

## LEONARDO REVIEWS

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### VIDEO

#### HOWARD ZINN: YOU CAN'T BE NEUTRAL ON A MOVING TRAIN

by Deb Ellis and Denis Mueller. First Run/Icarus Films, Brooklyn, NY, U.S.A., 2004. 16 mm, 78 min., color.

*Reviewed by Amy Ione, The Diatropé Institute, P.O. Box 6813, Santa Rosa, CA 95406-0813, U.S.A. E-mail: <ione@diatropé.com>.*

After watching the 2004 Democratic convention on C-SPAN, I slipped *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train*, a video biography of Howard Zinn, into my player, wondering how it would look after a 4-day infomercial presented by the American Democratic Party. Like most people who are worried about U.S. politics today, I know Zinn's reputation as an activist/scholar. I also remembered that as a young college student, years before the release of his popular *People's History of the United States*, I read his work when drawn to take courses on topics strange to my life today, ranging from constitutional history to labor law. Having long ago put these subjects aside, I still retain some sense that we can never separate our lives from politics. This idea has become particularly pronounced in recent years, which unfortunately too often brings to mind the old saying "If you're not upset by the current state of affairs, you're not paying attention."

*You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train* can only be described as a wonderful movie for our time and a superb biography. On a basic level Deb Ellis and Denis Mueller document the life and times of this historian, activist and

author. What sets the production apart is the way they weave together contemporary and rare archival materials, interspersing interviews with Howard Zinn and the many people who have worked with him over the years. Testimonials from his colleagues and friends (including Noam Chomsky, Marian Wright Edelman, Daniel Ellsberg, Tom Hayden and Alice Walker) greatly enhance the video. Even more enlightening is seeing most of the people in both their contemporary and historical personae. The juxtaposition of the events that forged each of these individuals with Zinn's influence and his deeply felt commitment to activism left me with a sense that many of us understand what is to be gained by speaking out against draconian measures and injustice.

In Zinn's case, the way his personal history makes his many achievements so striking is remarkable. In his early childhood Zinn lived in the slums of New York City, often in cold-water flats. After high school, before World War II, he worked in the shipyards and organized workers. Enlisting in the Air Force in World War II, he became a bomber. One understands Howard Zinn's metamorphosis when he recalls how the bombs he dropped were a factor in the development of his later instincts for peace. Even more striking are the segments on his time at Spelman College during the early Civil Rights Movement. One of two white professors at this black college in Atlanta, Georgia, Zinn encouraged activism among his students. He eventually was fired for doing so. His time at Boston University is better known. There, he led students in protesting the Vietnam War, as he continues to lead protests today. Although it is not possible to detail all of the areas Zinn has touched in his full life, another indication of his reach is his peace mission to Vietnam during that war, when he negotiated the return of American servicemen from the North Vietnamese.

Anyone with an interest in politics will find this video stimulating. Watching the tape right after the convention in Boston made it difficult to separate Zinn's style of patriotism from Ameri-

can history, particularly since the convention was in Boston, where much of *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train* was shot. The shrewd editing further encouraged me as a viewer to think about history. Watching its artistry, I found myself looking at the various protest sequences and thinking of how art speaks about war in its own fashion. Admiring the ability of the directors to join the current debates about Iraq with the legacy of Vietnam brought to mind Paul Revere, hero of the American Revolutionary War. Today, he is famous for his midnight ride, when it is said that he rode to Lexington to warn the insurgents that the British were approaching, as well as his work as a silversmith and printmaker. But it is less well known that his anti-British engravings (e.g. *The Boston Massacre*, engraved by Revere in 1770) were effective propaganda for the revolutionary cause during his life. Now, they serve to remind us of the degree to which art and politics can successfully merge.

Zinn's commitment likewise speaks of the degree to which following through on one's beliefs can make a difference. At 81 he is still vigorous and speaking out. Those who have not followed Zinn's career will find that the video lays out his long activist history

*Reviews Panel: Peter Anders, Fred Allan Anderson, Wilfred Arnold, Roy Ascott, Curtis Bahn, Claire Barliant, René Beekman, Roy R. Behrens, Andreas Broeckmann, Annick Bureaud, Chris Cobb, Robert Coburn, Donna Cox, Sean Cubitt, Nina Czegledy, Shawn Decker, Margaret Dolinsky, Dennis Dollens, Luisa Paraguaui Donati, Victoria Duckett, Maia Engeli, Enzo Ferrara, Deborah Frizzell, Bulat M. Galejev, George Gessert, Elisa Giaccardi, Thom Gillespie, Allan Graubard, Dene Grigar, Diane Gromala, Rob Harle, Craig Harris, Josepha Haveman, Paul Hertz, Amy Ione, Stephen Jones, Richard Kade, Curtis E.A. Karnow, Nisar Keshvani, Julien Knebusch, Daniela Kutschat, Mike Legget, Roger F. Malina, Jacques Mandelbrojt, Robert A. Mitchell, Rick Mitchell, Mike Moshes, Axel Mulder, Kevin Murray, Frieder Nake, Maureen A. Nappi, Angela Ndalianis, Simone Osthoff, Jack Ox, Robert Pepperell, Kjel yngve Petersen, Cliff Pickover, Patricia Pisters, Michael Punt, Harry Rand, Sonya Rapoport, Edward Shanken, Aparna Sharma, Shirley Shor, George K. Shortess, Joel Slayton, Christa Sommerer, Yvonne Spielmann, David Surman, Pia Tikka, David Topper, Rene van Peer, Stefaan van Ryssen, Ian Versteegen, Stephen Wilson, Arthur Woods, Soh Yeong.*

and encourages the viewer to respond in kind. That the film is the winner of the Audience Award for Best Documentary at the Provincetown International Film Festival speaks to its appeal, which I would second. Indeed, it is a film worth seeing. A short trailer is available at <<http://www.firstrunfeatures.com/howardzinn.html>>. Also at this site is a list of upcoming play dates in the United States and Canada.

## BOOKS

### **TWISTY LITTLE PASSAGES: AN APPROACH TO INTERACTIVE FICTION**

by Nick Montfort. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, U.S.A., 2003. 286 pp., illus. Trade. ISBN: 0-262-13436-5.

*Reviewed by Dene Grigar, Texas Woman's University, Denton, TX, U.S.A. E-mail: <[dgrigar@twu.edu](mailto:dgrigar@twu.edu)>.*

*We are standing at the beginning of a new fusion of technology and literature.*

—Gary McGath (p. 228)

Many of us are still waiting for a future of electronic literature that proves McGath's words correct; 20 years after they were spoken, Nick Montfort reminds us in his book, *Twisty Little Passages*, that few, if any, of McGath's "predictions" have come true. This fact may underlie the presence of wistful hopefulness that permeates Montfort's book. But if anything can infuse energy into the art, it is this careful and exciting study of interactive fiction (IF).

Defined as "text game," "text adventure," a "simulated world," work that "react[s] to input meaningfully," and a work that "explicitly (author's emphasis) call[s] upon the reader to interact . . . by means of queries or replies" (pp. vii–viii, 8), IF constitutes a specific genre of electronic literature whose genesis Montfort traces to the ancient riddle. Much is riding on establishing a connection between IF and the past, since many traditional literature theorists devote no attention to it.

The title of the book is borrowed from the well-known description of the terrain of a maze found in the game *Adventure* (p. 90). Lest anyone try to ignore the influence of IF upon contemporary culture, consider this:

"Twisty little passages" became the way in which Tim Berners-Lee envisioned the "hyper-routes" of his early iteration of the World Wide Web, bringing the conceptual framework of IF to bear upon the development of the Web. Not a shabby legacy for gamers to boast of.

This reference to the Web represents only one reason among many why Montfort's book is necessary for academics to read, for it raises consciousness about IF's importance in our culture. For those involved in games, it reasserts the name of the genre, lost in the Electronic Literature Organization's move to organize the many genres of electronic literature into a succinct list of eight categories. Finally, for all of us it fleshes out "an approach" toward a "richer experience" for engagement with IF (xi) in that it

describe[s] some of the intellectual history of the form and its relationship to other literary and gaming forms, and to computing and other computer programs, while critically examining a representative selection of important works and describing their interrelationships (p. 5).

One of the book's many strengths is the history of IF it provides, beginning with its link to riddles, which Montfort defines widely as "literary and folk texts and utterances" (p. 38), such as that of *The Exeter Book* and kennings; literary machines of the Middle Ages and beyond, such as Ramon Llull's *Ars Generalis Ultima* and *Ars Brevis*, dated 1274 CE; the I Ching and Ted Nelson's *Labyrinth*; role-playing games, such as *Dungeons and Dragons*; and, finally, adventure games like *SHRDLU*, *Adventure*, and *Zork*.

Other strengths include the book's many tables, figures and resources. The list of IF works and their creators reveals, for instance, the influence of Cambridge and the Acheron system upon IF, just as the list of 35 "canonical" works from Infocom reveals the variety of themes and plots reflected in IF. By the same token, the 150 primary works found in the list of works cited demonstrate yet another example of Montfort's careful research into the IF genre.

Since IF is classified as a form of electronic literature and Montfort discusses its narrative and literary aspects, it would have been helpful if he could have provided a working definition of electronic literature, as traditionalists who come across the book may wonder about it. To be honest, those who teach electronic litera-

ture wonder about it, too, so getting the perspective of one who actively creates it and critiques it could go far in helping to make the case of electronic literature's connection to literature.

Some other issues may bother a few readers. Unfamiliar terms such as "metalepsis" and "dyslepsis" are left undefined (p. 138), and some claims are not substantiated, such as Montfort's assertion that *A Mind Forever Voyaging* is "one of the preeminent works of computer literature" (p. 156). That very well may be true, but this reviewer wants to know why Montfort holds that opinion and on what criteria he bases his views.

*Twisty Little Passages* is the first book to devote complete attention to the study of one particular genre of electronic literature, and one hopes it is not the last. Such a book is timely and much needed, and greatly appreciated by this reviewer for its depth and scope.

### **TELEMATIC EMBRACE. VISIONARY THEORIES OF ART, TECHNOLOGY, AND CONSCIOUSNESS**

by Roy Ascott. Edited by Edward A. Shanken. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, U.S.A., 2003. 439 pp., illus. Trade. ISBN: 0-520-21803-5.

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If the definition of a good book is that one feels intellectually provoked during its reading and leaves the volume with the certitude of being more intelligent than at the start, then *Telematic Embrace* is the book one might be looking for. And if one is not hesitant about the old seductions of style and, most of all, that impossible thing called the "personality" of its author, this book provides even more than one could ask from a vast collection of essays in the problematic (because it is too overtly fashionable and therefore too easily outmoded) field of theory on art and electronic culture. In the case of Roy Ascott's writings, those two elements—the visionary force of his thinking on the one hand and the personal qualities of his style on the other—may seem a little contradictory, since few authors have made such strong pleas in favor of "distributed authorship" and against the mirages of the traditional (romantic, ego-centered) art world, yet

the very example of *Telematic Embrace*, which presents an extremely useful, highly representative and carefully edited anthology of Ascott's scholarly work, proves one of the basic theses of the author, that the leap towards global connectiveness through cybernetics and telematics does not exclude the human factor or prevent people from liberating themselves when abandoning the traditional domains of the humanities.

Most books and essays on the relationship between art, science and technology represent either a synthesis or a "snapshot" of what their authors have been thinking or are thinking on the subject. In both cases, their writings are homogeneous: In the case of a book, the previous phases of reflection are integrated in a kind of global survey that camouflages internal contradictions and transforms previous hesitations and errors into stepping stones on the long path leading to final insights; in the case of an essay, which normally gives just a cross-section of the author's thinking at that specific point of time and place, the lack of a global framework is not always considered a flaw, and contradictions with later texts are part of the game (e.g. "This was what I was thinking in 1984, and this is what I am thinking now, and tomorrow I may appear to think something else . . ."). The exceptional merit of Ascott's work as a theoretician of the relationships between art, science and technology is that in spite of its often shattered and overtly "visionary" character, it is not just a succession of speculations in which new links replace or destroy the previous ones. Although they have not been rewritten for this publication, the texts gathered in *Telematic Embrace* span a period of more than three decades (1964–1993) and reveal indeed an exceptional coherence (and maybe even a kind of master narrative, yet this word may have too many negative connotations).

This coherence is not the result of the mere application of a pre-established, teleological program or of a single, all-explaining and stubbornly-adhered-to theoretical paradigm. The coherence of Ascott's thinking and writing develops almost spontaneously along some basic lines, which the author never renounces but which he always adapts following his own principles of feedback and interactivity. If one had to summarize Ascott's evolution, one might say that he gradually moved from cybernetics to telemat-

ics, and from telematics to an overall view of connectedness at both an electronic and a biological level. In the late 1950s and during the 1960s, Ascott pioneered the interaction of art and the emerging science of cybernetics, defined as "the study of control and communication in living and artificial systems" (p. 331). He then realized with the cyberneticians themselves that such a study missed an essential point, namely the fact that the observer had to be considered part of the system studied. This brought him to second-order cybernetics, which recognized the blurring of boundaries between object and observer, while emphasizing even more the importance of feedback and interactivity. With the revolution of telematics (the integration of computers and telecommunications), Ascott's ideas evolved towards what he calls "connectivism," a paradigm in which the ancient spheres of mind, body and world, or those of nature and culture, are no longer separable and in which universal interaction is celebrated as a new step in evolution (not only of human evolution, since there is no longer a clear-cut separation of human and non-human in the universe).

All of this sounds familiar, and the name McLuhan comes quickly to mind. The philosophical underpinnings of Ascott's telematic embrace and McLuhan's global village are not without analogy: the East and the West will meet, human conflicts will be overcome by "communication," ancient hierarchies will be replaced by freedom and democracy, even love will be in the air. Ascott likes quoting (and connecting!), for instance, more or less like-minded people such as the 19th-century French socialist thinker Fourier, the apologist of "universal attraction"; the Jesuit Teilhard de Chardin, the inventor of the "noosphere"; or J.E. Lovelock, the advocate of Gaia; not to speak of McLuhan himself, regularly mentioned with great sympathy. Yet there are also considerable differences, which undoubtedly play in favor of Ascott. Ascott's visionary thinking is always deeply rooted in concrete, professional contexts: His many appointments (academic, advisory and editorial) all over the world have insured that he has always been in very close contact with the wishes and the needs of students, artists, researchers and the interested audience. This field experience is crucial: It is the perfect counterweight to intellectual freewheeling and gratuitous

speculation. What Ascott is discussing is always both visionary and down to earth. In the same essay, for instance, he can demonstrate the necessity of establishing "post-institutional" ways of working by giving all possible details on the equipment of each single room of the Ars Electronica Center in Linz. It is also the warrant of a real interdisciplinary approach. Ascott's understanding of contemporary science, for instance, is a real understanding, and not that of a dilettante. Moreover, Ascott's work has always been at the service of the intellectual needs of the field. The selection of his essays in *Telematic Embrace* gives full and clear evidence of this attitude of deep concern with the didactics of contemporary art. Of course, since "everything is connected," these didactics are never bookish. Almost all important issues that are at stake in the 20th-century reflection on art are represented here: the role and place of a museum, the relationship between art object and audience, the integration of art and society, etc.

Ascott's place in the philosophy of art (I know this label is erroneous, but nevertheless it helps to stress the importance of this work) is paradoxical. Ascott is antimodern, since he rejects absolutely the ideology of the purity of art and the celebration of its objects, and in this respect his visionary thinking can be linked with post-structuralism. One is not surprised to see that in the recent texts by Ascott the name of Deleuze starts appearing. Yet at the same time, his clear belief in some Grand Narrative makes him an antipostmodernist. Many of his essays, even in the years when postmodernism was still a positive value, are very critical of its incapacity to tackle the new and to exceed the parodying relationship with the past. The very long introductory essay by Edward A. Shanken, who did a wonderful job as an editor (the very fact that the editing goes almost unseen is the best compliment one can address to an editor!), provides the reader with a very profitable historical survey of the major tendencies in 20th-century art one has to know in order to fully understand what is at stake in Ascott's work. It is at the same time a perfect introduction to this work itself, which it helps to interpret while giving readers a strong impulse to deepen their own interpretations. Often collected and introduced essays are broken up into two non-communicating parts: the new introduction and

the older essays. In *Telematic Embrace*, the editor and the author manage to make love.

(This review appears by kind permission of *Image and Narrative* <<http://www.imageandnarrative.be/>>.)

### **DIGITAL PEOPLE: FROM BIONIC HUMANS TO ANDROIDS**

by Sidney Perkowitz. Joseph Henry Press, Washington, DC, U.S.A., 2004. 238 pp. Trade. ISBN: 0-309-08987-5.

*Reviewed by John F. Barber. School of Arts and Humanities, University of Texas at Dallas, U.S.A. E-mail: <jfbarber@eaze.net>.*

The 2002 World Robotic Survey, issued by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, placed the worldwide population of industrial robots at 760,000, projected to soon reach a million. The same report predicted a hundredfold increase in robot units sold for use in medicine, security, households and entertainment between 1999 and 2005. Simply put, robots, androids, cyborgs, bionic humans, artificial beings—whatever we call them—are coming. And, as Sidney Perkowitz, the Charles Howard Candler Professor of Physics at Emory University, argues, it is best to know something about them.

With this premise, Perkowitz's latest work, *Digital People: From Bionic Humans to Androids*, draws on achievements in artificial intelligence, smell, speech, taste, vision and touch; nanotechnology; molecular biology; implant science; biotechnology; biometrics; mechatronic engineering; neurorobotics; and materials science to detail how scientists and researchers are designing fully functional manufactured body parts, implanting computer chips and other devices into our bodies, and linking human brains with computers—all to make future humans healthier, smarter and stronger, to satisfy scientific curiosity and the technological imperative, and to develop industry, aerospace and warfare applications. The book is an insightful, careful contemplation of the ways in which contemporary science and technology are moving toward the next level of human evolution and what these developments mean for our visions of ourselves as human beings.

Perkowitz divides his book into two parts. Part One explores the virtual and real histories of artificial beings and concludes with current accounts

of efforts to form direct connections between living organic systems and nonliving ones at the neural and brain levels.

The virtual history extends from oral folk tales of the golem to complicated literature about robots, androids and cyborgs to current-day films showing each in action. Perkowitz contends that these imaginings, functioning as cultural repositories for human dreams and self-images, often form the basis for scientific and technological research and practical application. It is from these wells that scientists and researchers often draw inspiration in their efforts to create artificial human beings. Perkowitz chronicles early automata, efforts to harness electricity as a suitable, portable power supply, and efforts to replicate human looks and motions in his real history of artificial beings.

In the third section of this first part of his book Perkowitz concludes that we have long been bionic because of our history of prostheses, implantation (whether for beauty enhancement or medical purposes), and the scientific introduction of electrical-powered devices like pacemakers into the body.

Part Two explores advancements and applications in the key components of human life: our mobility; our ability to grasp and manipulate objects or use them as tools; our ability to draw information from our environment through touch, hearing, sight and taste; our ability to communicate through body language, facial expressions and speech; and our ability to differentiate a sense of self-awareness and unique identity through thinking and emotion. In each instance, Perkowitz details scientific and technological research and implementation as efforts are made to establish direct connections between the human body and machine components. Both imagination and integration, he argues, are based on the deep-seated human interest to merge with machines in order to better assure human survival, even if such survival means changing the basic nature of humanity.

The crucial hurdle will be self-awareness, self-knowledge and higher consciousness in artificial beings, Perkowitz argues. What separates human beings from humanoids is an adaptable intelligence centered in a brain that is aware of its sensory relationship to the body that houses it as well as its haptic relationship to a larger, surrounding environment through which the body moves. The first tiny steps toward

artificial self-knowledge Perkowitz documents and describes may be the beginnings of an evolution toward full digital thought and consciousness.

In the end, these efforts create a rich and powerful cross-disciplinary medical-technical environment that might lead to autonomous artificial beings and to enhanced human bodies and minds. Rather than frightful, the story is compelling, thought-provoking and informative. Perkowitz provides a wealth of interesting information, all supported by accurate and sound scientific research and reporting. He expresses his subject clearly, and, at the end, presents the inevitable result,

that any person who works to artificially match or surpass what humanity is, can only feel the hubris fall away, to be replaced with awe at the complexity of what nature has wrought, humility at the difficulty of emulating it, and wonderment that we humans can yet hope to complete this astonishing journey (p. 219).

### **JEAN DESMET AND THE EARLY DUTCH FILM TRADE**

by Ivo Blom. Amsterdam Univ. Press, Prinsengracht, The Netherlands, 2003. 480 pp., illus. Trade, paper. ISBN: 90-5356-570-1; ISBN: 90-5356-463-2.

*Reviewed by Tom Gunning, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL, U.S.A. E-mail: <tgunning@uchicago.edu>.*

When I was rather young, I had a strong desire to be an archaeologist and read a number of old and classic books on the subject. I recall one discussion in which a professor of ancient literature had said with some disdain, "After all, we aren't looking for the laundry lists of the ancient Egyptians!" and an archaeologist had replied, "Indeed, that is precisely what we are looking for! Laundry lists will tell us things about a culture that poetry or philosophical speculations never will." Film history has moved from the confines of appreciation and glorification of the few films that have risen above the tides of mass culture and the demands of commerce and trials of censorship to become Art. Film historians are in some ways like archaeologists, looking not only for masterpieces (which can never cease to provide a principal, though hardly exclusive, motive for our endeavors) but also for the film culture they came out of and fed back into. In this important new work, an authoritative survey of the

Jean Desmet collection at the Netherlands Filmmuseum, scholar Ivo Blom has provided us with a detailed “laundry list” of early cinema and a wealth of other things as well.

Jean Desmet, a Dutch film exhibitor, then distributor, in the decade from 1907 to 1917, accomplished something for film history that far outweighs his (as Blom confesses) fairly minor role as an innovator in either aspect of the film industry that he practiced: He threw relatively little away. Instead of simply discarding—as so many film pioneers had a habit of doing—his stock of over 900 films as well as his business records and publicity material, Desmet preserved them for decades. In 1957 his heirs presented this treasure trove to the Netherlands Filmmuseum. Although it may have taken film historians some time to fully appreciate the uses that could be made of this mass of material, it was carefully preserved. Now, after more than a decade of work with the collection, Blom presents us with a synoptic account of the film career of Desmet based on the collection.

The task of film history includes not only the description and analysis of film texts, but also—increasingly—an account and analysis of the contexts of their production (technological, industrial, financial) and their reception (which depends essentially on their distribution and exhibition). The study of production—the history of film technology and the setup of the studio system, for instance—has made great strides over the last decades. Scholarship on film exhibition is somewhat more recent but already impressive. But film distribution remains, for the most part, an under-researched area of film history even though it formed the topic of the most recent conference of Domitor (the international scholarly organization for the study of early cinema) this summer in Utrecht. Also, Kristin Thompson’s pioneering work on international distribution of American cinema around the world, *Exporting Entertainment*, has provided an important model. This new work by Blom combines a detailed account of a particular film exhibitor with perhaps the first thorough discussions of a film distributor, revealing how exhibition and distribution interacted during a specific period of time, within a specific culture (the Netherlands). However, this description sells this extraordinary work of scholarship short. Better, I should state that it provides one of the most detailed and comprehensive stud-

ies of early film history, focusing on the Netherlands but covering the international scope of the film industry in this era, extending not only through all of Europe but also from the United States to the Dutch East Indies (although illuminating only specific aspects of these last two areas).

Blom’s close observation of the account books, correspondence, bills and receipts of Desmet’s film business, as well as his publicity, allows him to deliver a fine-grained account of one of the most volatile periods in film history. What Blom’s account makes clear is not only the many transformations that occurred in the film business during this period but also the need to realize that the various aspects of film history each have their own history. Although our ultimate task must be to interrelate these elements, we must also acknowledge their relative independence and their differences from locale to locale. Just as radical changes occurred in the film form during its first two decades, transformations on the business side were equally intense. In the United States the early period is dominated by exhibition of films in vaudeville houses, while in Western Europe the traveling fairground exhibitor held sway. Distribution was handled mainly by the direct sale of prints to exhibitors, with the extent of vaudeville circuits or the changing venues of the traveling exhibitor supplying constantly renewed audiences for the stock of films owned.

In the United States the major transition in exhibition came with the growth of the nickelodeons: cheap theaters, mainly urban, with initially a primarily working class clientele that began appearing around 1905–1906. In Europe the parallel transition would seem to be that to fixed permanent theaters. Desmet’s career (and therefore the collection) covers this transformation. Desmet began as a fairground entrepreneur graduating from his fairground attraction, the Canadian Toboggan slide, to motion pictures in 1907. He then moved into permanent theaters around 1909, gradually phasing out his traveling exhibition. As in the United States, the switch to fixed exhibition sites prompted the growth of film distribution as entrepreneurs moved into the position of middle men between producers and exhibitors, purchasing films from the production end and then renting them to the theater managers. Desmet also began purchasing films from a number of

sources, as cinema moved from French (mainly Pathé) domination to a less centralized, more broadly European business, doing business with firms in Germany, Belgium, France, England and even, at points, the United States.

Perhaps the most novel information Blom gathers from Desmet’s documents comes with the details about the film programs he offered. After the establishment of permanent theaters, the next major transformation was the increasing importance of longer films. Blom’s discussion of the role of the long film in Desmet’s career supports research recently undertaken by Ben Singer about exhibition in the United States, revealing that feature films did not necessarily immediately replace a program made up of many shorter films. Longer films became common in Europe a bit earlier than in the U.S.A. (which did, however, begin importing these longer foreign films), and for several years the programs that Desmet bought, distributed and exhibited included both short and long films, with short films carefully programmed to lead up to the long feature film. It also may be that the growth of “elite” cinemas, catering to a higher class of audience, may have occurred earlier in Europe (although it is striking that fairground exhibitors often charged higher prices for certain showings and always had a graduated pricing scale for seats, whereas American film theaters more often had a one-price policy).

However, it was Desmet’s lack of realization of the importance of longer films on their own, his reluctance to pay top price for them, and his failure to recognize that the producers or their agents who controlled such films increasingly held the most powerful role in the film industry that led to his gradual extrication from the film business. Other distributors beat him out for the most popular films, and increasingly the production companies or their agents handled distribution. Although Desmet recognized and adapted to such innovations as exclusive control over a single film for a set area (the “monopoly” policy) or the switch by producers from selling prints to leasing them (occasionally willing to pay the new high prices), his way of doing business remained more in tune with an era when distributors called the shots. Ironically, it was his somewhat anachronistic policy of buying film prints and keeping them as his own stock for distribution that made his collection of films so valuable for film

historians, whereas production companies often saw little value in preserving old prints.

Blom's book is as filled with striking and vivid details as a painting by a Dutch master. At points the reader can lose the thread and become overwhelmed by all the accumulated facts, but Blom's excellent sense for what is both significant and intriguing, as well as his engaging style, brings us back on track. There are repetitive aspects to the book, often going over the same point in Desmet's career several times from different viewpoints, and more careful editing might have streamlined it a bit. However, it is precisely the richness of information that makes this a book every film historian must read.

### **MONSTROSITIES: BODIES AND BRITISH ROMANTICISM**

by Paul Youngquist. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN, U.S.A., 2003. 264 pp., illus. Trade, paper. ISBN: 0-8166-3979-5; ISBN: 0-8166-3980-9.

*Reviewed by Stefaan Van Ryssen, Hogeschool Gent, Jan Delvinlaan 115, 9000 Gent, Belgium. E-mail: <stefaan.vanryssen@pandora.be>.*

British Romanticism (Shelley, Wollstonecraft, Wordsworth, Coleridge, De Quincey, Byron, etc.) has been a crucial element in the building of British national identity and liberal society, alongside economic development and imperialist politics. An important question in understanding this process remains how these macro-developments are translated or transferred into daily life, into the acts and minds of the lower and the middle classes, and vice versa: How the changing norms and values, the evolving self-image of the populace, is expressed in social, political and economic institutions. This is, of course, the old historical and sociological problem of how the political becomes personal and how the economic becomes moral.

Paul Youngquist tackles one side of the issue by analyzing a wide and surprising range of phenomena in the Romantic era. Under the generic name of "monstrosities" he looks at a variety of deviant bodies and eccentric behaviors and tries to explain how the very fact of identifying, exposing and studying the un-normal, turning it into the monstrous and repulsive, helped create

normality. More specifically, he starts from the writings of the authors mentioned above to

show how the norm came to take hold of British bodies and how particular Romantic writers responded to its force. . . . So the aims here are twofold: first to examine further the emergence of the proper body as a regulatory norm, and, second, to show how monstrosities of various kinds become occasions for advancing, resisting, or transferring the operations of the social project of proper embodiment in liberal society in British culture of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

In doing so, Youngquist implicitly acknowledges the theory that liberal society has a need for normalized, "civilized" or even standardized individuals—for whatever reason—and that the normalization processes involved in the creation of that society took place through a number of different processes, one of which was the Romantic movement.

First, Youngquist turns to the role medicine and anatomy played in incorporating and legitimating a cultural norm of embodiment through the development of a discourse of physiology. He then examines a range of practices showing how monstrosities occasion the production and subversion of human values in liberal society. Humanitarian treatments of singular bodies and the annual festivities of Bartholomew Fair (an "exhibition" of deviant bodies) are some of these practices. Here, he points at the roles of the American freak shows and the British monstrosity fairs, unfortunately not making clear why their social function seems to differ. The final chapter of the first section focuses on the aspect of race and how whiteness became the norm in an increasingly powerful association between aesthetics and medicine.

The second section of the book investigates the relationship between drugs and proper embodiment. Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas De Quincey, both lifelong opium addicts, are the main characters in this part.

In the third and final section, the ways in which abject body parts incorporate power relations are examined. The parts in question, the placenta in one case and a deformed foot in the other, expose bodies to the operations of a medicine that appropriates what it treats. One woman and one man in particular are treated: Mary Wollstonecraft and her liberal feminist politics

and Lord Byron and his deformed foot.

Overall Youngquist's prose is rather dense, and the reader who is not used to the styles of Foucault, Derrida and the like will certainly develop a monstrous headache. But do not despair: There is hope for you yet, because the chapter on De Quincey is a real tour de force, showing how *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* is a test of philosophical idealism and how the critique of pure reason turns out to be a high-flown apology for the proper body. Kant versus drug addiction: *nil* to one.

### **CHRONOPHOBIA: ON TIME IN THE ART OF THE 1960S**

by Pamela M. Lee. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, U.S.A., 2004. 336 pp., illus. Trade. ISBN: 0-262-12260-X.

*Reviewed by Andrea Dahlberg. E-mail: <andrea.dahlberg@bakernet.com>.*

Technology is widely recognized as one of the major forces of modernity and one of the key ways in which our experiences of time is constituted. Pamela Lee's ambition in *Chronophobia* is to study the relationship between the art of the 1960s and the technology of the period. In doing so, she identifies an experience of time common to both, and she calls this experience "chronophobia." The term describes an experience of unease and anxiety about time, a feeling that events are moving too fast and are thus hard to make sense of. The result is an experience of being outside time or of "not being entitled to time," as E.M. Cioran describes it.

This book is, therefore, a study of one of the central problems of modernity, but unlike many other approaches to this issue, Lee considers it in a relatively brief period—the 10 years or so that constitute the 1960s—and she examines the experience of time in the works of artists of that period as well as some of the major writings on art of the period. This approach has much to commend it. Lee is able to identify complex and subtle relationships between art and technology that would escape any study on a larger scale. She can also consider a diverse range of work by artists such as Brigid Riley, Carolee Schneemann, Jean Tinguely, Andy Warhol and On Kawara. The period she has chosen is especially interesting today as we look back to the emergence of our contemporary media culture.

## CONFERENCES

Lee's reading of Michael Fried's seminal essay, "Art and Objecthood," articulates the concept of time contained within it. She contrasts Fried's aesthetic and ethical concept of "presentness" with the experience of duration, or "endlessness," which Fried railed against in the minimalist sculpture of the period. For Fried eternal time is a sort of timelessness and a negation of time because it is ahistorical. Lee shows how Fried's antipathy to minimalist sculpture is not only aesthetic and ethical but also a profound rejection of the experience of time it embodies.

Lee then studies the relationship between minimalism and technology and identifies the link between the two as systems analysis. She finds that this connection reveals the central problem of Fried's essay—the concern with the communicative structure of the artwork and the concept of time within it.

Her reading of Fried's much-discussed essay is fresh and innovative while ultimately confirming it as an impassioned defense of a fast-disappearing concept of art and, perhaps, as one of the last great moments of high modernist art. This reading of Fried thus demonstrates a rupture in the experience of time in the 1960s art world and, Lee would argue, also in the larger social world.

It is in this ambition to speak for the social world outside of the art community that the book is more problematic. To justify her claims that the art of this period reflected and critiqued experiences of time in society more generally, Lee cites a number of popular books, such as Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock*, and claims that the concept of time they espouse is chronophobic as defined in her book, and that their popularity means that their concept of time was widely shared. This type of evidence will not support such claims as it is too anecdotal and lacks a defined concept or theory of the relationship between art and society, but, above all, it does not draw on any of the work in this area in the social sciences or in critical social theory. For this reason, *Chronophobia* will appeal to students of contemporary art and art history and those studying the recent history of media and the creation of our digital age from a cultural studies or literary perspective. Despite its interdisciplinary subject matter, its arguments will be less compelling to those approaching this subject from history or the social sciences.

### A COLLOQUIUM ON ART/ SCIENCE/SPIRITUALITY RECONNECTIONS WITHIN EMERGING PLANETARY CULTURES

International Festival of the 5 Cultures, Melilla, Spain, 18–20 July 2004. Web: <[www.melillafestival.org](http://www.melillafestival.org)>.

Reviewed by Judy Kupferman. E-mail: <[kupfer@post.tau.ac.il](mailto:kupfer@post.tau.ac.il)>.

The city of Melilla recently held its first International Festival of Cultures. This included a colloquium on Art/Science/Spirituality, which took place in Melilla on 18–20 July 2004, as well as an art exposition and nightly concerts on the beach. The festival was sponsored by the City of Melilla together with Leonardo/ISAST and the Al Andalus Foundation.

Melilla is a surprising town. It is located on the north coast of Morocco but has belonged to Spain since 1497. The city features the most spectacular display of Modernist architecture outside Barcelona, along with an ancient fortress and a lovely seafront. Perhaps its main distinction is the fact that many cultures live there in harmony: Muslims, Jews, Christians, Hindus and Gypsies walk through its streets with no apparent tension.

The subject of the colloquium was art, science and spirituality, with an emphasis on Middle Eastern culture. Participants varied accordingly; rarely have I seen such a variegated set of people. This multiplicity of disciplines and backgrounds was reflected in the city of Melilla itself, with its multicultural harmony, and lent significance to the choice of this particular venue for the conference.

The moving spirits behind the conference were Mohammed Aziz Chafchaoui of Morocco; Roger Malina of Marseille, astrophysicist and editor of *Leonardo*; and Julien Knebusch of Leonardo/OLATS in Paris. Participants at the conference included scientists, artists and scholars from India, Egypt, France, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States. Our Israeli contingent included Eshel Ben Jacob, physicist and president of the Israel Physical Society; Yael Katzir, a former student who now works with bacterial art; Neora, a digital artist; and myself,

a theater lighting designer and physics student who has one foot in each world, so to speak.

The conference included four sessions: The first dealt with the relationship between art, science and spirituality, and the second with the role of computer software in future culture. The third focused on Islam and on art, science and spirituality within the Arabian-Spanish world. The fourth centered around the influence of cultural background on approaches to art and science. A few examples of the lectures may offer some idea of the content. This brief survey necessarily omits other interesting presentations, but I have tried to give some idea of the variety offered.

Roger Malina's lecture dealt with the tension between the different cultures of art and science as well as those of engineering and technology, of different worldviews and religions, and of regionalism. Other lecturers embraced technology as embodied by the Internet: Mohammed Aziz Chafchaoui, together with American Harold Brokaw, described their "Virtual Geodesy," an interactive computer program that attempts to create relationships between scientific data and cultural content. Karla Schuch-Brunet of Brazil gave a survey of the use of the Internet as a vehicle for social reform in Brazil. Fathi Saleh of Egypt described the web site he has set up <[www.cultnat.org](http://www.cultnat.org)>, which is dedicated to the documentation of Egyptian culture and heritage.

Some lectures centered around the arts and literature. Leila Khalifa of France spoke of the concepts of time and space in the work of Ibn 'Arabi. Israeli artist Neora ([www.neora.com](http://www.neora.com)) described her experimental theater production, *Medea\_Ex*. This production uses a virtual 3D mythological universe projected around the audience, and the audience, represented as the chorus, influences the action using SMS messages. Sangeetha Menon of India spoke of consciousness research in the light of Indian dance drama.

Ahmed Moustafa, a renowned Islamic researcher and artist, discussed the geometric form of Arabic script and its spiritual significance. Moustafa's talk focused on the square-shaped dot and its relationship with the shapes of letters. In accordance with the system of Arabic script devised by Abbasid Wazir Ibn Mugla in the 9th century, this reflects images of Islamic mystical thought. Moustafa also spoke of the cube, and indeed his own artwork,

a multicolored structure of cubes on cubes, was on view in the exposition. Eshel Ben Jacob's lecture involved a link between science and art. He described self-organization among bacteria, as evidenced by the beautiful artistic patterns they produce. This lecture had unexpected drama: The computer that was to project the Power-Point presentation would not function, and Ben Jacob finally decided not to wait for its repair. He placed one prepared slide in an overhead projector and improvised a beautifully clear presentation around this single slide, which may even have proved more effective than his original carefully prepared lecture.

An interesting insight into the relationship between art and culture was provided on the last day. In the morning Indian physicist C.S. Unnikrishnan spoke of his theory of "cosmic gravity," that is, the effect of all masses in the universe on one another. The lecture was geared to the layman, but evidently held detailed research behind it. Professor Unnikrishnan prefaced his lecture with talk about his own background and the spiritual motivation behind his scientific career. Two lectures later in the day were by Western artists. Philippe Boissonnet of Montréal described his work with holograms. The lecture and pictures were interesting, but it would have been nice to see the holograms themselves! Roy Ascott, a British artist with an impressive record of academic positions who has spent years of work on digital art, spoke of the new vistas opening up to artists inspired by biophysics and biophotonics.

In the two days preceding these two lectures there had been several comments about the opposition or dichotomy of art and science. These lectures seemed to contradict that. I very strongly doubt whether Western scientists would have prefaced a description of their work with talk about their spiritual motivations, and yet clearly there is spiritual motivation behind any such work. Similarly, the Western background of the latter two artists probably contributed to the clearly articulated conceptual framework and methodology they described; yet surely few artists of any culture create without a conceptual framework and methodology. One could see that in fact art and science are not inherently different activities, but that the cultural background of the speaker influences the way he describes his work to others.

Many of the participants seemed to find new food for thought in the meeting with people of such different backgrounds and fields. Artists do not usually attend conferences together with scientists; Muslims do not often talk about the Koran with Jews. There was much private discussion of the various issues. One long discussion centered around the very word "spirituality." Westerners and particularly scientists rear back at such a term. Yet obviously the term is meaningful, and it became interesting to consider what in fact it means to different people. The discussion lasted till the small hours of the morning, and it seemed many more hours would have been necessary in order to reach a definite conclusion.

The material presented at the conference was interesting and valuable, enabling a profound examination of values, the relationship between art and science, the concept of the spirit and man's place in the cosmos. But perhaps the most valuable and unusual aspect for all the participants, I think, was the opportunity to form relationships of friendship and respect with people from significantly different backgrounds and thus gain some insight into extremely foreign worldviews. It must be stressed that this is just the beginning: this first Melilla conference has shown that such a meeting of different and even conflicting elements can succeed, and it seems of first importance to continue such events on an annual basis.

### **TIMESHIFT: THE WORLD IN TWENTY-FIVE YEARS**

Ars Electronica Festival 2004, Linz, Austria, 2–7 September 2004.

### **FACE TO FACE: CONNECTING DISTANCE AND PROXIMITY**

European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) Conference, Vienna, Austria, 8–12 September 2004.

*Reviewed by Martha Blassnigg. E-mail: <lichtgestalten@hotmail.com>.*

With the title "Timeshift," Ars Electronica 2004 proposed an interface to review the past 25 years of Ars Electronica festivals and come up with a prognosis for the coming 25 years, or as the outline of the symposium states, "an overview of the way we deal with visions and prognosis in general [to] serve as a tool and point of departure." Theoreticians, scientists and practitioners were

invited to give their insights and visions for the fields of technology, art and society. While the past 25 years of development in electronic arts were reviewed by several conference participants, for example Itsuo Sakane, in a very elaborate way, the future seemed to linger in the realms of dark matter, as Roger Malina brought to attention in his treatment of the small percentage of knowable matter set against the vast indeterminacy of the universe.

Reviewing the symposium and the goals Ars Electronica set by choosing this year's subject, it may seem, at first glance, that visions into the future were greatly lacking, but on closer inspection there were a few strands that contributed much of value to such a perspective. Roger Malina's contribution in the Timeshift catalog synthesizes a view into the past with a prognosis for the future. Malina points out how the electronic arts community, reflected by both Ars Electronica and Leonardo/ISAST, has from its beginnings staked out an international scope, cross-cultural boundaries and an emphasis on explorations of "identity" and cultural difference. He sees a "timeshift" in the beginnings of a period of social experimentation and locally adaptive planetary cultures and quotes artist Max Bill, who in a Leonardo Editorial Board meeting in the 1970s had already identified "ethics" as the key issue for the next 25 years. With a rather art-historical perspective (but a similar outcome in some respects), Peter Weibel declared the future development in the arts sector a transdisciplinary re-mapping of competences, in the way in which arts practice expands from its field of work into new domains such as ecology or sociology.

These lectures and some of the following theoretical contributions anticipated what might be called an invigoration of what it means to be human, offering in parts ethnographic perspectives on the previously often rather abstract discourses about technology and art. In a slightly different approach, one of the most visionary stimulations at the symposium came from Roy Ascott, who advocates a stronger consideration of the interrelations of electronic art as a combination of organic and technological advances and contemporary research in quantum physics and biology. Toward the end of his presentation, by advocating the study of psychoactive narcotics that induce altered states of consciousness,

such as the effects of Ayuasca as it is used in spiritual and cultural contexts, Ascott anticipated a rather anthropological aspect of several of the presentations that followed, all of which emphasized a practical application of new media in various cultural contexts. In particular the Timeshift symposium entitled "Spirit" created space to revisit ancient mythologies and transfer some of these aspects into a contemporary perspective of new media and arts practice. Geetha Narayanan, for instance, promoted the importance of lived experience and subjective perspective as part of scientific discourses, and in her presentation of new models of educational institutions in India and a creative implementation of technology she introduced new reflections on terms such as "humanity," "wholeness," "ecology" and "spirituality." Sherry Turkle discussed the affective relationship between human and machine in a traditional Freudian context of psychoanalysis; her most interesting point was, again, the emphasis on human experience and subjective perspective. In the symposium entitled "Disruption," David Turnbull's sociological research on the integration of indigenous knowledge into a discussion of scientific cartography in Australia is not a new approach, but should be mentioned here for its explicit ethnographic emphasis. Finally, Nadja Maurer introduced her presentation under the rubric "Topia," with a brief insight into the discipline of comparative cultural studies and ethnographic fieldwork, furthermore bringing to attention a transcultural perspective in her treatment of media structures of communication.

These approaches ask for a consideration of a more elaborate debate within the art, technology and culture communities, and, as I would like to suggest here, for a more rigorous transdisciplinary discourse. An event like Ars Electronica could be turned more explicitly into a forum to serve as a social lever for promising technology to shape and constitute future collaborations and networks, a view that has been promoted by Ars Electronica from the beginning of its existence in 1979. Johan Brucker-Cohen reiterated this aspect in his treatment of disruption as a means of productive resistance and self-reflection, as did Joichi Ito with his call for practical application of the concepts of democracy and emergence supported by social technologies and Krzysztof Wodiczko's appeal to give

voice to the nameless and speechless by animated testimony memorials, turning people into artists in socio-aesthetic environments.

Furthermore, some treatments of the subject of time, synchronicities and relativity contributed to a prognosis of a timeshift and threshold into other dimensions. Two outstanding presentations worth highlighting were Mark Hansen and Ben Rubin's installation *Listening Post*, and Julien Marie's performance *Half Step. Listening Post* consisted of an installation of 231 independent screens processing electronic information in apparently coincidental sequences using sound, text images and movement. This computer-controlled audiovisual environment reflected upon the immediacy and dynamics of global communication through the World Wide Web. Without being interactive with the audience, the rhizome of dispersed text fragments triggered and reflected the associative networking of the spectator's brain activities. Bringing a historical dimension to attention and questioning its chronological technological developments in visual media, Hansen and Rubin and Marie offer an experience in the form of a crystal image in a Deleuzian sense: a time image, neither past nor future, both oscillating in presentness. In a more materialist way Julien Marie merged 19th-century magic lantern technology with digital technology, turning an item of pre-cinema technology into an exquisite audiovisual spectacle, which seemed to fascinate both the cinephile and the new media-oriented audience. Marie's minuscule high-tech glass-plate projection displays, thoroughly inspected by the audience after the show, transmitted a live spectacle that recovered some excitement of the pre-cinema period and also stretched the time-span of retrospective, in this case from 25 to over 100 years.

Interestingly enough, immediately following the close of Ars Electronica, another international conference opened nearby in Vienna: the biannual meeting of the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA). This year titled "Face to Face: Connecting Distance and Proximity," the conference attracted more than 1,000 international cultural anthropologists—a fortunate coincidence for those able to attend both events, since cultural anthropology, as a scientific discipline, has been treating the topics of technology and art since the very beginning of

the first intercultural contacts, embedded in a social and economic research context. The conference brought the established discourses in the discipline of cultural anthropology, such as culture and identity, into a framework of contemporary tensions and developments, redefining and transforming them into the context of imagined or virtual communities, creole (or hybrid) contexts of culture and transnational environments. With regards to electronic media, the new branches of cyberanthropology (based on, among other influences, Ars Electronica 2003 guest Pierre Levy's sociological research into "cyberculture") and media anthropology have been founded in recent years, wherein human interrelations with technology in new media are being studied more extensively than before.

With regard to film technology, some visual anthropologists such as Robert Flaherty, Jean Rouch and David McDougal are well known for having been involved in new technological developments and the reconfiguration of filmic style in the documentary genre throughout the 20th century. One of the discipline's intrinsic predicates of participant observation and integration with and of the subjects' perspective—an approach that otherwise has mainly been applied by the art community—directly matches contemporary discourses and items in the field of technology and culture, such as interactivity, self-reflection and intelligibility. During the three-day conference, topics such as global interconnections, face-to-face interaction, compliance and confrontation, conditions of intersubjectivity, identity and alterity in shifting contexts were discussed in various subject areas within the discipline ranging from a focus on medicine to political science, philosophy, sociology, methods of ethnography and ecology, film and new media.

Whereas the first ethnographers were missionaries or scientists informed by travelers and their secondhand information, cultural anthropology has developed and transformed throughout the last century from a 19th-century evolutionary perspective into a most vivid, politically engaged, critically self-reflexive and inspired community. Through involvement and integration in various cultural fields in Western and non-Western contexts, cultural anthropologists bind their empirically grounded research into theoretical discourses to contribute to

our understanding of very basic questions about human life and cultural expressions. To mention only one example of the many workshops during the EASA conference, in the workshop “Philosophy and Anthropology: Border Crossings and Transformation,” Ananta Kumar Giri quoted the philosopher and anthropologist Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803): “What fruitful new developments would not arise if only our whole philosophy would become anthropology?” Bruce Kapferer expresses a similar argument, defining anthropology as the practical extension of philosophy in a passionate response to T.M.S. Evens’s presentation that applied Deleuze and Guattari’s molecularist ontology in order to explain Nuer mythology. Kapferer explains why Deleuze has created an epistemological break in all scientific disciplines and emphasizes his engagement with ethnographic data and concerns. Deleuze, who most prominently has been used and interpreted by the arts and new media community throughout the last decade, has found entrance into social sciences and forms a link between theoretical, philosophical discourses and empirical research. There were too many workshops taking place at the same time to gain anything near to an overview of the event, but certainly in this panel and in the plenary lectures, in particular those of the younger anthropologists discussing perspectivism, personal belief, resistance and conflict as inter-subjective activities, there was a spirit indicating what Ars Electronica has titled a “Timeshift,” an opening up of reiterated discourses to new perspectives.

While reception theory in new media studies, self-reflexiveness in consciousness studies, and psychology and interactivity in electronic art are popular items of the last few decades, cultural anthropology brings a long tradition of well-established methodologies into scientific discourses that strive for an interactive dialogue between subject and object, science and practice or personal experiences, playing the role of intermediary between different cultures or cultural fields. As both the Ars Electronica and EASA conferences have articulated, implicitly and explicitly, the emergence of global interconnectivity, both in social and technological respects, calls for transdisciplinary approaches and collaborations. An emphasis on such a collaboration, a spectrum of sociological, ethnographic and politically

informed approaches, as it has been given voice in some presentations at Ars Electronica and as an intrinsic matter of discipline being discussed at the EASA conference, suggests an engaging vision into the future.

This perspective could provide a new impetus for the arts and technology community and an extension of the humanities as a scientific enterprise, merging art, technology and culture in a dialogue and promoting more proactive and productive exchanges for an understanding of and participation with new artistic, technological and cultural developments in the near future. We may consider the Ars Electronica exhibition Inter Dis-Communication Machine, by Kazuhiko Hachiya, as a starting point; in the installation, an experiment was undertaken in pairs, with both participants wearing a head-mounted display and a backpack with angel’s wings. This enabled them to view the perspective of the other in the display in an entirely exchanged visual perception. It was both disorienting and engaging and raised the question, Where does communion and communication start in a worldview experienced through the senses of the other?

## AUDIO CD

### TRANZITION

by Richard Pinhas. Cuneiform Records, Silver Spring, MD, U.S.A., 2004. Catalog number: Rune 186.

*Reviewed by Trace Reddell, Digital Media Studies, University of Denver, Denver, CO, U.S.A. E-mail: <trreddell@du.edu>.*

*Tranzition* is a multi-genre affair, part science fiction, part speculative philosophy, a hard-edged “soundtext” recalling the Deleuze of *The Logic of Sense*, but less whimsical, and suggestive of Derrida’s “Plato’s Pharmacy.” Richard Pinhas evokes the same realm of reverberation that drives Plato to distraction in the psychedelic coda to Derrida’s article, where echo makes direct quotation impossible, then trips the circuits of *memnos* to generate new sounds out of old, sustaining the delirium of the misheard through glitchy, loopy fade-out. The play of phrases links them among themselves but also reverses them through phase-shifted echoes,

making one line of live riffing cross over into its recorded other, an after-effect that becomes its own voice in the accumulating mixture. This is the same sound that Pinhas has been chasing and reprocessing since his days with the French prog-rock/electronic outfit Heldon in the mid-1970s, and yet updated through takes on recent shoegazing space rockers such as God Speed You! Black Emperor and any number of glitchy laptop acts.

“Dextro” begins with a sequence of “click’n’hiss” that would feel at home on a Mille Plateaux compilation, then builds patterns through Frippertronic-delay and Antoine Paganotti’s drumming, before Pinhas plays lead sequences through a mostly dry mix. The second track, “Moumoune girl (a song for),” is all ambience until the thinly processed voice of Philip K. Dick comes in, taken from a cassette that Dick sent Pinhas in the late-1970s. Dick’s voice is not as processed as the guitar and “blips’n’bleeps” that are, perhaps, the contributions of Jerome Schmidt, credited as “laptop boy” on the jacket. Even using headphones, it is hard to follow Dick’s deadpan delivery before the drums return to drown it out, followed by one of the heaviest “guitar god”-style solos I have heard from Pinhas. This is straight-ahead space rock, one of the genres, like glitch, that Pinhas transitions through over the course of the CD. “Tranzition,” the third track, begins with a sinister recall of William Basinski’s *Disintegration Loops* before launching into stomach-churning waves punctuated by heavily compressed drumming and more space rock guitar.

While I am comfortable situating Pinhas in the context of experimental prog-rock (King Crimson, the Eno and Fripp of *No Pussyfooting*, Tangerine Dream) or even the minimalism of Philip Glass, I have always found the most provocative reference points for his work to be literary and philosophical figures. Over the years, Pinhas has mixed in recordings of Deleuze, Dick, Norman Spinrad, Maurice Dantec and Chloe Delaume, whose heavily processed voice we hear on track four, “Aboulafia Blues.” Pinhas’s early work with Heldon pays tribute to the electronic guerilla discussed in William Burroughs’s *The Electronic Revolution*, while album titles such as *Event and Repetition* (2002) and *Rhizosphere* (1977) and the ongoing Schizotrope collaborations suggest the influence of post-structuralist French philosophers.

Pinhas studied under Deleuze's direction while getting his Ph.D. in philosophy from the Sorbonne in the 1960s, writing on time and science fiction. These topics still permeate his work, which should be considered a performative philosophy of sound and consciousness.

The inability to hear voices (human or instrumental) correctly drives *Tranzition*, providing what may be its central thesis: The mistaken attribute is the source of creative progression. Unlike drums and lead guitar, labels such as "laptop," "violin" and "electronics" do not mean much in the context of these performances. Voices are perpetually transformed through effects-processing to meld into the noise of identity-fade. It often becomes impossible to determine who generates a signal, what carries that signal, and who receives and reprocesses that signal. For all that *Tranzition* feels like the product of jam sessions from something like a rock group, the CD notes indicate otherwise. We read that *Tranzition* was recorded in summer 2003, though Pinhas's guitars were recorded live in concert a year before. The drums were, likewise, recorded separately, then mixed by Pinhas and Schmidt in the studio. The improvisational feel of the album is thus revealed as an illusion of studio editing.

Illusion situates *Tranzition*, blurring the moments and roles of live, processed and recorded sound in ways that question assumptions about performance and collaboration through digital varieties of Burroughsian cut-up and Derridean punning. Recognizable voices are subsumed by metaphorical exchange within a sonic mandala. Fittingly, Pinhas evokes an analog of Thoth for the closing track: "Metatron (an introduction to)" sprawls out for a classic solo Pinhas vibe of hypnagogic textures thick with shimmering drift and occasional bursts of melody and deep tones, inducing a trance that reinforces the previous half-hour of music even while cleansing the palette and inviting one to play the disc on endless repeat.

LEONARDO  
REVIEWS ON-LINE

The reviews published in print are but a small selection of the reviews available on the *Leonardo Reviews* web site. Below

is a full list of reviews published in *LR* in September and October 2004 <leonardoreviews.mit.edu>.

### October 2004

*Ash in the Rainbow*, by Haco and Sakamoto Hiromichi. Reviewed by Mike Mosher.

*Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, edited by Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner. Reviewed by Dene Grigar.

*The Boys: Music from the Feature Film*, by the Necks. Reviewed by Mike Mosher.

*Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism*, by Ranjana Khanna. Reviewed by Coral Houtman.

*Digital Ground: Architecture, Pervasive Computing, and Environmental Knowing*, by Malcolm McCullough. Reviewed by Rob Harle.

*The Electric Guitar: A History of an American Icon*, edited by André Millard. Reviewed by John F. Barber.

*Festival Il Cinema Ritrovato 2004: Cineteca del Comune di Bologna and the Mostra Internazionale del Cinema Libero*, 3–10 July 2004, Bologna, Italy. Reviewed by Michael Punt.

*Fresh Talk / Daring Gazes: Conversations on Asian American Art*, edited by Elaine H. Kim, Margo Machida and Sharon Mizota. Reviewed by Stefaan Van Ryssen.

*Jean Desmet and the Early Dutch Film Trade*, by Ivo Blom. Reviewed by Tom Gunning.

*Kuxa Kanema: The Birth of Cinema*, by Margarida Cardoso. Reviewed by Andrea Dahlberg.

*Lost in Rooms*, by Lutz Glandien. Reviewed by Mike Mosher.

*Musical-Aesthetic Education: Synesthesia and Complex Influence of Arts*, by N. Kolyadenko; translated by V. Skorokhodov. Reviewed by Bulat Galeyev.

*Railroad Vision: Photography, Travel and Vision*, by Anne M. Lyden. Reviewed by George Shortess.

*Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, by Nikola Kodjabashia, and *Koncert!*, by Kampec

Dolores and Grensco Istvan. Reviewed by Mike Mosher.

*Slew: A Compilation of Compilation Tracks 1990–2003*, by Thomas Dimuzio. Reviewed by Mike Mosher.

*Space Art*, Anomalie Digital\_Arts Issue, No. 4. Reviewed by Mike Mosher.

*Things That Talk: Object Lessons from Art and Science*, edited by Lorraine Daston. Reviewed by Jan Baetens.

*Timeshift: Towards an Anthropological Perspective*, The World in Twenty-Five Years, Ars Electronica. Reviewed by Martha Blassnigg.

*Women, Art and Technology*, edited by Judy Malloy. Reviewed by Stefaan Van Ryssen.

### September 2004

*AngloModern: Painting and Modernity in Britain and the United States*, by Janet Wolff. Reviewed by Bill Seeley.

*Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s*, by Pamela M. Lee. Reviewed by Andrea Dahlberg.

*A Colloquium on Art/Science/Spirituality Reconstructions within Emerging Planetary Cultures*, 1st Melilla Festival for the 5 Cultures. Reviewed by Judy Kupferman.

*Davide Grassi 02–04, Selected Works*, by Bojana Kunst, Igor Spanjol, Ana Buigues and Antonio Caronia. Reviewed by Stefaan Van Ryssen.

*Desert Island and Other Texts, 1953–1974*, by Gilles Deleuze; edited by David Lapoujade; translated by Michael Taormina. Reviewed by Eugene Thacker.

*A Field Guide to Bacteria*, by Betsey Dexter Dyer. Reviewed by Kasey Asberry.

*First Person: New Media as Story, Performance, and Game*, edited by Noah Wardrop-Fruin and Pat Harrigan. Reviewed by Jan Baetens.

*Howard Zinn: You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train*, by Deb Ellis and Denis Mueller. Reviewed by Amy Ione.

*Kazuo Ohno's World: From Without and Within*, by Kazuo Ohno and Yoshito

Ohno; translated by John Barrett.  
Reviewed by Allan Graubard.

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