

BA (Hons.) PHOTOGRAPHY

The Evolution Of New Media Art And: It's Journey Into The Physical Realm



By

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I certify that all material in this dissertation, which is not my own work, has been identified.

Signed.

Abstract

In this dissertation, I wanted to investigate New Media Art. From its history, to its journey into the contemporary physical realm. I began by defining the term *New Media Art*. I then went on to explore and discuss the genre's historical influences touching upon Dadaism. My first chapter discusses technologies such as the Internet and how this served as a catalyst for many emerging New Media artists. An example of this comes from a collective of early New Media Artists named JODI. I critically analysed their work and made comment upon their audience reception. This paired with a resistance from institutional support and a lack of commodification saw me explain the obstacles the genre met in the late 1990's which ultimately led to its pace slowing. Chapter two focuses on the return of the genre and analyses contributing factors elemental to its success. These are compared with events mentioned in chapter one. One of which is the circulation of free information seen in social media. I discuss how this is affecting contemporary practitioners. I then reference the work of artist Rafael Rozendaal who became a central part to my investigation, noting his feats of innovation in the commodification of Internet based New Media art. The study then hones in on curatorial rationale when showing New Media Art, mentioning the relationship between Technology and methods of display. It compares exhibitions that have used technology in its display of work with some that haven't, this is underpinned with theory from curators who make claims on the attitude work of this nature should be approached with. The final section contains a personal reflection on what I have gained from the research I have undertaken. This section includes ways in which I feel the paper could be more successful and mentions ideas for further research.

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The Evolution of New Media Art and: it's Journey into The Physical Realm.

“Digital is not here to put an end to anything...it is here to expand all things, to combine and to make...things attainable. For the artist, it is the edgiest work of all; the biggest, most exciting challenge in a...history of the synthesis between technology and hand and mind and heart.”

The world is drifting further and further into the digital spectrum that is technology. It governs our lives, from our relationships to our economy, analogue processes are quickly becoming replaced resulting in a change in our anthropological make up. It is affecting all areas of culture including art.

This dissertation will focus on a genre of art that is driven by technology. It is either produced using it or is commenting upon it.

"Digital art," "Computer art," "Multimedia art," "Interactive art" and, "NET.ART" are used interchangeably, but for the purposes of this dissertation I have chosen to use the term New Media art to describe works that make use of *new media* technologies and are concerned with the cultural, political, and aesthetic possibilities of these technologies. New Media Art is still relatively young in its development as the mediums most popular with its creation only became affordable within the last twenty years. There appears to be a gap in academic text's covering its course, from historical influences, to aesthetics and critical discourse. This was the rational behind the commencing of my research. This study hones a particular focus on the genre's relationship to institutions and explores the creative thinking that defines its relevance

in contemporary culture. Key events that amass to its journey into the physical realm are explored. I have done this through analyzing a number of exhibitions. Research will be gathered from a variety of sources including web articles, books and through critical analysis of work produced by some of the genres key contributors. With a keen interest in curatorial studies I have embarked on a journey to contextualize and understand elements of this elaborate genre of art. I hope to further my knowledge in creating situations for New Media Art to function in an understandable, engaging manor. Due to practical constraints, this paper cannot provide a comprehensive review of specific applied techniques used in the production of gallery shows. Instead it investigates the theories made by artists and curators. As well as this it makes note of the mentality curators should approach work of a technological basis with.

Chapter One: *New Media Art and its exclusion from Contemporary culture between 1990 and 2000*

When defining any term, a break down of its form often assists the understanding of its nature. *New Media Art* is no exception. We must consider the term as a culmination of two separate elements: New media, and Art. New Media is an umbrella term used to describe the technologies involved in the processes of creating this work. Bailey Socha and Barbara Eber-Schmid; writers for website *newmedia.org* claim it's,

“a 21st Century catchall term used to define all that is related to the internet and the interplay between technology, images and sound.” - (Socha B & Eber Schmid. B, 2012,)

What's interesting is that this definition constantly changes, along with the technologies, that encompass it –

“New media evolves and morphs continuously. What it will be tomorrow is virtually unpredictable for most of us, but we do know that it will continue to evolve in fast and furious ways.” - (Socha B & Eber Schmid B, 2012,)

The latter part of the term; *Art*, refers to what is achievable with the medium, the context you place it into and how the user, “molds and subverts the computational powers of the computer and technology to create new signs, meanings, communications and forms” – (Jennings P, 2000)

New Media Art often centers much of its conceptual framework around “the new”, dealing with developments in technology, culture and politics. In contrast to this many

of its ideologies can be found in what has come before. Mark Tribe, author of book *New Media Art* mentions that “The conceptual and aesthetic roots of New Media art extend back to the second decade of the twentieth century, when the Dada movement emerged in several European cities.” - (Tribe M & Janna R, 2006 P 7) Fuelled by an animosity towards the nationalistic views, which led to the First World War: the Dadaists were radical in their approach. Their main aim consisted primarily in rebelling against what they saw happening in society. The same can be said for New Media Art; “Much as Dada was in part a reaction to the industrialization of warfare and the mechanical reproduction of texts and images, New Media art can be seen as a response to the information technology revolution and the digitalization of cultural forms.” – (Tribe M & Janna R, 2006, P 7)

The techniques used by New Media Artists can also be linked back to many Dadaist strategies including the use of irony, photomontage, collage, re-appropriation of existing materials, The Ready-made and political statements. One artist in particular who was using such techniques, which are widely used in New Media art today, was Max Ernst. Ernst worked predominantly with collage: he “used catalogs and textbooks to create these cut out collages, which he would use to create bizarre quotations for compositions.” - (Author Unknown, *Max Ernst (1891-1976)*, n.d)

Ernst also used found objects in his work, as seen in his 1919 piece entitled *Fruit of a Long Experience* (Fig1), the piece crosses over the boundaries between painting and sculpture resulting in a three dimensional viewing experience.



Fig 1, Ernst M, (1919), *Fruit Of A Long Experience*

A direct link to this work can be found within contemporary arts practice and in particularly from New Media artist *Kate Steciw*. As seen in (Fig 2)

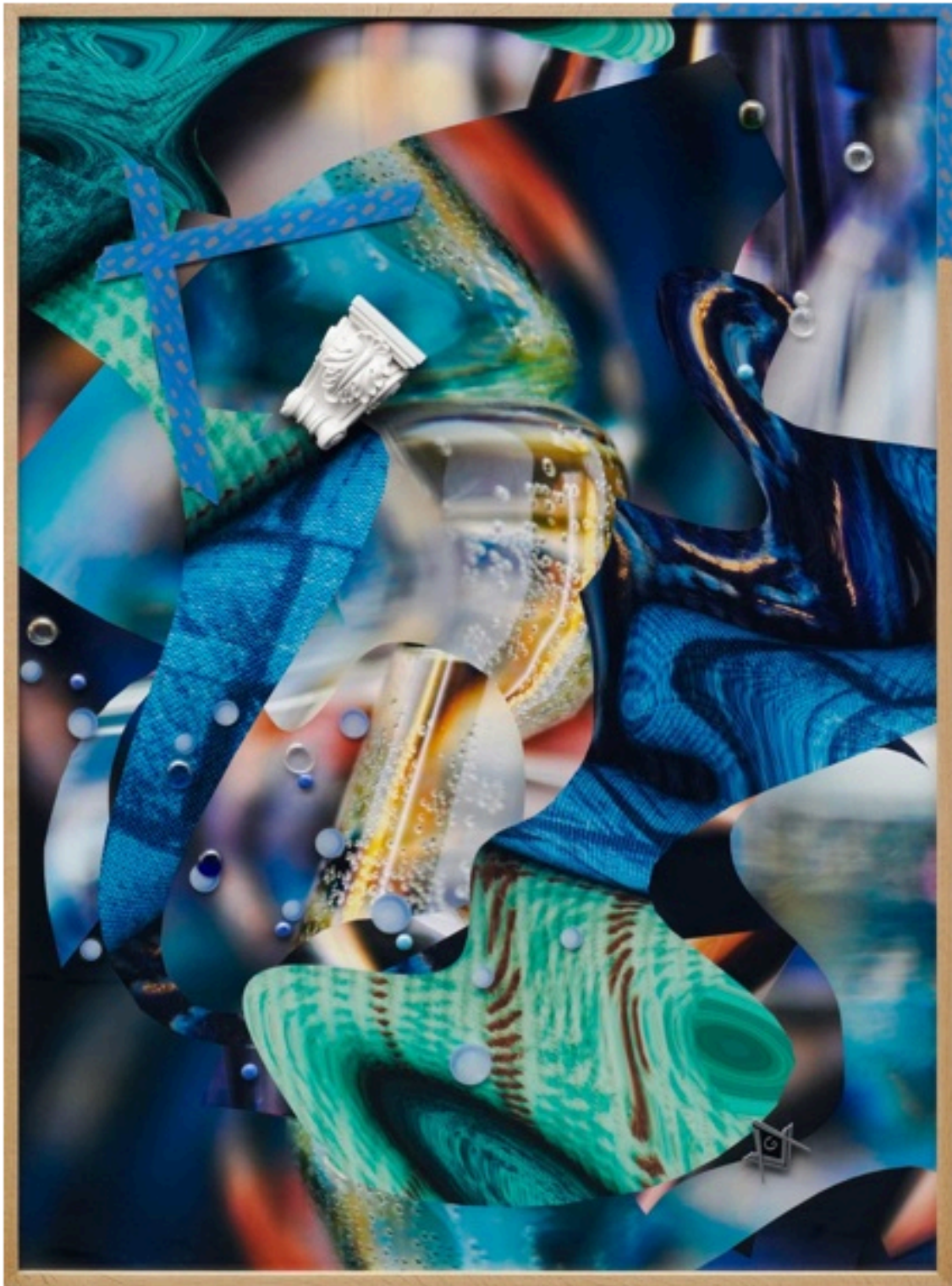


Fig 2, Steciw K, (2012), *Adhere, Adhesive, Aqua, Alter, Base, Based, Bauble, Blase, Blend, Blending, Blue, Crease, Decanter, Dimension, Elan, Filter, Faulty, Gaiety, Gauge, Glass, Grain, Mason, Masonic, Melange, Mystery, Opal, Opalescent, Own, Owned, Pwn, Pwnd, Sconse, 2012*

Steciw re-appropriates stock imagery found online and using digital manipulation merges them together transforming them into new forms recognisable to the computer savvy, although her audiences can also resonate with the craft that has gone into her collages. With the use of texture and a three-dimensional surface her work explores both virtual and physical realms and comments on our ever-growing involvement with the Internet.

It was in fact the Internet that served as a catalyst for many New Media Artists, following its explosion in the early 1990's. An expanded culture and communications system flourished and a separate artistic territory emerged. The worlds of contemporary art and digital culture collided and with the Internet's ability to connect users without the constraints of money, time and geography information on these new modes of artistic practice spread quickly. "E-mail lists and Web sites served as alternative channels for the discussion, promotion, and exhibition of New Media art work, enabling artists to form an online art scene..." - (Tribe M & Janna R, 2006 P 10)

The increase in home computers also brought New Media art to a wider audience. It was in the mid 1990's that home computers became affordable and programs capable of editing video, images, rendering 3d models and designing web pages with ease became available. In his book *New Media Art*, Mark Tribe discusses this, claiming; "the first generation of artists to have grown up with personal computers and video games (in the 1980s) was coming of age. These young artists were as comfortable with new media as they were with more traditional cultural forms. - (Tribe M & Janna R, 2006 P 10)

In 1994: fuelled by the birth of the Internet and the opportunities it creates, the artist collective; JODI (Joan Heemskerk and Dirk Paesmans) was formed. Joan Heemskerk was born in 1968 in the Netherlands and Dirk Paesmans was born in 1965 in Brussels. They met at the Silicon Valley's electronic arts Laboratory CADRE at San Jose State University in California and their background was in photography and video.

Electronic Arts Intermix states that they were among the first artists to “investigate and subvert conventions of the Internet, computer programs, and video and computer games. Radically disrupting the very language of these systems, including interfaces, commands, errors and code”. – (Author Unknown, *JODI*, n.d). Their work predominantly explores the way in which we use technology, they often create interventions that corrupt and diminish the usability of electronic systems. They take advantage of the Internet's framework of free information; it's ability to reach the masses and the resulting vulnerability of its users caused by it's impersonal nature.

The majority of their early projects existed exclusively on-line, within this digital space JODI were essentially dealing with code. This is central to the overall functionality of their work; from its aesthetics to the way it allows users to interact with it. Code comes in several forms including; scripts, html 5, CSS 5, JavaScript, and JQuery (to name a few), this builds the digital make-up of the work. With a background in technology JODI didn't have much difficulty teaching themselves the art of code, “We had never done our own computer programming before, the HTML was very simple,” explained Paesmans in a recent conversation at EAI – (Chayka May K, 2012). In order for these codes to become operational they require a framework, and in the case of Internet based art works this comes in the form of The

Web Browser. *The Creators Project* defines this as; “ More than a utility, the web browser is an aesthetic and cultural framework with implicit stylistic and functional biases. It is the white cube. It is a museum in flux”- (Fino-Radin B, 2012). The web browser acts like a gallery, a container where artist like JODI can show their creations.

JODI utilise online space through buying web domains thus creating a container for their work. Each project is identifiable through the use of separate URL address's that pair up as titles for the piece. Each piece is accessible through their main website entitled; “www.jodi.org “ each time you visit it directs you to a different sub-domain containing a different project.

When JODI first appeared online- in 1993; they did so through a home page, which can now be viewed at <http://wwwwwwwww.jodi.org>. The site consisted of a page filled with a nonsensical array of green text, numbers and punctuation flashing on a black background.

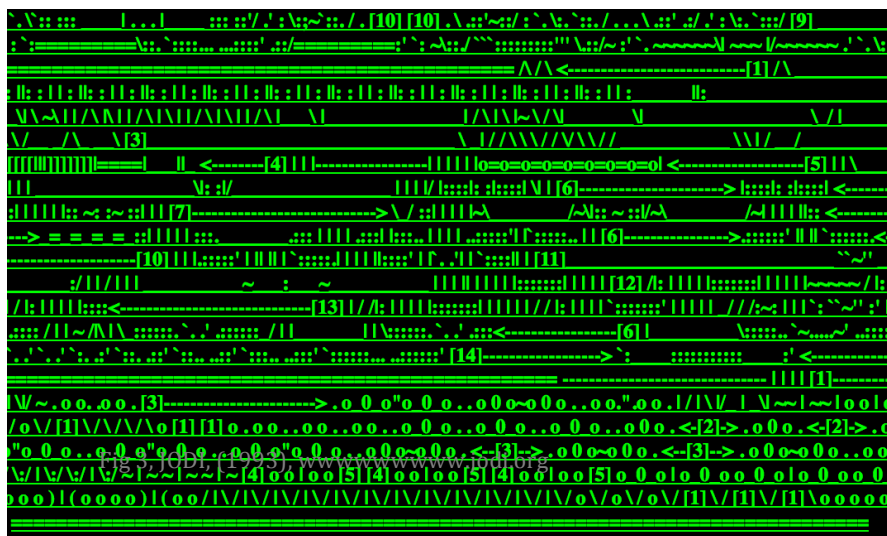


Fig 3, <http://wwwwwwwww.jodi.org/>,JODI, 1993

Many people believed the page was an error, a coding mistake made by the creator or a problem with the Web Browser. Due to the nature of the website it often crashed the audience’s computer resulting in a worry for some of a virus. But if visitors to the site were technologically aware and knew to view the *page source* (a separate page that shows the inner workings of the web site) they were in for a surprise as the page source shows that underneath the jumble of green text Jodi has inserted a diagram, “drawn in slashes and dots, of a hydrogen bomb, as if to explode expectations about the Web as a medium.” (See Fig 3) – (Tribe M & Janna R, 2006 P 50)



Fig 4, <http://wwwwwwwww.jodi.org/>, JODI,1993

With regards towards aesthetics, this jumble of green text appears time and time again within technology and is usually a sign of damage to the system or a failure in its process. It is often labeled as a “Glitch”. Many artists working within the digital sectors often use such failures as aesthetic frameworks. In his essay – *The Aesthetic of Failure: Confusing Spectators with Net Art Gone Wrong*, Michele White states, “Net artists engage, worry, and frustrate their spectators and maintain a sort of

dialogue with the technology when they render Internet and computer failures.” – (White M, 2006). In JODI’s case, they force the viewer to access unfamiliar areas of the web browser, searching for meaning and creating confusion. With consideration to this, Michele White believes that “Jodi’s net art is as much about blindness as it is about visibility. Jodi operates by shifting the spectator between confusion and comprehension.” - (White M, 2006) Regarding this shift, White goes on to claim “viewers are encouraged to read all web material in a different way after viewing Jodi’s net art.” - (White M, 2006) This would suggest a change in the thinking of the audience and a broader consideration of the technologies they are engaged with. Although this would only be the case if everyone had knowledge of the inner workings of the Web browser. Overall the work, “most clearly engages with “accomplished” Internet spectators and those who are familiar with art conventions.” - (White M, 2006). This essentially narrows the audience and makes the work inaccessible.

The technological nature of New Media Art often results in an immediate decline in engagement from the viewer, as it’s just too difficult to decipher. In the book “*Rethinking Curating. Art After New Media* (2010), a recent publication by Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook, they divide audiences of New Media Art into three categories of understanding,

the experts who are *familiar with the art form*; the fairly small group of those who claim a “natural” *aversion to computers and technology* and refuse to look at anything presented using them; a relatively young audience that is highly *familiar with virtual worlds, interfaces and navigation paradigms* but not necessarily accustomed to art that involves these aspects; and those who are *open to and interested in the art but need assistance* using it and navigating it.

-(Graham B & Cook S, 2010.)

Graham and Cook are suggesting that as a consequence of the focus on technology there are varying levels of familiarity among viewers. This is further evidenced in the titles of subchapters in the book which include, “it's all about technology” [2]; “it doesn't work”; “it belongs in a science museum”; “I work on a computer all day – I don't want to see art on it in my free time”; “I want to look at art – not interact with it” [3]; “where are the special effects? -(Graham B & Cook S, 2010.).

In conclusion, “technology ultimately prevents new media art from being understood by the contemporary art audience.” – (Quarnta D, 2012).

Towards the end of the 1990's art of this nature suffered a decline, paired with the complexity of mediums used to make New Media Art was another contributing factor. This comes in the form of an institutional disengagement with these new modes of practice; a key consideration within this discussion. “Since their inception two centuries ago, museums have been vested with ever greater responsibility to define what qualifies as art. Art is what is shown in museums.” – (McClellan A,2008).

Due to a lack in *physical* platforms and the massless nature of New Media Art; it never got pushed into contemporary culture. In an interview with curator Marc Garret conducted by Karen Verschooren, Garret states

Due to the immaterial nature of Internet Art, which is also known as Net Art, it has not been readily accepted into the more established physical venues around the world over the last 10 years. Most fine art institutions have failed in taking on their responsibility, in finding a place for Net Art to thrive in an art arena context, this includes much of the media art out there as well.

-(Verschooren K,n.d. P 5)

Garret goes on to talk about economic issues that also surround these types of art works and speak of that fact the art market has not found a successful way to make money out of New Media Art as, “the main stumbling block” - (Verschooren K, n.d. p 5.)

As a result of this resistance from galleries; New Media art specifically net based works lost momentum and in 1998 curator Tilman Baumgartel who was central to the movement announced (in a contribution to *NETTIME- a* publication about internet based artworks) that it was, “the end of an era. The first formative period of net culture seems to be over.”- (Baumgaertel T, 1999)

Chapter Two: Investigation of Contemporary New Media Artists, Online presence and curatorial rational behind the showcasing of their work.

Regardless of the decline in net based art works, as seen towards the end of the 1990's, there appears to be a new generation of artists utilising and celebrating the web browser for the production and promotion of their practice. Artist Rafael Rozendaal is a prime example of someone using the Internet as a platform for contemporary arts practice. The Dutch born visual artist lives and works in New York, his practice consists of, "websites, installations, drawings, writings and lectures". – (Rozendaal R, n.d)

Like JODI, Rozendaal's work is "Spread out over a vast network of domain names," using each as a container for his art, of which" attracts a large audience of 40 million visits per year". - (Rozendaal R, n.d) What sets Rozendaal apart from his Net Art counterparts is that he came up with the idea of selling his websites, thus generating revenue from massless media. This is made possible through the creation of his *Art Website Sales Contract*; this can be found and downloaded at www.artwebsitesalescontract.com. The site features a description written by Rozendaal explaining the service he provides.

[Art Website Sales Contract](#) is a document that I use to sell my [websites](#).

I think in moving images, and I don't think moving images are objects. I place these moving images in domain names. Each URL is the title and the location of each art piece. These websites are public, their ownership is exclusive. Domain names are one of the internet's few scarcities. They are unique, they can't be forged or copied. This contract explains the rights and duties of the artist and the collector, to make sure the work remains intact as long as possible. You can download the contract [here](#) (pdf). It can be used by anyone who wants to buy or sell an art-piece-in-a-domain-name.

-(Rozendaal, n.d)

With the creation of the *Art Website Sales Contract* Rozendaal is making a digital arts market possible. He is building on the fact that scarcity results in value claiming, “Domain names are valuable, and they can create value for digital art. They are truly unique and can’t be forged. If you have it, it’s yours.” – (Rozendaal R, 2012). In order for a collector to purchase the website they must adhere to the *Art Website Sales Contract*, “The contract states...the website has to remain public. That is the nature of the work. When bought, the domain name is transferred to the collector...the name of the collector is mentioned in the title bar” - (Rozendaal R,2012)

The websites function like a piece of public art anyone can view it but it also remains exclusively in the possession of the buyer who is credited in the title of the work. The buyer owns the rights to sell and exhibit the work as they please but must keep it publicly available. This feat of innovation from Rozendaal has resulted in a commodification of Internet based artwork; this represents a step forward in the understanding and acceptance of New Media Art into contemporary society. Rozendaal’s work isn’t aimed at a niche audience of computer experts, unlike JODI; he celebrates the medium of technology in a much more accessible way.

One-way in which Rozendaal ensures his audience’s understanding is through simplicity, in both aesthetics and conceptual rational. He works with looping animations, sometimes interactive, that create a sort of meditative experience for the viewer forcing them to slow down and reflect. Rafael claims, “I like making these moving images that do not have a beginning or end, but they still move, infinitely... I’m not sure why I do it or what it stands for, but it’s something I have to do.” - (Rozendaal R, n.d)

Rozendaals work boasts a painterly, fun aesthetic that is reminiscent of modernist paintings and animated cartoons. The animations he creates are often reconstructions of real life moments. As seen here in Fig 5, screenshots taken from Rozendaals piece, www.lookatsomething.com which depicts various rates of rainfall over a gradient that symbolises time of day.

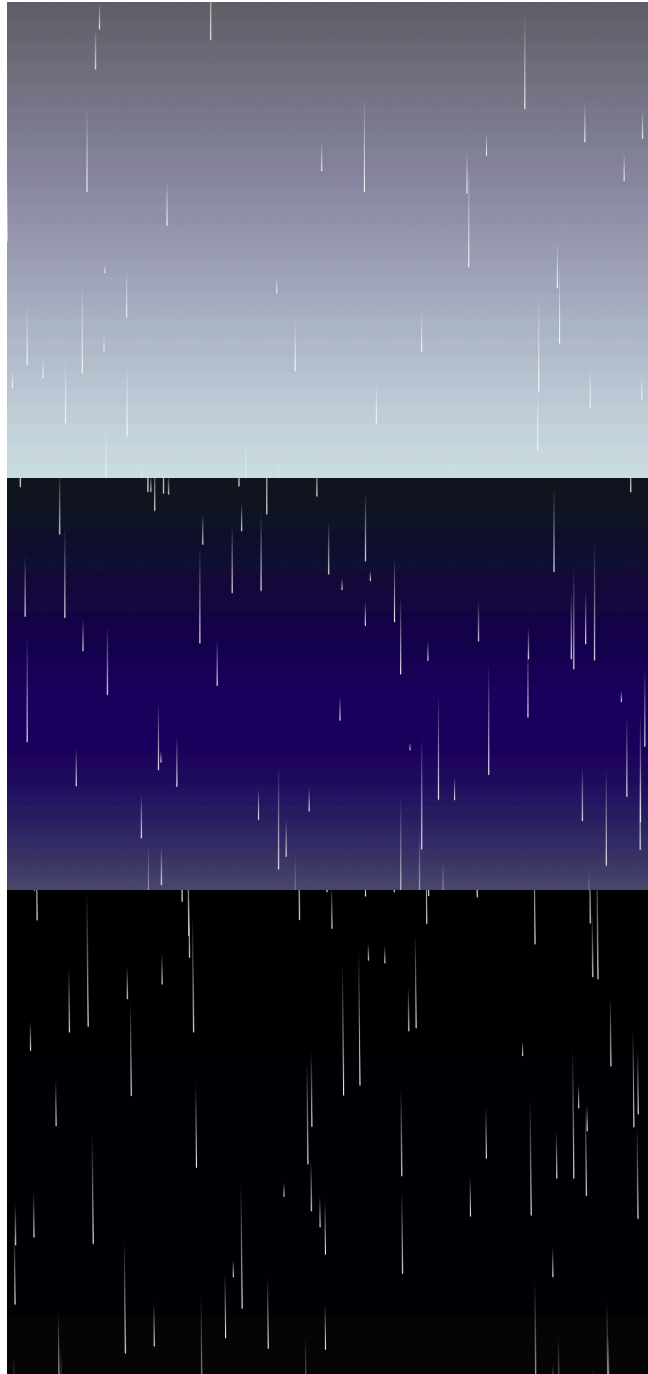


Fig 5, Rozendaal R, www.lookingatsomething.com/, 2013

The lower the cursor is positioned on the page, the heavier the rainfalls. As the medium of technology has developed so has the work that uses it, although not necessarily in a more complicated fashion. Even though the technologies used to make this work are further developed than that used in the creation of JODI's websites it boasts a simplicity that makes his work easier, for audiences, to empathise with.

In the press release for an exhibition of Rozendaal's work entitled *Thank You Very Much* held at the Future Gallery, Berlin there is a statement from Rozendaal describing his aesthetics as, "not a stylistic choice ... a theoretical choice, to reduce, to reconstruct reality into a universal language, and to optimize it for the infrastructure that is the Internet." – (Rozendaal R, 2010)

Unlike JODI, Rozendaal is interested in his work being recognised and enjoyed Universally. His aesthetic strategies echo mass communication to large audiences, an elemental factor within Internet culture. The fun, interactive nature of his work, paired with ease of accessibility, harvest a large number of visitors to his websites.

The amplitude of popularity Rozendaal has received owes itself to the platform on which he is showcasing his work. Many artists are following suit and using the Internet as their number one format for self-promotion and networking. Its capabilities are groundbreaking in the process of becoming noticed as an artist.

In 2009, artist and editor Romeke Hoogwaerts founded the blog, "MOSSLESS", which served as a platform on which emerging photographers were given exposure through interviews. Interviews were usually conducted every two days and consisted

of similar style questions each time, resulting in a catalogue of artist profiles that gave context to some of the most contemporary photographs of that time. The project soon developed and in 2010 Hoogwaerts launched a campaign on Internet funding site “Kickstarter” where he unveiled his plans to make MOSSLESS a more physical affair. He proposed to launch a publishing house, which would serve the same purpose as the blog and sits under the same alias. The inaugural issue, released in 2012 consisted of 4 booklets – each offering a detailed insight into the work of one photographer. Susan Bright wrote an introduction to the project by commenting on featured photographers’ vision as, “a collective one with the Internet always at their side. This generation of image-makers are ‘alone together’ in a world of connectivity simultaneously tagging, reblogging, crowd sourcing, networking and tumblr-ing their vision.”- (Bright S, 2012)

The internet served as a catalyst for the photographers featured as well as the project itself; it’s a pertinent medium when discussing contemporary culture and is especially relevant to current art practices. MOSSLESS issue two presents a particular focus on the Internet and its effect; it includes an essay written by Hoogwaerts entitled, “Swimming in the Centre of the Earth”. Here he describes the work that artists are currently making as, *Post Monovial*, Monovial means a single path so Post Monivial means after single path; after singular life. Hoogwaerts claims, “To define post-monovial artists, they: use social websites as the primary publishing and peer review platform; communicate the desire for a connected disconnection, and; acknowledge the detachment from monovialism.” - (Hoogwaerts R, 2012)

In this statement Hoogwaerts is trying to create a written representation of contemporary arts practice; highlighting the primary effects that global digitalisation

has had on artists. The Internet has resulted in an endless network of connectivity between practitioners, with most of them using it as their “primary publishing and peer review platform”. – (Hoogwaerts R, 2012) This new method of self-promotion and critique has had an effect not only on the type of work being made but the value of it too. In terms of value Hoogwaerts states,

Virtually all visual art discourse within the Internet has been organically reduced to Likes. The popularity of social websites is exemplary of memetic natural selection: those, which please most, prosper. The overpowering desire to generate Likes exhausts any want for further discussion offline”...” This is a problem that affects our work deeply. Post –monovial art has little perceived value because without discourse art loses density.

-(Hoogwaerts R, 2012)

From this it would seem Hoogwaerts is suggesting that these battles of self promotion overshadow the work itself, this paired with the lack of dialect in reference to the conceptual nature of images results in; a devaluation of work and a judgment of taste being made purely on an aesthetic basis.

Regardless of the negative repercussions the work of artists is suffering Hoogwaerts goes on to mention that, “It is meanwhile perilously necessary for an artist to exist within the network while representing oneself as an outsider simultaneously.” - (Hoogwaerts R, 2012) And that,” The resulting desire for singular distinction has allowed the fragmentation of style in art to bloom into an immensely spectacular backlit spectrum of aesthetic triumph.” – (Hoogwaerts R, 2012)

Due to credibility being scored on a purely aesthetic level; particular trends have formed, this paired with a culmination of artists making work solely to achieve Internet popularity, (regardless of whether they actually like the work); results in a necessity to seek creative distinctiveness. In his essay Hoogwaerts declares, “Post-

monovial artists create work that stands in contrast to the by-products of this social phenomenon in order to appease it” – (Hoogwaerts R, 2012)

Hoogwaerts, being a young contemporary, writes the essay with a tone of familiarity and sincerity, his interest in this particular field of culture is obvious and through the use of some creative metaphors he speaks of subjects that have become engrained in the human psyche in a notably engaging manner.

With regards to New Media Art and its validity within contemporary culture, it is essential to not only consider its online/ digital manifestation, as its journey into the *physical* realm is central to the discussion and a contributor to its recent rise. When looking back at causes for the decline in art of a technological nature, it was evident the resistance of institutional support was a huge contributor.

Whether it was due to its immateriality, its lack of commodification or that galleries and museums were devoid of the technologies required for its execution; the absence of New Media Art in contemporary spaces hindered its success. It was a genre defined by its medium: a medium too complex to curate.

Fortunately in recent years this dilemma has been addressed and the curatorial engagement from institutions, paired with the adaptability of contemporary New Media artists, has given long deserved relevance to this enthralling art form.

Adaptability is a key element in the spectrum that is, curating New Media art. In reference to this; an article written by Domenico Quaranta for *Rhizome* (An online archive for digital art) states, “artists are already showing curators the way along this path...the artists formerly known as new media artists started taking the

problem of how to present their art in the white cube more seriously,” -

(Quaranta D, 2012). Quaranta goes on speak of how artists have realized,

that sometimes, putting technology aside was not just a compromise with the market [5], or a way of watering down their works and making them more palatable to the masses, but the right thing to do. It was a process that took time, involved trial and error and ultimately accepting failure, and was eventually facilitated by the emergence of a new generation of artists who enjoyed both bits and atoms, and who didn't see “new” and “old” media in opposition, but as lines of inquiry that should be pursued together, and that can sometimes converge, sometimes diverge, and sometimes criss-cross.

-(Quaranta D, 2012)

Rafael Rozendaal is a good example of this. He has been a key participant in the evolution of Internet based, New Media art; from his enchanting flash animations to the creation of the Art Website Sales Contract. In addition to these acts of progression he is committed to a curatorial venture entitled *BYOB*; an acronym of Bring Your Own Beamer. The concept is very simple, the website describes it as, “a series of one-night-exhibitions hosting artists and their projectors. Anyone can make a BYOB exhibition.” – (Rozendaal R, n.d). Artists are invited to bring their own beamer, set it up and beam their artwork where they please. This makes it possible to show video, animation and stills in one place at the same time. With the first being held by Rozendaal in Berlin; these symphonies of light and sound have been infecting cities ever since, with a list of over two hundred archived on Rozendaal’s website this simple yet intuitive idea has generated large success.



Fig 6, *BYOB London at the Woodmill*,

In an interview with website *The Creators Project* Rozendaal claims *BYOB* “could be a model of what computing is in the future, where its not restricted to devices, it’s all around us.” - (Rozendaal R, n.d). Rozendaal hopes to make digital art a more experiential affair that exists outside the machines used to create it. As well as founding *BYOB* Ronzendaal has been ingenious with the development of display techniques regarding his personal work. Mixing projections and mirrors, Rozendaal reflects his Projections onto the gallery floor a place where digital and physical meet to form something new. (Fig 7)



Fig 7, *Everything Dies*, exhibition at kunstverein Arnsberg, 2012

In recent times New Media art has materialized in a number of institutions around the world. On the 19th of May 2012 *The Photographers Gallery*, London, reopened after a period of redevelopment. One of their many new features was *The Wall*, a digital 2.7 x 3 meter sharp video wall that is situated in the main lobby of the gallery. In addition to this they appointed Katrina Sluis as the curator of digital programming to coordinate its content. The Photographers gallery website states, “The Wall forms part of a research programme which aims to address the multiple contexts of the digital image.” – (The photographers gallery, 2012)

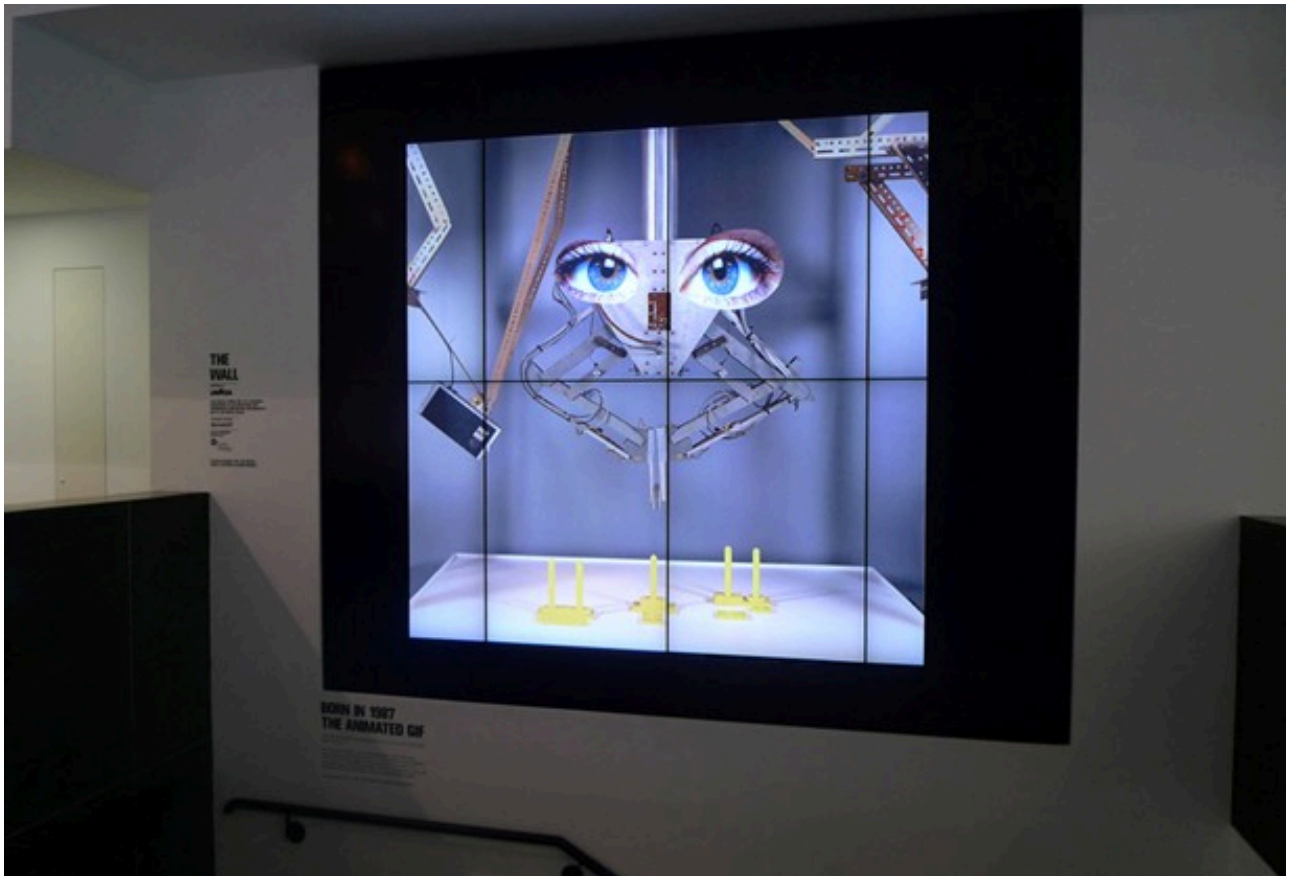


Fig 8, *The Wall*, *The Photographers Gallery*, 2012

Both *BYOB* and *The Wall* simulate screen-based images, using technology, but this isn't the only method of display artists and curators are adopting when showcasing New Media Art. Some work is shown without the aid of technology regardless of whether it was an important factor in the production of the artwork. Science Gallery, Dublin, was host to the piece, *Angry Birds, All levels 2012 (Fig 9)* by Evan Roth; that consists of three hundred pieces of tracing paper and black ink displayed in a grid with each piece mounted by pins. A statement on the Science Gallery's website describes the work as, "a visualisation of every finger swipe needed to complete the popular mobile game of the same name. The gestures exist on a sheet of paper that's the same size as the iPhone on which it was originally created." – (Science Gallery, 2012)



Fig 9, Roth E, *Angry Birds, All Levels*, 2012

The work is a comment on technology and the way it is used, in the form of finger movements on touch screen interfaces. The use of technology was key in the creative process but isn't featured in the gallery space. In an article written by Domenico Quaranta for *Rhizome* (An online archive for digital art) Quaranta claims this is, "not out of convenience or for marketing reasons, but because this is what works best for the artwork itself." -(Quaranta D, 2012).

Another example, similar to this comes from a photography exhibition held by *Foam*, (a photography magazine, based in Amsterdam). The exhibition entitled *What Is Next* a project set with the aim to uncover and predict the possible futures of photographic culture. Four curators were set the task of curating a section of the gallery. One of which was Erik Kessels, the editor of *Dazed & Confused* magazine. His contribution to the exhibition involved filling a room with photographs uploaded over twenty-four hours to Flickr, Facebook and Google in the hope to depict the visual bombardment of images that exists online. *The Photography In Abundance Installation* resulted in a sea of pictures stretching across several rooms in which the audience was encouraged to walk through, picking up any image as they please. (Fig 10)



Fig 10, *Photography In Abundance*, Erik Kessels, 2011

Like Evan Roth; technology has been incorporated into the creation of the piece. It is also a comment on the way in which we use social media. But these technologies aren't required in the showing of the work.

Through these examples it is evident contemporary galleries and museums have started to recognise both the importance, and relevance of New Media artwork.

Through individuals and groups being represented by contemporary institutions; the audience can only grow, and with it their understanding of current arts practice, and additionally; its involvement with technology.

Domenico Quaranta for *Rhizome* (An online archive for digital art) Quaranta declares, "In most cases, artists arrived at this point under their own steam, with little help from curators. Are new media curators ready to help them take the next step? If so, they should probably start by focusing on their art rather than their media." -(Quaranta D, 2012).

Conclusion

This dissertation has been an investigation into the beginnings of New Media Art and its contributing influences, from history to the ever-developing culture of technology. It explores factors responsible for the genres short lived demise in 1998, and goes on to discuss and determine its resurgence into contemporary culture, with a focus on institutional acceptance and methods of display. Through comparing elements of past and present it builds an account of aesthetics, audience, commodification and the curatorial rational contained within this curious genre.

The research undertaken shows that the often-confusing nature of early works paired with the resistance of institutional support caused the genre to slow its pace to an almost standstill situation. Contrary to this, the persistence of some artists matched with some compelling idea's (as seen by Rafael Rozendaal) saw the genre return. New Media Art currently resides in an exciting situation, with a growing number of its practitioners achieving institutional representation, monetary status and most importantly audience appreciation. The obstacles the genre faced have been noted within chapter one; these therefore assist in our understanding and identification of changes that ultimately aided the movement's return, which is then discussed within chapter two. The research suggest that the main contributing elements mounting to this succession include; the wider availability, affordability and general understanding of technologies seen in current culture, combining social media and its making possible of mass audience engagement. Parallel to this, the study shows that New Media artists are now more open to adapting their work in a way that betters its functioning within a gallery situation. In some cases, like that of Rafael Rozendaal, it

adds a completely new dimension to the work. The research confirms previous findings and contributes additional evidence that suggests there are still tensions between the genre and contemporary institutions. After conducting the research it has become apparent to myself that in order to incorporate new Media work successfully into galleries and museums; curators must shift their focus. Rather than focusing on the medium used to produce the work and trying to simulate it, curators must open a dialogue with artists and collaborate in a way that incorporates adaptability on both parts.

With consideration to how technologically driven our society has become, which essentially has resulted in such a rise in the amount of creative practitioners working in this field; the number of institutions around the world allowing the involvement of this art into their galleries is still very low.

This investigation was representative of a small selection of opinions concerning the 1998 death of Internet based New Media Art and as a result could have missed a number of practitioners or organisations that were continuing their work through the slowing of pace that I have evidenced in some of my research. The gathering of research suggested that due to the fact New Media Art, (especially Internet based works) is still relatively young in its development as a movement, texts regarding both its curation and commodification were sparse. There was also difficulty in finding primary research in the form of interviews due to a lack of response to many interview requests' I had made. After establishing this body of research findings have provided insight for future research into the relationship between New Media Artists and online only galleries, in the hope to gain a broader understanding of how this genre should be curated. The findings made evident in this dissertation have gone on

to influence my personal practice. I have become increasingly interested in the tension between physical and digital platforms. Not only in the case of Art but also in society. With an ever-increasing digitalisation of culture, where does one end and the other begin?

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