

## State of the (Online) Art

*Art in America*, April 1999, p. 89-95

Three years ago the author published an introduction to the nascent online artworld in this magazine [["The Art World & I Go On Line," December, 1995](#)]. It chronicled, in diary form, the 1994-95 season during which online art emerged. This essay discusses ensuing developments in the medium.

If the 1994-95 season will be remembered "as the year the artworld went online" (to quote myself), then the 1997-98 season might be characterized as the year that online art necessitated a business plan. Two pioneering projects which debuted during the 1994-95 season lost their sponsors in 1998: Antonio Muntadas's *The File Room* (1994), an interactive archive of social and cultural censorship cum conceptualist artwork, and ada'web, a site that produced and distributed online artworks by more than two dozen artists ranging from Julia Scher to General Idea. As I write in late summer, the Walker Art Center has acquired ada'web, although no money will exchange hands. (The site remains online at [www.adaweb.com](http://www.adaweb.com). Note: URLs, or web addresses, do not end with punctuating periods.) But *The File Room's* fate is less certain. Since the demise of Randolph Street Gallery, the artist-run organization in Chicago that produced the project, the archival artwork has lost its home on the University of Illinois' computer server. Currently inaccessible, Muntadas is negotiating *The File Room's* transfer to another institutional server, but no agreement, which must include provisions for maintenance and operation, has yet been signed. (author's note, 2001: *The File Room* is back online at [www.thefileroom.org](http://www.thefileroom.org))

Writing this account in the techno-business dialect of lower Manhattan's Silicon Alley may be both inevitable and apt. Consider the case of ada'web, one of the first (and most impressive) of the online art, "start-up" ventures. Conceived by curator Benjamin Weil (pronounced vile), ada'web is named after Ada Byron King, the 19th-century scientist and daughter of Lord Byron, whom many consider the first computer programmer. To realize his dream of presenting artworks that offered an alternative to the Net's glut of information and entertainment, Weil found a modern-day Medici in new-media developer John Borthwick, who started WP Studios and published an online city guide called *Total New York*.

The ada'web site debuted in May 1995, with Jenny Holzer's *Please Change Beliefs*, an interactive project that encourages site visitors to become junior Jennies by re-arranging Holzer's aphorisms. Everything was copacetic until late 1996 when Borthwick sold WP to Digital City Inc., a company owned chiefly by America Online and the Tribune Company. Digital City didn't signal (or perhaps know) its own intentions regarding its WP properties throughout much of 1997; in February 1998 the axe finally fell. Weil is now fatalistic about Digital City's cancellation of financing: "This was doomed, inevitable. When companies restructure and refocus certain areas are going to be outside their interest." In the Age of the Producer, online-art presenters are frequently transformed into entrepreneurs, as well as curators.

Understanding online art requires a field of analysis that is unprecedentedly broad. Online art is the most hybrid of all media; one in which production and distribution, economics, design, and aesthetics hopelessly--and intriguingly--intertwine. (By *online art* I mean original, interactive works that can only be experienced on the Net, rather than the digitized images of paintings or photographs that characterize most gallery- or museum sites. Many online pieces now capitalize on the burgeoning capacity of the Web to deliver video and sound, as well as text and graphics.) It is sometimes difficult to even recognize online art as such. Alexei Shulgin, a Russian artist, asked in his prospectus for his satirical *WWW Art Medal* (1996) ([www.easylife.org/award/index.html/](http://www.easylife.org/award/index.html/)): "What is WWW art? Is it public art? Advertising? More data noise?...We give it [the WWW Art Medal] to web-pages that were created not as art works but gave us definite 'art' feeling."

There are many commercial sites including those of the design firm, Funny Garbage, or the

tchotchke purveyor Unamerican, ([www.unamerican.com](http://www.unamerican.com) or [www.funnygarbage.com](http://www.funnygarbage.com)) that give me a "definite 'art' feeling," while many other sites coyly work to elide the art/non-art question. (One of my favorites is *Mouchette* [[www.bekkoame.or.jp/i/ina-1744/](http://www.bekkoame.or.jp/i/ina-1744/)] the chronicle of a twelve-year-old web artist who will commit suicide at age thirteen. It is no longer so ambiguous: when it first appeared it was not set in its current, online-art-gallery context.) Certainly many of the hundreds of thousands of visitors to *The File Room* have no idea that the site they visited is "art," nor are they likely to care. Susan Farrell, the creator of the *Art Crimes* web-site (<http://graffiti.org>)--it began as a huge, international archive of graffiti photos--e-mailed me a message in 1996 thanking me for covering her project and noted that "I know nothing about art; I leave that to the art experts." The Internet not only tends to call into question the traditional identity of artmakers as a group, but destabilizes the entire Duchampian view of (physical) context as signifier, the notion that whatever is presented in an art gallery assumes art status. Is there a more pointed assault on the underlying rationale for the contemporary format of choice, the installation-work?

It's tempting to think that the relationship of seventies' media art to an earlier mass medium--television--might shed light on the nature or workings of online art. But this analogy has only limited value. By the time that video art emerged in the early seventies, television was an established industry with no room for the distinctly, un-televisual single-channel works and installations that video artists were producing. By contrast, artists helped create the idiosyncratic "look and feel" of the Web. Or as David Ross, director of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art recently commented to me: "The digital domain is going to be more pervasive than TV...and the active involvement of artists is critical to developing the potential of this medium. The alternative is far worse than the Disney aesthetic; it's a world of online shopping and spam. Artists have been involved early enough to affect the [online] vocabulary." Ironically, when Jenny Holzer's piece debuted on ada'web in 1995, AOL hosted an unprecedented (at least for an artist) live chat event in its online "odeon." Today it's unlikely that Holzer would be featured on AOL, given the company's recent embrace of television's mass-media model under President/COO Robert Pittman, formerly of MTV. The current view from the Net: Holzers are out; *Seinfelds* are in.

\* \* \*

This is not to suggest that uncertain production, distribution and marketing conditions have deterred artists from producing online artworks over the past few years. Indeed thousands of such works have been produced. So many, in fact, that I usually flinch when asked to name my favorites, an exercise akin to comparing the work of Bill Viola and Elizabeth Murray for someone who's familiar with neither artist, nor with video art. Despite trepidations, I am going on the record here with some recommendations, but one feels keenly the subjectivity of such designations. (See the *Some Notable Sites* sidebar.)

The problem isn't simply quantity, however. After all there's more contemporary art available than any viewer can experience either. But it's not all exhibited at the same time. And it operates within a long and well-known tradition. The off-putting effect of the stupendous, online overload is compounded by the lack of signposts, especially for the uninitiated. (A recent victim of this "Help! Where do I begin?" syndrome was *New York Times* critic Michael Kimmelman, who turned to Yahoo's unreliable art listings, found little of interest and wrote off the entire web-art enterprise. ) The consensus of the contemporary market-museum apparatus is often manufactured, but its clear-cut hierarchies offer a kind of elite conventional wisdom in relation to which one can position oneself. A former colleague now at the *New York Times* Electronic Media Company recently remarked that she didn't know what to think about the medium of online art when its highest accolade was "cool." Although she exaggerates, she's not *that* far off the mark.

Very little art historical attention--as opposed to the commentary of political-, cultural- and telecommunications theorists--has been brought to bear on online art. As with video art, art historical methods may be inadequate to the task of new media and time-based forms. (The most effective commentary about video has tended to be the province of film- and cultural studies theorists.) John Hanhardt, Senior Curator of Film and Media Arts at the Guggenheim,

aptly suggested that "the web has fulfilled many of the ambitions of twentieth-century new media--seeing video images, adding real time via closed circuit [or web-] cameras, incorporating [video] installation elements such as still photographs and texts. This is the radical potential of the medium and artists have charted many of these developments....[But] the struggle for arriving at a language of description for this temporal medium remains."

Despite such discursive difficulties, it is already clear that the five-year-old medium of online art has outgrown its infancy. Works exploring the essential technological and formal characteristics of the medium have already assumed a kind of classic stature. Such characteristics include navigation (the links that make the Net a web); interactivity (a medium in which many can talk to many); the data base (the computer's emergence as information management tool *par excellence*); and the interface (including the web browser, which transformed the graphical--rather than text-only--capability of the World Wide Web into the most popular part of the Internet, following the 1994 release of the Mosaic browser.)

These classic works might be likened to such pioneering video works as Joan Jonas's *Organic Honey's Vertical Roll* (1973 ) or to Richard Serra's *Television Delivers People* (1973). They are often declarative and transparent. A classic work about navigation is Heath Bunting's *Read Me* (1995) ([http://irational.org/\\_readme.html](http://irational.org/_readme.html) ), a text in which every word is linked to another site. Two classic archives-as-artworks are *The File Room* and *Art Crimes*. (The latter is also a brilliant exemplar of the possibility of creating online community.) A classic showcase of interactivity is Douglas Davis's *World's First (and probably longest ) Collaborative Sentence* (1994), (<http://math240.lehman.cuny.edu/art>), which is just what its title implies and the first online work acquired by a collector. (The late Eugene Schwartz purchased it, allegedly for about \$500, and donated it to the Whitney Museum of American Art.) An interface-related classic body of work is the site of Jodi, a Dutch-Belgian duo, ([www.jodi.org](http://www.jodi.org)), which sends computer geeks into paroxysms of joy thanks to its ingenious riffs deriving from HTML, Java, Unix and other programming/scripting languages. Jodi's approach is expressive: Visit the site, and suddenly your cursor is lost in a field of cursors or you're whisked back to a site you've previously visited.

Works like these are sometimes "anthologized" in online exhibitions. I use the term anthologized to suggest the hybrid nature of the online exhibition itself. Since linking a site or project to your own site or project costs nothing and requires no permissions, many online exhibitions and the ubiquitous awards shows are frequently just collections of links. Are they exhibitions or catalogs of exhibitions? They are certainly good news for art-interested web surfers. (See the *Some Notable Sites* sidebar.) But since artists rarely get paid for their participation, such exhibitions don't necessarily encourage artistic development in the field. Even the trend-setting inclusion of Net-works at the 1997 Documenta proved to be a mixed bag: Low-cost programming, some of it developed in an on-site laboratory/workshop situation, was privileged over the presentation of online art in the exhibition galleries, where it might have been projected. When the mammoth, physical exhibition came down, the online site, too, was disbanded.

The new medium's pressing need for discourse has yielded a vast outpouring of interpretation and discussion. Such discourse takes place almost entirely online, discouraging potential interest from those not already comfortable with being online. English-language online-art publications include: *Leonardo Electronic Almanac* (<http://mitpress.mit.edu/e-journals/LEA/>), although it is not exclusively dedicated to online art; *Why Not Sneeze* ([www.ccc.nl/sneeze/](http://www.ccc.nl/sneeze/)); the *indispensableTelepolis* ([www.heise.de/tp/](http://www.heise.de/tp/), in German with English translations), and *TalkBack! A Forum for Critical Discourse* (<http://talkback.lehman.cuny.edu/tb>), which I produced for Lehman College. Technologically-mediated culture is also the purview of many theoretical, cultural-studies journals including *Thresholds: Viewing Culture* ([www.arts.ucsb.edu/~tvc/index.html](http://www.arts.ucsb.edu/~tvc/index.html)) and *C-Theory* ([www.ctheory.com](http://www.ctheory.com)). But it is the members-only email list that has provided a quick and constant flow of information and feedback. (Such lists generally have web-site "archives" of their postings.) The premier Email list is the Amsterdam-based *Nettime* ([www.desk.nl/~nettime](http://www.desk.nl/~nettime)), which was collectively founded in 1995. Hundreds of participants and readers have generated thousands of texts that purportedly relate to art, but run a huge gamut including Eastern European politics and anything else that strikes a member's fancy. (Today I received an interesting but non-art-related posting in my email box about the workings of the

viatical industry; or those companies that buy up the life insurance policies of the terminally ill.)

Virtually all of the *Nettime* postings embody a post-counter cultural and decidedly anti-neo-liberal ideological framework. (By *anti-neo-liberal*, I mean a position opposed to the corporate-capitalism of Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, or *Wired* magazine.) The precision hair-splitting can resemble medieval theological debates; and, again, discourage casual interest. The focal point of the European online-art community, the well-established list's membership has dominated the field as fully as the Museum of Modern Art set the institutional, modern-art agenda during the inter-war period: *Nettime* has anointed certain (talented) "net.art" practitioners (*net.art* is a *Nettime* term coined to separate the online-art-wheat from the non-innovative chaff) including Shulgin, Bunting, Jodi, Vik Cosic, Olia Lialina. Soon the anthologized postings from *Nettime* will appear in print in a volume entitled *zkp5*, but usually referred to as the *Nettime Bible*. *Nettime*'s prominence has also been reinforced by the participation of *Nettime* regulars as presenters at a seemingly non-stop circuit of mostly European conference-event-festivals, including Ars Electronica, DEAF (Dutch Electronic Art Festival), Cyberconf, ISEA (International Society of Electronic Art), the Next 5 Minutes, Telepolis, Doors of Perception, etc. *ad infinitum*. This is less a matter of any hidden agenda than testimony to *Nettime*'s effectiveness and lack of viable competition. Other email lists do exist--including the *Syndicate* ([www.v2.nl/mail/v2east](http://www.v2.nl/mail/v2east)), a politically progressive list which is more low key than *Nettime*, the pleasantly casual and synthetic Rhizome ([www.rhizome.org](http://www.rhizome.org)), and 1998's provocative, three-months-long email symposium, *Artistic Practice in the Network: A Critical Forum* (archived at [www.blast.org/eyebast.html](http://www.blast.org/eyebast.html)), which was organized by artist Jordan Crandall for the Blast Foundation and Eyebeam Atelier. Although the forum reached out to a more culturally diverse group of participants than is usual in such circumstances, it is, nonetheless, time for a broader range of voices about online art to be heard--off-line as well as on.

\* \* \*

The novelty and hybridity of the online medium has resulted in an online art scene that can only be described as ghettoized. Technological art has usually been regarded with suspicion by the mainstream artworld: The pioneers of computer art are largely excluded from the art-historical canon and innovative techno-art initiatives of the past, such as MIT's Center for Advanced Visual Studies or E.A.T. (Experiments in Art and Technology), are accorded footnote status in art history, the latter primarily because of the involvement of Robert Rauschenberg.

The main reason for online art's ghettoization is, of course, its non-commodity status. (The commercial success of Art Net [[www.artnet.com](http://www.artnet.com)], the auction date base service, or the first major online photo auction [<http://photoarts.com>], which grossed \$120,000 last May, reflect only the Internet's astonishing capability as a *communications medium*.) Not surprisingly, galleries have demonstrated little interest in this not-very-lucrative arena. The most supportive dealer of online art is New York's Sandra Gering ([www.interport.net/~gering](http://www.interport.net/~gering)), who has represented online artists including John F. Simon Jr. and Jordan Crandall for four years. Although she doesn't see big money ahead, Gering is committed to encouraging innovation. "Artists are reaching for new ideas and I'm always interested in what artists are thinking." A very small number of collectors have emerged, perhaps most prominently Greenville, Ohio-an Robert Schiffler ([www.bobsart.com/](http://www.bobsart.com/)) who has acquired works such as John F. Simon Jr.'s *Color Balance*. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art architecture and design-department head Aaron Betsky has also solicited copies of nine mostly commercial web sites, including ada'web's, but as examples of web design. (Museums will need to face the fact that much of the software by which such works are created and presented will soon be obsolete.)

Most museums are only beginning to expand their interest in the Net beyond the portals of their education and publicity departments. The Dia Center for the Arts ([www.diacenter.org](http://www.diacenter.org)) is the notable, award-winning exception. Dia--under the direction of Lynne Cook and Sara Tucker--has commissioned artists including Tim Rollins + KOS, Komar and Melamid, Susan Hiller, choreographer Molissa Fenley, Kristin Lucas, and Diller + Scofidio, among others, to create works for its exemplary site.) Such laudable efforts as the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco's ([www.thinker.org](http://www.thinker.org)) development of a searchable data base including digitized images of its entire

collection have little to do with online art, as I've defined it. Or consider the Museum of Modern Art, which has recently won numerous awards for its handsome web site ([www.moma.org](http://www.moma.org)), although it has never commissioned an artist to create an independent, online artwork. Despite its 1996 re-opening as high-tech central, the Soho Guggenheim's much vaunted technology program has been slower than snail mail getting off the ground. This year the Guggenheim finally took the plunge with its first cyber-commission, a year-long event-oriented project called *Brandon*, by Shu Lea Chang (<http://brandon.guggenheim.org>) and curated by Matthew Drutt. The intriguing introductory material about Teena Brandon, a young woman in Nebraska who dressed as a man, dated young women and was raped and murdered for it, went online in June. It will be supplemented during the 1998-99 season with two webcast forums developed in collaboration with Harvard's Institute on the Arts and Civic Dialogue and the Society for Old and New Media, in the Netherlands. The interactive examination of real and cyber sexual assault will be presented in theatrical courtroom proceedings and in forums about the "mapping of the digital body" to be staged simultaneously in Amsterdam and New York.

Among American museums, the most ambitious online art program is taking shape at Walker Art Center ([www.walkerart.org](http://www.walkerart.org)), now under the direction of Steve Dietz. Site visitors are greeted with a home-page adapted from a work by Lawrence Weiner. Piotr Szyhalski's online *Ding an Sich* (1997) will soon be joined by four, Jerome Foundation-funded web-commissions. The San Jose Museum, looking to leverage its Silicon Valley location, recently hired as its new media director Randall Packer, who is working with E.A.T. founder Billy Kluver on a virtual recreation of E.A.T.'s Pepsi-Cola Pavillion at Expo '70 in Osaka. Befitting the hybridity of online art, neither Dietz nor Packer formally holds a curatorial position: Dietz is Director of New Media Initiatives, Packer is Director of Multimedia.

While most American museums are waiting until the art-historical dust settles before committing curatorial resources to online art, the international competition has not. Many large-scale online production and exhibition facilities are already operating, some with existing new-media- and techno-art-production facilities: At Zentrum fur Kunst und Medientechnologie (ZKM) in Karlsruhe, Germany; Ars Electronica in Linz, Austria; the Banff Centre for the Arts, and the Intercommunications Center (ICC) in Tokyo. ICA London is also getting into the act with major support from Sun Microsystems (Benjamin Weil recently assumed directorship of the new media program there.) Some of these R'n D facilities are supported by the enlightened overseas corporate leadership of American technology companies, while the technology-driven American economic boom hasn't much benefited American digital artists working in the United States.

Art-media attention has also been scant, following a flurry of often-breathless articles in 1996. (*American Photo*'s "Secrets of the Internet" special issue of March-April, 1996 offered "celebrity surfers," "wired art," and "cruising for erotica.") While print publications such as London's *Mute* have long chronicled the digital arts, no American counterparts to it have existed until this year, save for *Leonardo*, the venerable, and more broad-based, art-science journal. Two promising American publications recently debuted--*Intelligent Agent* and *Art Byte*. The former is published and edited by Christiane Paul and focuses on online art, education and their intersection. Lively interviews (subjects include Jodi and Sherry Turkle), multi-media reviews, and artists' projects by the likes of Eduardo Kac, who inserted a ditigal time capsule under his skin ([www.ekac.org/timec.html](http://www.ekac.org/timec.html)), stand out. *Art Byte*, published by Gabriella Fanning (publisher of *On Paper*) and edited by Bill Jones, is betting its hybrid existence on a twin focus of new media/new technology/online art and the medium of digital prints (and the ad base this editorial approach brings.) Art historical contextualization of new-media art is a laudable, editorial concern of *Art Byte*, although the results can be mixed. An article on the history of new media, for instance, likens Sol Lewitt's "licensed" wall drawings to the software licensing agreements we routinely click when installing new applications, but begs the questions of influence or relationship. Still, it's a reminder that the twenty-first century will bring us radically new narratives about our own century.

Progress on the institutional- and publication fronts ensure an ever more vital, online art environment. Unfortunately, online artists seem to have been left out of the loop. Despite the sometimes exorbitantly expensive tools of their trade, little support is available to them outside

of university art departments and media labs, or Silicon Valley think tanks such as Xerox Parc, where artists and scientists are similarly encouraged to pursue their intuitions. Only the most isolated gains have been recorded: Some state and local art agencies now offer grants to online artists in their new-media funding category; some video/film festivals, as well as Thundergulch, a digital "alternative space" in New York, offer exposure and promotion for online work; and the Digital Museum, a new facility housing digital artist' studios and developed by Eyebeam Atelier, is currently poised to break ground for a multi-million-dollar facility in New York's Chelsea district, which is slated to open in 2000.

\* \* \*

What can be done to stimulate the field at its most fundamental--and underfunded--level? Although I suggested the limited utility of invoking video art to understand online art, its history offers essential lessons regarding the development of a field. Thirty-five years ago, a few exhibitions involving televisions were staged--Wolf Vostell's *Television De-Coll/age* (1963) was probably the most important--but video art as the production of 1/2" videotapes by artists arose with the 1965 introduction of Sony's portable video camera, which Nam June Paik immediately used for his own mischievous purposes. This event should be set against a backdrop of mid-sixties experimentation in art, media, and technology, including experimental television broadcasts originating out of WGBH (Boston), the inclusion of video in experimental film festivals such as the Expanded Cinema Festival in New York in 1965, and the emergence of techno-arts organizations such as E.A.T., which sponsored *9 Evenings: Theater and Engineering* in New York in 1966. Video art entered the world as part of this lively and chaotic extended family.

Into the chaos of this emerging field stepped the Rockefeller Foundation. Under the leadership of Howard Klein, its Director of Arts and Humanities, the foundation created sometimes radical initiatives that supported the production and distribution of video art. (Klein's radicalism apparently had its historical roots: Joan Shigekawa, the Associate Director of the foundation's Arts and Humanities Program pointed out that the program supported the new media of radio and "talkies" during the 1930s with grants to the Museum of Modern Art to establish its film library.) Between 1967 and 1976 alone, the foundation funded the creation of laboratories and artist-residencies at then-innovative public television stations in Boston, San Francisco and New York; conferences such as *Video and the Museum*, organized by David Ross at the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse; production facilities for artists in Long Beach and San Francisco; direct support to numerous video artists and documentarians; as well as grants to the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art to outfit their facilities and provide the necessary equipment for exhibiting video installations. John Hanhardt, who originated the Whitney's video program recalls, "I was determined to expand the film program into video. Rockefeller funds were so important strategically, it was quite a statement for a major foundation to be supporting a new art form. It enabled us to find ongoing sources of support."

The Rockefeller Foundation was not, however, operating in a vacuum: In 1970, the New York State Council on the Arts formed its TV/Media Program, and a year later Steina and Woody Vasulka founded the Electronic Kitchen (later the Kitchen Center for Video, Music and Dance) at the Mercer Arts Center in New York, which provided a prototype for alternative spaces interested in video art. Although the emergence of new forms and technologies may remind us of our own era there is a major difference: Nobody extolled the magic of the marketplace as a panacea for arts funding then. As Hanhardt observed, "There is a mistaken belief in the creative power of the market and the corporate environment. There is a need now for independence in order to stimulate a range of expression. This means that accessible laboratories and support for individual artists are a necessity. While Rockefeller played an important and essential leadership role, we can't return to the past." But surely we can learn from it--even in an arts-wary culture that sometimes seems bent on obliterating the progressive legacy of the sixties and seventies.

## [Sidebar] Some Notable Sites

This list complements those art-sites mentioned in the body of the article including ada'web, Shu

Lea Chang's *Brandon*, and the Dia Center for the Arts. It is intended primarily to suggest the available range of online art. (Free, downloadable Real Video and Audio players are essential for viewing many sites today.)

**Beyond Interface** ([www.archimuse.com/mw98/beyond\\_interface/index.html](http://www.archimuse.com/mw98/beyond_interface/index.html)) Organized by Steve Dietz for the 1998 Museums and the Web conference, this should be the novice online-art-buff's primer of choice. A well-selected collection of links to 24 representative artworks--by Mark Amerika, Cohen/Frank/Ippolito, Ken Goldberg, Guillermo Gomez Pena/Roberto Sifuentes, and Olia Lialina, among many others--is contextualized by commentary and essays. Note I/O/D 4's *Web Stalker*, a downloadable web browser that reveals the limitations of the web-defining, "published page" paradigm employed by conventional browsers.

**The Thing** ([www.thing.net](http://www.thing.net)) One of the first art bulletin boards anywhere, the original underground club-house of hip Net-art has grown into a full-service Internet Service Provider under the direction of Wolfgang Staehle. Visit years of art and publication projects by artists including Vik Muniz and Vanessa Beecroft, video and audio riffs from Sylvie Fleury, Gregory Green and the Bush Tetras, and the online home of the innovative Postmasters Gallery, among the most digital--if not the most online-oriented of any major commercial gallery.

**Siberian Deal** (1995) ([www.tO.or.at/~siberian/](http://www.tO.or.at/~siberian/)) Eva Wohlgemuth and Kathy Rae Huffman boarded the Trans-Siberian Railroad with a packet of potlatch for this art adventure. Constant dispatches from the road made this one of the first, interactive web documentaries, one of today's hottest online formats.

### **City of Baltimore Opens Nine New Museums** (1996)

(<http://math.lehman.cuny.edu/tb/issue3/gallery/home.html>) The Cultural Cryptanalysts Collective provides a master plan for the redirection of civic funds from a planned sports stadium to nine, locally-relevant new museums, including the Museum of Workers' Rights and the Museum of African-American Culture. Downloadable stencils are available for parallel actions on city sidewalks in your neighborhood. Another reminder of the web's hospitality to marginalized groups and viewpoints, are Robert Clarke's delightfully raunchy works, *Wild West* and *Poodle* (<http://crisp.net/home/rclark>), which pay cleverly animated homage to gay iconmaker, Tom of Finland.

**ArtNetWeb** ([www.artnetweb.com](http://www.artnetweb.com)) A treasure trove of artists' projects and publications assembled over the past five years by Remo Campopiano and Robbin Murphy (often aided by G.H. Hovagimyan and Adrienne Wortzel.) One highlight is the documentation from *Port: Navigating Digital Culture*, a ground-breaking exhibition of interactive, time-based projects organized by the ArtNetWebbies for the List Visual Art Center at MIT in 1997.

**The Life of King Edward the Confessor** ([www.lib.cam.ac.uk/MSS/Ee.3.59/](http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/MSS/Ee.3.59/)) All right, so this manuscript is not exactly contemporary art but it is a compelling experience of imaging technologies of both the thirteenth- and twentieth centuries. You've never viewed an artwork as you can view this one. Zoom in and magnify any area of each of the manuscript pages housed in the Cambridge University Library. It's a pungent reminder that some of the web's best art experiences are produced by universities and libraries.

**Digital Landfill** (1998) ([www.potatoland.org/landfill/](http://www.potatoland.org/landfill/)) Destined for classic status, Mark Napier's work provides a virtual trash dump for your unwanted data--be it spam, outdated links, or that digital artwork which never lived up to expectations. Netscape Navigator 4.0 offers often elegant-looking views of the detritus and metaphorical testimony to frustration and failure.

**Turbulence** ([www.turbulence.org/index.html](http://www.turbulence.org/index.html)) This site exploits the hybridity of the web with online performances and original artworks from artists, poets, performers, composers and filmmakers. My favorites include Diane Bertolo's eliptical *FT2K*, Annette Weintraub's engrossing *Pedestrian* and John Hudak's witty *Artifact*, among many other rewarding, featured projects. The most regular, online performances are offered twice-monthly by Franklin Furnace ([www.franklinfurnace.org](http://www.franklinfurnace.org))--and then archived for six months.

**Zush: Evrugo Mental State** ([www.evru.org](http://www.evru.org)) The Internet is simultaneously anglophone and the virtual home of many minority languages and cultures. Zush, the well-known, Catalan artist writes in his own, Evrigan language but his visual vocabulary is the focus here; random surrealism gets pushed to mordantly playful extremes.

top