AHST 4342-001 (88513)
New Media Art Histories
Fall 2023
Dr. Charissa N. Terranova
University of Texas at Dallas
Arts & Humanities
Tuesdays-Thursdays 10:00-11:15
Class Location: ATC 2.602

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Views of *Pixel Forest* (2016) and *Worry Will Vanish* (2014), an immersive experience by Swiss artist Pipilotti Rist at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2023

This class focuses on the histories of new media art, or the amalgamated field of art, science, design, and technology. It explores how artists have used science and technology to mediate ideas over the last 250 years. The course traces new media art across mediums, media, and devices, including the punch-card loom, the analytical engine, painting, daguerreotype, photograph, chrono-photography, player piano, television, telephone, novel, mainframe and personal computers. Students attend lectures, participate in discussions, read essays from journals, anthologies, and the textbook, write short essays, and take a final exam.

Goals of Course:

- Learn and engage the history of science and technology within art, 1799-present.
- Learn how this amalgamation can transpose art into design.
- Learn the philosophical meaning and artistic incarnation of medium, media, and mediation.
- Learn how to think critically about the history of new media art, and its cultural and political ramifications.
- Learn how to identify the salient and successful formal components of a work of art, whether a painting, a performance, or web art.
- Habituate close and analytical reading of texts.
- Hone critical writing skills.
- Hone public speaking skills.

Requirements:

Students are required to attend every scheduled class meeting, complete the assigned reading and writing prior to class, give short presentations based on essays they've written, and participate with verve and gusto in class discussions.

Attendance Policy:

Students are allowed two unexcused absences after which every unexcused absence will result in a deduction of ½ grade in the computation of the final mark. Absences due to illness are excused with a doctor's note. Absences for religious holidays are excused.

Readings:

Textbook: Hannah B. Higgins and Douglas Kahn, *Mainframe Experimentalism: Early Computing and the Foundations of the Digital Arts*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012.

Links to essays and book excerpts outside of the textbook are provided at elearning in the ereserves created by the library.
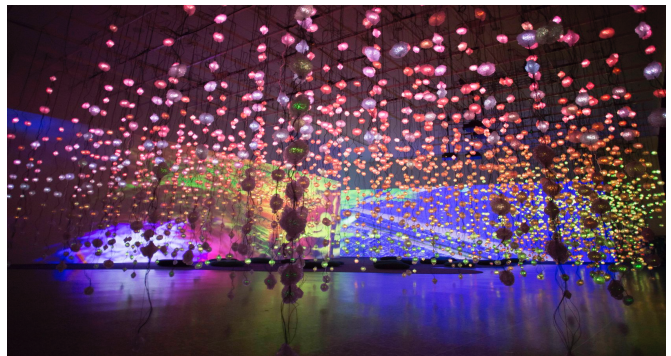
Teachback – I teach! You teach! We all teach! [4 x 15% = 60%]
Polymathic intermedia artist and engineer Gordon Pask coined the word "teachback" fifty years ago to identify the generative circular feedback between teachers and students that constitutes learning on both sides. Pask argued that teaching must have a component of learning and, likewise, learning of teaching. In this class teachback identifies short presentations made by students each Tuesday based on short essays they've written about the reading assignment from the prior Thursday. The basic writing prompt each week is: **What did you like best about the reading assignment? Your essay should focus on the reading assignment and one related work of art/artifact.** Details:

What should be in my presentation?

- Presentations are made up two things: the essay and a work of art/artifact.
- Students read their essays in front the class while intermittently engaging a projected work of art/artifact during teachback each Tuesday in class.
- This is followed by 1-2 questions from the teacher and/or classmates.
- Individual presentations take roughly 10 minutes.
- Professor creates a powerpoint presentation each week with images of works of art chosen by students.

What kind of contents should be in my essay?

- The essay should engage the reading assigned the past Tuesday by summarizing, paraphrasing, and making critical commentary.
- If the reading assignment included two or three essays, focus on only one of them.
- Tell your listeners and reader (Dr. Terranova) what you liked (and didn't like) about the reading assignment.
- Students may include only one quote no longer than three lines from the reading assignment.
- Your essay should include a work of art/artifact related to the reading.
- Do not use the first person or passive voice. Write objectively using the active voice.
    - Passive voice: "The lecture was given by Cynthia."
    - Active voice: "Cynthia gave the lecture."
- Model your writing after sophisticated journalism. I like *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, and *New York Review of Books*. My husband regularly reads the British Film Institute's *Sight and Sound*, a magazine devoted to film and film criticism. What journalism do you read regularly?
- Avoid hyperbole, or exaggeration.
- Essay grades are based on syntax, spelling, grammar, and contents.

How should I format my essay?

- Left-hand justified heading with name of student, course number, professor's name, date
- Double spaced
- 12 pt. font
- 500-550 words
- Include an image of the work of art/artifact in the document
- Your image should be accompanied by a caption that identifies the object by title, who made it (if known), and the year it was made.

What are some tips on how I should make my classroom presentation?

- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Brief silences are good. They are called "pregnant pauses." They help everyone breathe thoughtfully while thinking about the contents of your essay and the reading assignment.
- Engage the work of art/artifact you've chosen.
- Describing the work of art/artifact provides a good opportunity to engage the projected image before the class.
- Every so often, one should look up from the essay while they're reading in order to make eye contact with the audience.

Where do I find the assignment schedule so I know when to prepare and present?

- Students find the assignment schedule with individual names and dates at elearning.

What kind of object should I include with my essay?

- Choose something you like.
- The professor will help by providing examples beyond the reading if necessary.
- **Objects may span all media.**

When and where do I submit the image of my work of art/artifact each week?

- Submit an image of the work of art/artifact by 5 pm the Monday prior to the Tuesday of the presentation to a file at elearning.
- Your image file (tiff, jpg, or pdf) should be titled with your last name.
- Dr. Terranova arrives to each Tuesday class with a powerpoint presentation containing the images for each student presentation that day.
- Include a copy of the image also with the final version of your essay.

When and where do I submit my final essay?

- Students submit their final essay at midnight on the day of the presentation to elearning.

Final Exam [40%]:
The final exam is on December 7 and is cumulative. It requires students to choose four favorite works of art/artifacts from the class and, in four short hand-written essays, explain what each object is, why it is important to the history of new media art, and why they have chosen it. **Objects may span all media.** Essays should identify the objects by title, maker, and date. Students may bring printed images (without any other information other than the object itself) to be included with the exam, which is provided by the professor. Essay grades are based on syntax, spelling, grammar, and contents.

Schedule:

Tuesday August 22 Coding and Programming: Ada Lovelace and Lynn Hershman Leeson
- Course Introduction: Syllabus
- Screening of *Conceiving Ada* (1997) produced, written, and directed by Lynn Hershman Leeson

Thursday August 24 Coding and Programming: Ada Lovelace and Lynn Hershman Leeson
- Screening of *Conceiving Ada* (1997) (cont'd)
- Lecture
  - Ellen Moll, "A Network or a Line?: Gender, Technology, and Cyberfeminist Figurations of Time," *Rhizomes*, No. 26 (2014).

Tuesday August 29 Teachback
- Student Presentations

Thursday August 31 From Painting to the Daguerreotype
- Lecture
  - Sarah Kate Gillespie, "Mechanical Imitation," in *Samuel F. B. Morse's Gallery of the Louvre and the Art of Invention*, ed. Peter John Brownlee (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press/Terra Foundation for American Art, 2014) 100-110.

Tuesday September 5 Teachback
- Student Presentations

Thursday September 7 Photography and Plato's Cave
- Lecture
  - Susan Sontag, "In Plato's Cave," *On Photography* (New York: Picador, 2001) 3-26.

Tuesday-Thursday September 12-14 No Class

- Professor Terranova presenting "A Biological Bill of Rights: 20th-Century Organicism" at the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design in Budapest, Hungary

Tuesday September 19 Teachback
- Student Presentations

Thursday September 21 Chronophotography: Capturing Time and Movement in Images
- Lecture
  - Dimitrios Latsis, "Landscape in Motion: Muybridge and the Origins of Chronophotography," *Film History* Vol. 27, No. 3 (2015) 1-40.

Tuesday September 26 Teachback
- Student Presentations

Thursday September 28 László Moholy-Nagy, the Bauhaus, and 20th-Century New Media Art
- Lecture
  - Oliver Botar, László Moholy-Nagy's New Vision and the Aestheticization of Scientific Photography in Weimar Germany," *Science in Context*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (2004) 525-556.
  - Antonio Somaini, " 'The surface becomes a part of the atmosphere': Light as Medium in László Moholy-Nagy's Aesthetics of Dematerialization," *Screen* (London), Vol. 61, No. 2 (2020) 288-295.

Tuesday October 3 Teachback
- Student Presentations

Thursday October 5 New Tendencies, Op Art, and Gestalt Psychology
- Lecture
  - Margit Rosen, " 'They Have All Dreamt of the Machines – and Now the Machines Have Arrived': New Tendencies – Computers and Visual Research, Zagreb, 1968-1969," *Mainframe Experimentalism*, 90-111.

Tuesday October 10 Teachback
- Student Presentations

Thursday October 12 Thinking Machines: Invisible Technology in Novels and Conceptual Art
- Lecture
  - David Bellos, "Georges Perec's Thinking Machines," *Mainframe Experimentalism*, 38-50.

Tuesday October 17 Teachback
- Student Presentations

Thursday October 19 Fluxus and Computers
- Lecture
  - Hannah B. Higgins, "An Introduction to Alison Knowles's *The House of Dust*," *Mainframe Experimentalism*, 195-199.
  - Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "The Book of the Future: Alison Knowles's *The House of Dust*," *Mainframe Experimentalism*, 200-208.
  - Dick Higgins, "'Computers for the Arts' (May 1968)," *Mainframe Experimentalism*, 292-297.

Tuesday-Thursday October 24-26 No Class
- Professor Terranova conducting double panel on "Alien Organicisms" at the annual meeting of the Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts at Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ

Tuesday October 31 Teachback
- Student Presentations

Thursday November 2 Sisters with Transistors: Pioneers of Electronic Music
- Screening of *Sisters with Transistors* (2020) written and directed by Lisa Rovner

- o Trevor J. Pinch and Karin Bijsterveld, " 'Should One Applaud?": Breaches of Boundaries in the Reception of New Technology in Music," *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (July, 2003) 536-559.

Tuesday November 7 Teachback
- Student Presentations

Thursday November 9 Sound and Algorithms: Between Alvin Lucier and John Cage
- Lecture
  - o Christopher Cox, "The Alien Voice: Alvin Lucier's *North American Time Capsule 1967*," *Mainframe Experimentalism*, 170-186.
  - o Robert A. Moog, "An Introduction to North American Time Capsule 1967," *Mainframe Experimentalism*, 187-188.
  - o Alvin Lucier, "*North American Time Capsule 1967*," *Mainframe Experimentalism*, 189-194.

Tuesday November 14 Teachback
- Student Presentations

Thursday November 16 The Digital Image as Print and Performance: between the Stuttgart School and EAT
- Lecture
  - o Christopher Klütsch, "Information Aesthetics and the Stuttgart School," *Mainframe Experimentalism*, 65-89.
  - o Steven Duval, "Identity, Rhetoric, and Method in the Collaborations of Experiments in Art and Technology, the Artist Placement Group, and the Art and Technology Program at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art," in *Hybrid Practices: Art in Collaboration with Science and Technology in the Long 1960s*, eds. David Cateforis, et. al. (Los Angeles: UCLA Press, 2019) 45-60.

Tuesday-Thursday November 21-23 No Class - Fall Break

Tuesday November 28 Teachback
- Student Presentations

Thursday November 30 Immersive Environments, Distributed Networks, and Experimental Exhibitions
- Lecture
  - o Gloria Sutton, "Stan VanDerBeek's Poemfields: The Interstice of Cinema and Computing," *Mainframe Experimentalism*, 311-333.
  - o William Kaizen, "Computer Participator: Situating Nam June Paik's Work in Computing," *Mainframe Experimentalism*, 229-242.
  - o Edward A. Shanken, "In Forming *Software*: Software, Structuralism, Dematerialization," *Mainframe Experimentalism,* 51-65

Tuesday December 5 Teachback
- Student Presentations

Thursday December 7 Final Exam