

New Media 2.0 -- Why the Next Revolution Might Not be Webcast

There are times when I think that getting out of touch for a little while can be quite useful to get a sense of perspective. I feel that this is exactly what happened over the past 2-3 years, a period during which I did not create a lot of network-based projects. Upon returning to my work with networked art, I realized that some changes seemed to have occurred. Although I had seen the coming of artblogs and groups like Discordia, I now noticed an increased interest in the implications of XML, RSS, and news aggregators. I had understood the importance of nomadic devices quite some time ago, but moblogs, smart mobs, mobile phone art and locative media were not as prominent as they are now. Also, there now are more groups using networked performance applications to create dynamically programmable live interventions across multiple continents. (FurtherStudio and KeyWorx are examples of this.)

The next media revolution will not be webcast. Well, maybe part of it will be. But the other part of it will move across our aggregators, out onto Blackberries, into our phones, PDAs, and GameBoys, bleed into our ears, strap itself to our bodies, emerge into real space, converge with the traditional arts... you get the idea. New Media as a genre makes it clear that it will not stop its chimaeric development, and it seems to be entering yet another phase of being. Welcome to the next level. Play begins.

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What seems clear to me is that new media is in yet another phase of permutation. Once happening in installations, on the CD-ROM and then in the browser, new media as a genre is once again broadening. And this seems natural -- where there once were primarily the Usenet, World Wide Web, e-mail etc., there now seem to be even more channels opening through the continuing development of mobile technologies, networked performance, networked physical installations, peer-to-peer interventions (such as my recent download of a GNN news release as 'another' clip), data aggregation, and so on. This isn't meant to say that browser-based work is dead, but the cutting edge of new media has, by and large, gone beyond just the browser.

This extends the problems that artists had to face with regard to the problematic place that new media has traditionally occupied. New media pushed its boundaries into new technologies that posed challenges for traditional curators and historians; once the scholars arrive in the just established milieu, new media pushes out into a wholly new set of technologies. Perhaps two steps ahead of the institution just is the place of the Avant-Garde. Perhaps the process of documenting the new work on the Web and leaving a trail of bits to the new channels (with an operating manual and an invitation) is the right strategy to make people come join us and watch.

