
http://www.whitney.org/datadynamics/

## VI. ARTISTIC PREFERENCES

What do museums tend to favor in their commissions, in both form and content? In addition to "quality," museums are anxious to make work accessible, and to show work that has never been displayed elsewhere. In content, much of the artwork deals with the nature of the Web and new media. But as with all art forms, many expressed the desire to commission work with a strong concept that could be easily explained.

Some museums have gone for a big splash. People cited the Guggenheim's initial focus on one single project, Shu Lea Cheang's *Brandon,* which had events tied to it for one year. However, the Guggenheim is now commissioning 15 to 25 projects.

Artists referred to museums' selection of art that can be easily explained, given the curators' own backgrounds and the institution's mission to interpret art. What curators write about and present is often the meaning and impact of the work. One artist observed that the difference between the art that was commissioned by museums and non-museum work was the need to start with a written text. This text led him to alter the way his process of art-making started, and thereby affected the end product.

### • Examples of commissioned work - Commenting on New Media

At the Tate, the curator commissioned an artist whose focus is net language and the Web itself (Graham Harwood). The commissioned work of a second "traditional" artist, Simon Patterson, attempted to challenge people's preconceived notions of information and systems, rereading or reinterpreting coded information.

At the Whitney, *Bitstreams* displayed a digital media artwork that transformed pre-existing images, and in *Data Dynamics*, a piece chronicled the ways that physical movement and information flow can be "mapped" graphically and dynamically in real time.

The online commissions of the SFMOMA exhibition *010101* have been described as falling into two digital-art camps: 1) those that are informed by the computer's seductive ability to form eye candy and games, and 2) those that engage with the practice of deconstructing Web programming and behavioral conventions. In the eye-candy category are: *Eden.Garden 1.0*, by Entropy8Zuper! and *The New Place,* by Matthew Ritchie. In the Web deconstruction category are Mark Napier's *Feed*; Erik Adigard's *Timelocator* ( a corporate critique filled with graphic icons, conglomerate links, and appropriated banner ads); and Thomson and Craighead's semi-interactive *e-poltergeist*, which seemingly takes over your browser by introducing a Web-surfing ghost into your machine.

### • Formats

*[There is a] cultural form of technological determinism: the latest, coolest new technology, with a little bit more of cultural contextualization.*
Patrick Lichty, artist

The formats of choice change quickly. In SFMOMA's *010101*, for example, there were Web sites, virtual reality installations, video projections, "physiological architecture," as well as photography, designed environments, installations, drawing, painting, sculpture, and crossovers.

Some point to net art as a dominant genre, which gained credence with the 2000 Whitney Biennial, the 1999 *Net_Condition* show at ZKM, and *010101* at SFMOMA in 2001.
http://www.whitney.org/exhibition/2kb/biennial.html)
http://on1.zkm.de/static/index.html
http://www.sfmoma.org/exhibitions/exhib_detail/01_exhib_010101.html

Hypertext used to be a popular model, which has been challenged by gaming and TV broadband. Flat-screen monitors have become popular in museums, perhaps because they resemble framed paintings, and serve as a physical and virtual bridge.

One artist finds that he makes different work for museums than he does otherwise. Mark Napier referred to his Web piece, *Net Flag,* for the Guggenheim. "Because it is really meant to be a public work, it makes sense for it to be in an institution that will promote it and work with it. It's not the kind of piece that I would sell privately to an individual because it's really so much about democracy. *Net Flag* doesn't work as an edition. You fly one flag on a territory. There's only one on the Internet. "

### • **Infrequent or rejected formats and works**
Certain works and forms have not been embraced, or have fallen out of favor by museums. These include time-based work and works whose subject matter is deemed unacceptable or inaccessible for that museum's constituents.

The exhibition *Port: Navigating Digital Culture* at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's List Center in 1997 is considered unusual. It was an online, time-based performance with a live audience. A theory as to why this type of work is rarely repeated is that this format has unpredictable outcomes. The exhibition was staged via numerous interactive real-time performances scheduled in two-hour time slots. Visitors participated either in the galleries (with enlargements on four large screens), or from their own computer terminals.  The exhibition was intended to provoke questions about the identity and role of the artist situated within a virtual terrain, the role of an active viewer/participant, and the dematerialized work of art. Of primary concern was the interactive potential of the Internet and its functions as creative catalyst, network, and social space. In this regard, projects were planned in advance, but only came to fruition in execution.
http://web.mit.edu/lvac/www/WINTER1997/port.html

For museums, umpredictablility comes in many forms.

The Network of Carnegie Libraries of Pittsburgh, the public library system,  hosts the four Carnegie Museum Websites including those of the Andy Warhol Museum and Carnegie Museum of Art.  The Network planned to commission new media art projects, and the first was by Richard Hawkins.  He researched Warhol's *Time Capsules*, and created an essay with photographs based on Warhol's collection of pornographic homoerotic materials. The Network of Carnegie Libraries decided they could not host that site, and so the Warhol Museum and the artist created a new site, called Arts OnLine, which has its own, distinct URL, www.artistsonline-warhol.org. Users must claim to be 18 years of age to enter the site, which was unchanged in form or content.

For SFMOMA's *010101*, a project was rejected that crashed the user's browser. It was described to be like the Sorcerer's Apprentice in the animated film *Fantasia,* where when one window was closed, more would open, ad infinitum. The only way to stop it was to shut the computer off and reboot. Although it didn't destroy the computer, any unsaved files would be lost.  The museum could not assume the liability, and felt it to be too "anarchic."

### • **Museum Impact on the Art**
Is the nature of commissioned work different from non-commissioned projects?  It is a question that may be best answered in the future.  Although some museum personnel agreed that the work is different, they

had difficulty identifying the differences. Some artists suggested the avant garde is becoming institutionalized and blunted as a result of its affiliation with museums.  Two artists highlighted the differences they see in goals and process.

Patrick Lichty, artist, says, "when you get involved in commissioned work, there's really no way that you can get away from the external influence of the commissioning body. They shape it, you know who they are and where the money's coming from.  A 501c3 has certain goals that they want to meet.  Everything that I've been involved with has been tailored to fit their goals.  There's an undertone there."

For artist Mark Napier "the common thread that I've experienced in all of these commissions is that the artwork starts as a text document that you're bound to…that  starts to direct your creative process, rather than the other way around. Although you can be the bad boy artist and throw the whole idea out, or bend it, and then face possible conflicts with curators and museums, I end up gauging, do I want to fight with what I wrote? And I'm not even saying that's necessarily bad or good; I'm just saying that it has a big impact on what's created.

"With *Net Flag* [for the Guggenheim] the piece has evolved and been honed into something that's more specifically about politics, geography and the Web than what I originally started with, which was more open-ended."

## VII. MUSEUMS' APPROACHES TO NEW MEDIA ART COMMISSIONING

The characters of museums are played out in high relief when it comes to new media. For example, SFMOMA's approach reflects its location in the heart of Silicon Valley, whereas the Walker Center's relative physical isolation in Minnesota leads it to be global in orientation, especially since new media is a world oblivious to zip codes. Some commentators point to the Guggenheim's so-called imperatives in branding and globalization, whereas MoMA's bias was deemed more conceptual.

Below are descriptions of the major institutions' approaches to the commissioning of new media art, their current policies and practice including copyright, exclusivity to display, maintenance, services provided, money (funding and budgets), and ancillary rights. The information is based on conversations, not on a survey; therefore not all areas are parallel or complete.

- **DIA CENTER FOR THE ARTS,** New York

Dia's stated goals are to facilitate projects that might not happen elsewhere, provide unmediated experience with the artwork, and host long-term exhibitions. New media commissions fit neatly with this remit.

Dia's artists' projects for the Web began in late 1994 when Michael Govan became director. His support for the Web had two goals: to make information about Dia and its programs accessible to a wide audience and to commission artworks made specifically for the Web. The Web provided both an opportunity to bring art directly to the public and to commission significant projects with artists who are interested in exploring the aesthetic and conceptual potentials of this new medium.

Dia's curator, Lynne Cooke, selects the artists in consultation with Sara Tucker, director of Digital Media. Artists are chosen mostly from the fine arts but also from adjacent disciplines, including dance and architecture, based on Dia's conviction that they will approach the medium in a thoughtful, even unorthodox way.

While there have been a few exceptions, most of the artists have not had programming skills.  The working process involves an exploration of potentials and limits, and then the artist works closely with Tucker to design and program the projects.

To date, there have been 14 Web commissions and three artists' Web projects in conjunction with gallery exhibitions. The projects can be found only online, although they may be hyperlinked to other sites, and offline versions shown in galleries are permitted. When Dia's new building in Beacon, New York, opens, there might be a gallery presence for new media commissions.

Budgets average $8,000 per project, which includes artist's fee, production costs, launch event, and public relations. There has been funding from NYSCA since the program's inception, and the Lila Wallace Readers Digest Fund contributed in 1997-98. Dia maintains its online art projects. Artists own the copyright to their work.

- **THE SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM** New York, Bilboa, Berlin, Venice, Las Vegas

As I did not meet with Director Tom Krens, the institutional overview has been gleaned from curators and artists. New media art falls under two curatorial divisions, the Media Department (Jon Ippolito under John Hanhardt) and Contemporary (Matthew Drutt). Media seems devoted to new media artists, whereas Contemporary favors artists from more traditional media. (In addition, Drutt was in charge of the *Virtual*

*Guggenheim* site, a new museum in cyberspace, by Hani Rashid and Lise Anne Couture, principals in Asymptote Architects.) Matthew Drutt left the Guggenheim in summer 2001.

Commissions automatically become part of the permanent collection. The museum has gone from commissioning a single project, *Brandon*, to commissioning 15 to 20 projects over two years. According to Ippolito, "The overall budget is in six figures." Fifteen percent of the budget for these commissions is reserved in a Variable Media Endowment. The interest from that endowment pays for the costs of reprogramming and recreating these works in the future. "After a couple of years, with the interest [accrued], we will be able to reprogram one of the sites; after five years, three of them; and after 10 years, all 20," said Ippolito.

The Guggenheim has a non-exclusive license, which allows them to guard against another version of the piece being made, but no stake in copyright. I also heard that artists were asked to yield their copyright to the commissioned work, but that it was possible to negotiate.

*Case study:  "NET FLAG" by Mark Napier*

Artist Mark Napier is creating *Net Flag*, working with curator Jon Ippolito. According to Napier, this is their first commission/acquisition of new media art into the permanent collection. Part of the stipulation is that, within reason, this piece will always be on the Web, and Napier has to create the process to make that possible. Napier says, "They own it. And I'm giving up rights to it. It's going to reside on their server, but you can directly link to it from my own site. The whole point being I want it to be Web accessible. I also added into the contract that they are obligated to keep it on the Web all the time. They don't say anything about reselling it, which I assume is not part of that deal. You don't go around just making copies of artwork. They will own the code, although they use the code only to show the artwork. However, I can reuse the code in other projects (so long as I don't recreate this piece again)."

- **MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART - Los Angeles,** CA

Director Jeremy Strick sees MOCA LA as a connection point between the entertainment industry and area art schools. For example, they did a joint series of lectures on new media art with California Institute of the Arts  (Cal Arts) in 2000.

The average budget for commissions is $3,000-$12,000, which covers the artist's fee and technical costs. Strick considers this amount mid-range for museums.  Funds come from a grant for commissioning from the Irvine Foundation, which also supported development of the Web site.  For legal reasons, MOCA LA has been approaching the commissions like a purchase, but Strick did not elaborate.

The first commission went to artist John Baldessari. Called *Still Life: Choosing and Arranging*, it will be "staying up forever." The intention is to present four works a year, with one work at a time featured on the Web site. The other works go into the archive, which will be accessible online.

Regarding exclusivity, Strick said, "Frankly, we don't have a position on that at this point, " but for now the museum will have exclusive rights for the time the work is featured on the site.

- **MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**, New York

*We're not driven by being the first at all; but we are driven by being the best.*
Glenn Lowry, director

At the same time the museum prepares to have its flagship building on West 53rd Street closed for expansion for several years, it has launched a new online program. For this series, MoMA will invite, on an annual basis, two to three artists working in different media to create projects for its Web site. Artists will be chosen by a committee of MoMA curators from different departments. The projects will join MoMA's Web archive of earlier online projects, which date back to 1995 and were done on an ad hoc basis. (Included are two Web commissions by Fred Wilson and Allan McCollum for Kynaston McShine's exhibition *Museum as Muse.*) The new series follows the lead of the *Projects* series, begun in 1971, which is a "free zone" among the curatorial departments. The first selection was Tony Oursler's *TimeStream*, under curator Barbara London's aegis.

The museum has a two-year licensing agreement, during which time the museum has exclusive rights. After that point, the museum will reevaluate, but policy has not yet been set. (The exception is the work of Allan McCollum, which was done in collaboration with Stadium, a Web site for artists' projects, which has been acquired by Dia. MoMA is technically co-hosting his site, although in fact, Dia has exclusive rights. But if MoMA decides to link off of the site, Patterson Sims asks, "then who cares where it is?")

Trustee Susan Jacoby has been the "patron saint" of funding in this area. The museum's Junior Associates and Contemporary Arts Council (led by a creative director at Razorfish) have also provided funds.

Glenn Lowry points out that the museum does not own the rights to any of the paintings in the collections except those over 75 years old. In new media, it is just another dimension to the same issue. "We are going to want to develop a collection of Web-based art. Not only of works we have commissioned, but of other artists as well." Lowry indicated that their Web contracts are different from non-Web contracts, but did not elaborate. But he did say they were grappling contractually with maintenance of the art. Also of concern is ownership; on a Web site, "anybody can log on, and take anything they want from it. So who actually owns it? How does it get distributed? Is it available for other institutions to use?"

- **SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**

Director David Ross (who recently left his post) has a long, personal commitment to media and new media. Ross set the tone for how new media has been approached by the museum: "Artists who choose video or choose media art are purposely choosing to blur lines. They resist being characterized and boxed. If you're going to be an effective curatorial body, you have to mirror the blur. We acquire from different departments, and sometimes different departments acquire things together. The Janet Cardiff video performance piece that we just acquired was bought by Painting and Sculpture and Media Art. Monica Dykstra's video piece was just acquired by Photography and Media Art."

Aaron Betsky, until recently the curator of Architecture and Design, pioneered the collection of Web sites as design in CD-ROM format, therefore treating them like unique, fixed objects. Benajmin Weil, curator of New Media, seems committed to presenting new media artists, although prior to his post in San Francisco, his first commissions for äda'Web were of established non-new media artists, including Jenny Holzer and Julia Sher.

SFMOMA acquired portions of three Web sites: äda'web, Atlas, and Funnel, all of which feature new media art. The museum also hosted the Webby Prize, the international awards for achievement in technology and creativity.

For SFMOMA's commissions, budgets ranged from $25,000 to $75,000 per project. Funding has been provided by patrons Dick and Pamela Kramlich (Mrs. Kramlich serves on the museum's board).

The museum has a one-year exclusive contract. Afterward, it has the right to show the work, but it is the property of the artist who can sell it if he or she chooses.


- **SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM**, Washington, DC

The American Art Museum's *New Media/New Century Award* was the museum's first venture in commissioning or awarding art for the Web. The award-winners' work will be posted on *Helios*, the museum's American photography center on the Web. The recipients are new media artists Cindy Bernard, Russet Lederman, and Patrick Lichty. It is unclear if the program will continue. The artists point out that, being part of the federal government, the Smithsonian must follow certain protocol.

Their commissions' model for new media was the same as their agreements for commissioning a photograph, print or multiple. The artist is the copyright holder, and the museum has exclusive rights for one year. During that year, it can be linked to other sites. Afterward, the museum retains the copy they have, and it falls under their usual nonexclusive license agreement, where the museum can use images of the artwork for promotional and educational purposes. The budget was $4,000 per project, and funding was provided by a grant from Dominion, a Virginia-based energy company, which also funded the Web site, *Helios*.


- **THE WALKER ART CENTER**, Minneapolis, MN

The Walker Art Center has made a strong commitment to new media art and made it central to its mission, working with a "healthy attitude and genuine interest." Much of the effort has been spearheaded by curator Steve Dietz.

The nature of the institution—film and video, visual arts, and performing arts—makes its outlook unusually broad when it comes to conceptualizing an approach to new media. Many think new media's analogy to performance is a strong one, often more so than to unique artworks or multiples. Because the Walker has expertise in all these forms, it has an interdisciplinary perspective.

The Walker defines its missions as "a catalyst for the creative expression of artists and the active engagement of audiences. Focusing on the visual, performing, and media arts of our time, the Walker takes a global, multidisciplinary, and diverse approach to the creation, presentation, interpretation, collection, and preservation of art."

The Walker relaunched its Web site in 1997 and created a virtual "Gallery 9" (the current building is eight stories), in which it instituted a series of artists' Web projects. Gallery 9 has commissioned approximately 150 projects to date. The first was Piotr Szyhalski's *Ding an Sich (The Canon Series)*. In the following year, the Walker focused on commissioning projects from emerging artists, including work by Lisa Jevbrat, Paul Vanouse, Janet Cohen, Keith Frank, and Jon Ippolito. The Walker Art Center acquired the complete äda'Web site, a Web site for artists projects, but new projects are not added to it.

The Walker's budgets ranges from $1,000 - $15,000. Jerome Foundation grants, averaging $10,000, often break down to: artist's honorarium ($4,000), technical support ($3,500), presentation ($1,000), and a small amount for publicity. Artists own the rights, and the Walker has a non-exclusive license in perpetuity. The Jerome Foundation's *Emerging Artists, Emerging Media* grants are open call. For other commissions, Steve Dietz selects the artists.

The Walker plans to commission at least three "hyperessays" a year on broad themes that relate to on-site programming.

- **THE WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART**, New York

After Max Anderson assumed the directorship in 1998, he revamped the curatorial structure so there are curators with media-specific portfolios and curators who cover a chronological period. Christiane Paul was brought in as adjunct curator in New Media, and Larry Rinder, who covers Contemporary Art, was the curator who selected the new media inclusions in the 2000 Whitney Biennial, considered an important watershed.

The Whitney has a Web site for resources in the field of new media art. Also planned are an experimental site to commission sophisticated search functions; a forum to write about net art; and a virtual museum of technology.

Larry Rinder has commissioned two pieces, both for under $30,000, an amount he compares to commissions in other media. "We pay the artists a fee that's negotiated and agreed on. We pay for materials, as negotiated and agreed on. The works were both site-specific." Max Anderson and Christiane Paul said there would be four online commissions per year at a cost of $5,000 - $10,000 per piece. In Christiane Paul's *Data Dynamics* exhibition, the budget was $120,000, with pieces ranging from $9,000 - $50,000 for the five artworks.

Larry Rinder says: "Ironically, we did not get high tech funding for [*Bitstreams*], so… it's not as fundable as you might imagine."
Christiane Paul counters, "Funding right now is easy because the subject is sexy. French Telecom funded the last Biennial new media component [although Larry Rinder notes none of those works were commissioned]. The Rockefeller Foundation funded *Data Dynamics*. The Web site is funded by a New Jersey backed data company, StorageApps Inc., until the end of 2001, including a monthly artist's splashpage."

Artists owns their work. Max Anderson says, "Software is intellectual property." The museum has a one-year exclusive, then has non-exclusive rights. Max Anderson describes the Whitney's approach: "What we did with the Biennial a year ago was to pay those artists who had already made work a licensing fee. It was the first net art loan form. We basically borrowed their work by building a link and paying them a nominal amount for the period of the show, and then we took the link off after a certain period of time." The museum does not offer technical support.

- **MISCELLANEOUS, INCLUDING NON-U.S. (UK, AUSTRALIA) AND UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS**

*The Tate has never been averse to controversy.* Matthew Gansallo

In the spring of 2000, at the same time as it was extending its physical presence, the Tate decided to extend its work in the virtual world. It commissioned two artists, Graham Harwood and Simon Patterson, to make works to complement both the re-launch of the Tate Gallery at Millbank as Tate Britain, and the opening of the new Tate Modern at Bankside.  In addition, the Tate initiated *Art Now*, which is similar to the MoMA *Projects* series and the Wadsworth Atheneum's *Matrix*. The spring 2001 *Art Now* installation was new media-based art, and, for the trustees, raised the concern of how these works relate to the Tate's permanent collections.  In addition, Sandy Nairne, head of National Programmes, envisions a Tate digital channel that could include a Web site, a dot-com, dog.org, Webcasts, and broadband that would be an alternative to coverage on established broadcast and cable.  When asked if the Tate would continue to commission new media art, he replied, only if it's interesting.

Honor Harger, the museum's Webcasting curator observes, "We've set up an expectation now, internationally, that this is something that we do. I think that we have to follow through with that. Now is really the moment for Tate as an organization to signal that we have got a knowledge of this area, and that we are confident with this. Because if you look over the past six months, we've got the Web art commissions, *Art and Money Online* [the *Art Now* installation], and the technology-based works in *Century City* (exhibition at *Tate Modern*)."

The Tate is a strong advocate of artists' rights, and thinks it is a bad precedent to infringe on those rights. The museum does not own anything commissioned.  If a physical installation is created, and the artist sells the work within three years, they repay the Tate the material costs of the installation.  The online works are licensed for one year in exclusivity, with right of first refusal thereafter, at which point the artist is free to do what they wish with the work. The budget was £10,000 per commission.

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Honor Harger says, "The **Science Museum** in London has got the most significant commissions of new media art in the country, without a doubt. It's not an art place at all. It was curated by Hannah Ridler, who is now working for an organization called C-Plex in the Netherlands. She was an outside curator, working with Dave Patton, the head of Interactive Media Exhibitions at the Science Museum. When they opened the new Wellcome Wing, which is their digital media space, they really wanted to try and break down the distinction between what art was and what science was. The original museum complex around South Kensington was always supposed to be about cultural, scientific, and artistic exploration. There is something in the region of eighteen new commissions in there ."  None are on-line works, but can be seen on the Web site.  Intel reportedly funded this exhibition, *Digitopolis*, for £1.5 million.
http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/on-line/frameset.asp

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Honor Harger: "New media practice in **Australia** has been part of daily life for such a long time. It's been supported at an institutional level for long enough now that it's absolutely being embraced by museums, in contemporary museums that you would expect and the very, very traditional galleries like the Art Gallery of New South Wales [the National Gallery], which is now commissioning people like Char Davies to do new work."

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Steve Dietz notes, "Two of the earliest pioneers, it is interesting to note, are both **university museums** with a strong connection to photography and to artist-run programming. The California Museum of

Photography at U.C. Riverside acquired a copy of the software program Adobe Photoshop for their permanent collection because of its importance to the future history of imaging, and the School of Art and Design at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's art's projects include works by Peter Campus, Carol Flax, Barbara DeGenevieve, and others." Rick Rinehart mentioned his own Berkeley Art Museum, as well as the Henry Art Gallery at University of Washington at Seattle and the University of Minnesota as innovators in the field.

# PART TWO


# FINANCE & DISTRIBUTION

## I.  FUNDING & THE MARKET: DETERMINING VALUE

*We're finding now that museums can play a role that galleries could not, that dealers could not, and that to some extent, private collectors could not. In the early Internet, I really believe it was a gift economy. Academics mailing ideas, programmers sharing code, everything going into the ether and people pulling things out, without expecting tit for tat or money.*
Jon Ippolito, Guggenheim

*I don't have a dealer. I'm working on it. Part of it is the question: What are you dealing?*
Mark Napier, artist

The art world is struggling to find a way to make new media art economically feasible. Precisely because new media art is hard to sell and collect, putting a price tag on it has proved particularly difficult. The traditional methods of valuing an artwork—authenticity, condition, provenance, rarity, and so forth—make limited sense with new media.

Museums are financing new media projects through fundraising from the business community and foundations, and through attempts to establish their own commercial revenue streams such as dot-coms. The art market is exploring options to make the work profitable, such as licensing work and selling it like a CDs or computer software.

### •  Sponsorship
Where are museums finding the funds? Generally, from the business and foundation communities. The following is a cursory list. The Whitney has found various sponsors including French Telecom, StorageApps Inc., and The Rockefeller Foundation.  The Smithsonian American Art Museum tapped the Consolidated Natural Gas Company, which had previously sponsored the landscape photography collection and the *Helios* Web site.   SFMOMA cited Intel and the Kramlichs, who are private patrons. MoMA noted trustee Susan Jacoby, their Junior Associates, and their Contemporary Arts Council (headed by a creative director at Razorfish). The Walker administers the Jerome Foundation's *Emerging Artists, Emerging Media* grants, and secured funding from MCI WorldCom and AisleFive.  *Brandon* at the Guggenheim was funded by The Bohen Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, The New York Foundation for the Arts, The Mondriaan Foundation and the Ministry for Cultural Affairs in Holland, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

### •  Value
Museums are trying various ways to put a monetary value on the work they commission. Right now we are in a moment of limbo, where the commission price may be confused for the value of the work. Unlike private collectors, museums do not commission or purchase art with the intention of selling.

Jon Ippolito at the Guggenheim raised the question of value regarding the maintenance of a project: "What would it be if you added up all of the money you ever spent to maintain a project?  That amount arguably could be the minimum value of the work. Because it's what you as a museum are willing to pay to keep it alive. (It's like the people who buy a cat for $10, and then pay thousands of dollars in veterinary bills. On the exchange market, it's $10; but that's not the value of the cat.) Even though you may be able to make semi-infinite copies of, say, *Every Icon* by John Simon [a work sold on Amazon.com], the museum may be the only place where you could go back to view them [in the future]. Suddenly everyone will have access to it again."

**•. The Market**

The issues contributing to the thorniness of commissioning and collecting have had an impact on the art market, and a variety of models are being tried by galleries and others to figure out how to make the work sell. One precedent is the purchase of music by the consumer. When a consumer buys a CD or tape, it is a copy, which is played and listened to, but the music is not owned by the purchaser. Sheet music sales pioneered a new economic concept of artists' collecting royalties each time the work is sold, and a new kind of a legal arrangement. Similarly, theater companies license plays from authors or their estates in order to perform them. This model, applied to new media art, presupposes that it is a software product, as opposed to a physical object.

Artists expressed a preference to find market solutions to support their work, rather than relying on museum patronage exclusively. There are wider possibilities in having "hundreds of thousands of people each putting a thousand dollars in than to have a few institutions splitting the bill."

**• Commercial museum ventures**
There are a variety of for-profit enterprises contemplated by museums in which artists' commissions would be a component. MoMA and the Tate planned a joint venture, which collapsed, but each is contemplating their own dot-com site. SFMOMA was discussing a commercial venture in which former director David Ross wanted to "sell" the platforms developed through commissions. The Guggenheim is planning to launch a dot-com in autumn 2001 in collaboration with the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg; The Albertina, Vienna; The Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; and the Zentrum fur Kunst und Medientechnologie/Center for Art and Media (ZKM) Karlsruhe, Germany.

**• New art and commerce**
For some, there were expectations that new media art would gain from the technology boom of the late 1990s, from the gold rush atmosphere of silicon valleys and alleys across the United States. One curator noted that it is hard to imagine the same financial prospects anticipated for early video art in the 1960s. Now, with the demise of the dot-coms, reduced expectations for returns might be a blessing in disguise, according to Jon Ippolito where "artists are once again being prized for their work. I think the dot-com's loss is the dot-org's gain."

## II.  AUDIENCE & OUTREACH

*Bill Viola or Gary Hill or anyone working in video can assume what their audience will be like.  When you start making work for the Web, you have no idea who your audience is. And in fact, it's almost certain that whoever you think will be your audience, won't be your audience.*
Glenn Lowry, MoMA

Whether discussing new media art, museum Web sites, or virtual galleries, the audience was of great importance, but few in the museum world have a firm grasp of who they are and how they will respond. What is clear is that the numbers could be substantially larger than those who attend the museum in person. The educational function of the museum takes center stage with new media, building on the museum's traditional mission to create a critical context around the art and to foster a strong two-way dialogue between the art and the audience. This has been particularly crucial with an art form that may be difficult to "get," alien to those used to viewing conventional art, or those who are not computer-literate.

• **Nature of the Audience**
What is understood about the museum audience for new media as compared with the audience that walks through the museum's door is that it will be larger, different, global, and 24/7. These new services provide an opportunity to undercut charges of "elitism" that are often leveled at museums. "Even in a museum like this [MoMA], where we have had up to 1.8 million visitors, we still started doing better than that on the site, really quite quickly," says Patterson Sims.

New media can create new audiences for the museum, people who may not ever attend an exhibition. "I don't see the Web site as being a lure for the museum. It's a sporting analogy. Television created entirely new audiences for football or baseball games, and most people who watch football on TV don't go to football games. That's why I talk about a parallel museum. I'll be very happy if we have four or five or ten million people a year who visit the Museum of Modern Art's Web site, and for them, that's visiting the museum," says Glenn Lowry.

• **Education & Outreach**
Museums can enhance their educational role by helping visitors to look at new media art, which many found difficult, according to museum staff. One person ventured that what is needed is a critical dialogue to contextualize the work, otherwise it could repeat the experience of video art in the 1970s, which took a long time to be accepted. Repeatedly, I heard a plea for presenting context and background, and those museums that had not worked to provide context wanted to do better next time.

Museum officials were proud when they had been able to provide "filters" to understand the work, both online and in the gallery.  This included layers of interpretive material to foster interest and curiosity from audiences, extended labels, and a stream of texts to foster thought.

Steve Dietz of the Walker predicts that "the emphasis will shift from simply `creating' content to presenting a context for it—just as one of the roles of the curator is to identify, contextualize, and present a point of view about works of art." This mirrors the changing role of the teacher as going from the "sage on the stage" to the "guide on the side."

## III.  MUSEUM CONSORTIA & PORTALS
Although some of these sites are not new, the following were noted by interviewees.

- *APERTURES*

Jon Ippolito described a planned online Guggenheim project called *Apertures*.  He refers to it as "Napster for art."  It is "an attempt to acknowledge the `networkness' of museums. It creates a way of exchanging bookmarks and dynamically altering them, colliding them together or subtracting one from another. You could essentially build your own personalized curator, by adding a certain percentage of my bookmarks, Steve Dietz's, Benjamin Weil's and Christiane Paul's and putting them together in a chain. The upshot is this is an attempt to represent a hybrid between museums and the online world.  In other words, rather than break the model of museum, make it open to a network, reinvigorate it by adapting it to the network.

"My deliberate reason for choosing the term `apertures' rather than `filters' is a filter cuts things out; an aperture lets light in.  The goal is not to filter out what doesn't fit in the nice, white box of the museum, but actually to open the museum up, take some of the things museums are good at like calling each other and telling about artworks, sniffing the breeze and telling you who's hot and who's not, at making critical judgments.  So it really begins with a kind of fairly centralized repository, although one that's intra-institutional."

- *ART ENTERTAINMENT NETWORK*

The Walker Art Center's expansive Net project clearinghouse, Art Entertainment Network, was created in 2000. Although this is an online exhibition from the Walker's Gallery 9, curated by Steve Dietz, AEN models itself after the portal. "Just as everyone from Yahoo to Microsoft tries to create the ultimate one-stop destination for Web surfers — a place with news headlines, shopping, and stock quotes at your fingertips — Dietz creates a one-stop destination for online art." (Jason Spingarn-Koff, Rhizome)
http://aen.walkerart.org/

- *ARTPORT*

The Whitney Museum's Artport is designed to be a comprehensive portal to Internet art wordwide, and an online gallery space for specially commissioned net and digital art.  The site consists of four major areas: 1) an exhibition space of net art/digital arts, where current exhibitions will be shown and past exhibitions, such as the Whitney Biennial Internet art projects, are archived, 2) an art database, with links to net art projects that have been created since the beginning of Web-based art, some six years ago, 3) a splash page, created each month by an invited artist with links to the artist's site and most important projects, which will be archived in the databased collection of net art and digital art in the Whitney Museum's holdings; and 4) a resources archive which links to galleries, networks, and museums on the Web, past net art exhibitions, festivals, as well as net art publications on the Web. This archive will constantly evolve as new organizations and resources are added.

Users can currently access 60 sites worldwide, including such networks as Rhizome and The Thing; art institutions including the Guggenheim Museum, the SFMOMA, the Walker and Dia; and such publications as *Leonardo* online, *Metamute,* and *Switch*.
http://whitney.org/artport/

- *CROSSFADE*

A joint project of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Goethe-Institut, ZKM (Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe), and the Walker Art Center.  Steve Dietz says "*CrossFade* is not to have museum

`branding' but instead to be a place for art. *CrossFade* focuses on the Web as a performative space for sound as an artistic medium.  Creating a platform for diverse sonic and musical directions that utilize network technology, the site integrates works of sound and visual art, houses an archive of live events, and features a special `asynchronous' area—including essays by Josephine Bosma, Chris Chafe, Golo Foellmer, and Greg Niemeyer."  Combining and leveraging resources, *CrossFade* is a separate entity, with a shared server. It is funded in part by the James Family Foundation.
http://www.sfmoma.org/crossfade/
http://crossfade.walkerart.org/
http://on1.zkm.de/zkm/e/projekte/crossfade
http://www.goethe.de/uk/saf/archiv/pingcrossfade.htm


- *CYBERATLAS*

The Guggenheim Museum has a program called *CyberAtlas*, which Steve Dietz calls a "concerted effort to chart this terra incognita of cyberspace." The aim of *CyberAtlas* is to commission and collect a series of maps of cyberspace, with a particular focus on sites related to visual art and culture. Its first two projects are *Electric Sky* by Jon Ippolito—"Bright stars in the firmament of online art and the networks that support them'"—and *Intelligent Life* by Laura Trippi—"a thematic map that traces connections between recent scientific developments and art, theory, and popular culture.  These are wonderful, must-see works, which point to an important direction in curating on the Web. " *CyberAtlas* also features a "metamap" representing a series of online projects—artistic, curatorial, and scientific—that offer alternative approaches to mapping cyberspace."
http://www.cyberatlas.guggenheim.org/


- *SHOCK OF THE VIEW*

A collaboration organized by the Walker Art Center with the Davis Museum and Cultural Center at Wellesley College, the San Jose Museum of Art, the Wexner Center for the Arts at Ohio State University, and Rhizome.
*Shock of the View: Museums, Artists, and Audiences in the Digital Age* was a general discussion listserv, from September 22 - March 1999, with a parallel series of exhibitions every three weeks. It was fundamentally an attempt to generate discussion about the relation of digital media to contemporary museum practice—and vice versa. It looked at the network as a way to extend or change the model of traveling and collaborative exhibitions. By inviting artists, writers, educators, and curators from across the Net to respond to some fairly generic questions——What is virtual? What is real?etc——using  the exhibitions as potential concrete reference points, they strove to avoid the traditional, authoritative institutional voice.  "From *artnetWeb* to *äda'web* to *Rhizome* to *nettime* to the *irational-ljudmila-easylife-jodi* axis to *V2* and *ANAT* to *Eyebeam*, and *ZoneZero*, and many others, there is amazing work going on that consciously or not challenges traditional, institutionalized, museological practice and perhaps certain notions of Art with a capital A. Hopefully, `Shock of the View' can be a short-term medium of exchange among these groups," wrote Steve Dietz.
http://www.walkerart.org/salons/shockoftheview/sv_front.html




- *VAN, Virtual Art Network*

A planned consortium of the Walker, SFMOMA, Brooklyn Academy of Music, and the Asia Society, thus far.  These institutions, which combine performance, visual art, film and radio, are brainstorming about ways to share services, technologies, information, and scarce resources. They are attempting to capitalize on the potential economies of scale and the kind of efficiencies that coalition-building can produce. The institutions are still in discussion, and the product is still under development.

APPENDIX 1:  **INTERVIEWEES** (as of June 2001)

Anderson, Max.  Whitney Museum of American Art, Director
Berthoud, Lisa.  School of the Art Institute Graduate Student in Arts Administration,  thesis *Web-Specific Art and the Institutionalization of the New Avant-Garde* in progress
Betsky, Aaron.  SFMOMA, Curator of Architecture & Design through April 2001
Brew, Kathy. Thundergulch, Director.
Buchheit, Jason.  SCIArc student working on *The Future Art Space* project in Christophe Cornubert's studio
Dietz, Steve.  Walker Art Center, Curator, New Media
Dodd, Philip. ICA, London, Director
Drutt, Matthew.  Guggenheim Museum, Curator of Contemporary Art through June 2001
Earl, Ed, ICP, Curator of Digital Media and Director of Information Systems
Foley, Jeana.  Smithsonian American Museum of Art, Curatorial office.
Gansallo, Matthew. Tate, Curator of On-Line Projects (freelance)
Goodman, Carl.  American Museum of the Moving Image, Curator of Digital Media
Harger, Honor.  Tate,  Webcasting Curator, Department of Education and Interpretation
Helfand, Glen.  San Francisco-based writer for *San Francisco Bay Guardian, Wired*, et al
Ippolito,Jon.  Guggeneheim Museum, Assistant Curator of Media Arts
Lichty, Patrick, artist
London, Barbara.  MoMA, Associate Curator, Department of Film and Video
Lowry, Glenn.  MoMA, Director
Loyer, Erik.  Artist
Lunenfeld, Peter.  Art Center College of Design, Institute for Technology & Aesthetics (ITA),Director and Graduate Faculty, Media Design and writer
Mendeloff, Todd. Razorfish, Client Partner
Nairne, Sandy.  Tate, National Programmes, Director
Napier, Mark. artist
Pasternak, Anne.  Creative Time, Executive Director
Paul, Christiane.  Whitney Museum of American Art, Adjunct Curator of New Media
Philips, Lisa.  The New Museum, Director
Rinder, Larry. Whitney Museum of American Art, Curator of Contemporary Art
Rinehart, Richard.  UC Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive, Director of Digital Media
Ross, David. SFMOMA, Director through August 2001
Selbo,Vivian, designer
Simon, Jr., John, artist
Sims, Patterson.  MoMA, Director of Education through May 2001
Strick, Jeremy MOCA, LA, Director
Tone, Lilian.  MoMA, Assisstant  Curator, Painting and Sculpture, current in charge of the On-Line Projects series
Tribe, Mark.  Rhizome, Creative Director and Founder
Trippi, Laura, Tech BC, TechOne Leader, Academic Programs, Interactive Arts  and artist
Tucker, Sara.  Dia Center for the Arts, Director of Digital Media
Weber, John.  SFMOMA, Curator of Education
Weil, Benjamin.  SFMOMA, Curator of Media Arts
Wortzel, Adrianne. artist