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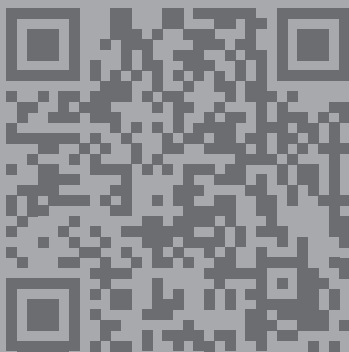
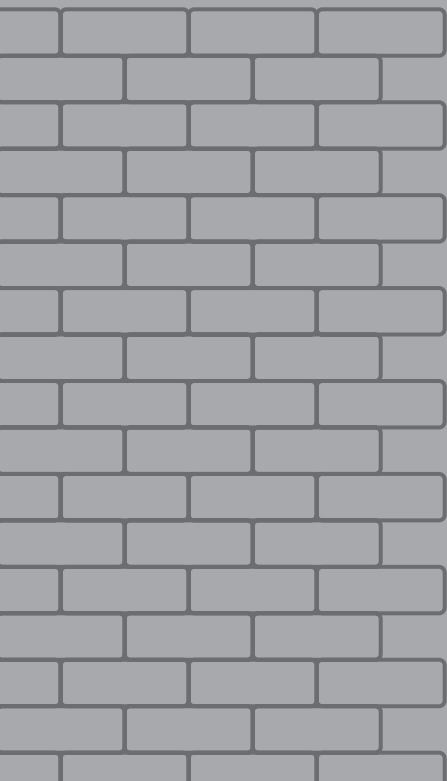**Sabancı Üniversitesi**
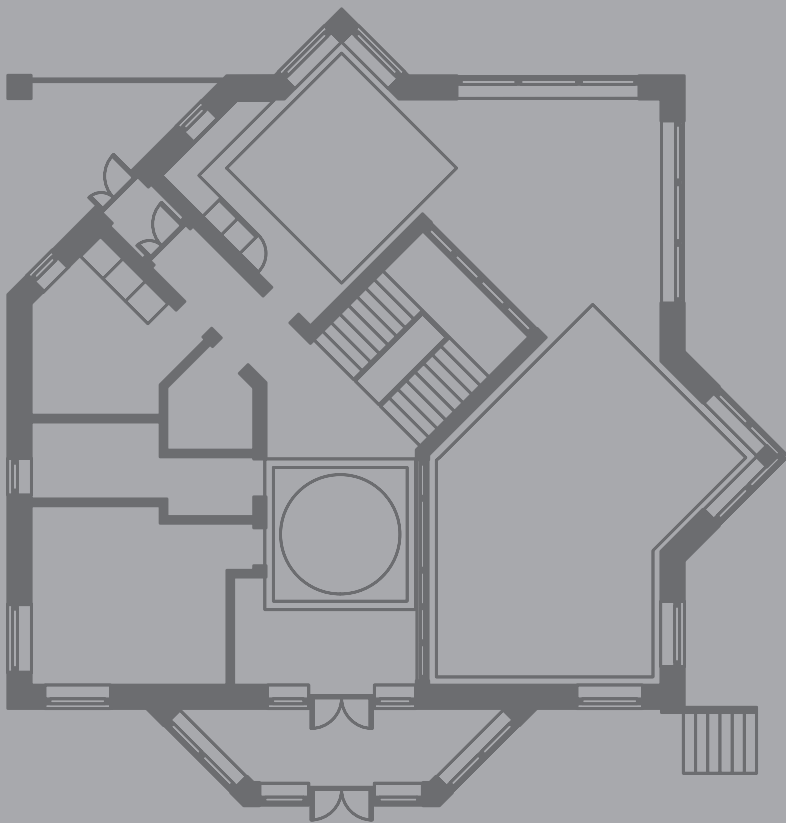
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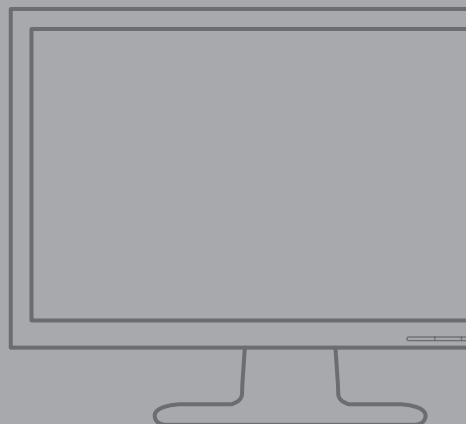LEONARDO ELECTRONIC ALMANAC

VOL 19 NO 2 VOLUME EDITORS **LANFRANCO ACETI** AND **RICHARD RINEHART**
EDITORS **ÖZDEN ŞAHİN**, **JONATHAN MUNRO** AND **CATHERINE M. WEIR**
This LEA publication has a simple goal: surveying the current trends in
augmented reality artistic interventions. There is no other substantive aca-
demic collection currently available, and it is with a certain pride that LEA
presents this volume which provides a snapshot of current trends as well as
a moment of reflection on the future of AR interventions.

NOT HERE

NOT THERE

Not Here Not There

VOLUME EDITORS
LANFRANCO ACETI AND RICHARD RINEHART

EDITORS
ÖZDEN ŞAHİN, JONATHAN MUNRO AND CATHERINE M. WEIR

Not Here, Not There: An Analysis Of An International Collaboration To Survey Augmented Reality Art

Every published volume has a reason, a history, a conceptual underpinning as well as an aim that ultimately the editor or editors wish to achieve. There is also something else in the creation of a volume; that is the larger goal shared by the community of authors, artists and critics that take part in it.

This volume of LEA titled *Not Here, Not There* had a simple goal: surveying the current trends in augmented reality artistic interventions. There is no other substantive academic collection currently available, and it is with a certain pride that both, Richard Rinehart and myself, look at this endeavor. Collecting papers and images, answers to interviews as well as images and artists' statements and putting it all together is perhaps a small milestone; nevertheless I believe that this will be a seminal collection which will showcase the trends and dangers that augmented reality as an art form faces in the second decade of the XXIst century.

As editor, I did not want to shy away from more critical essays and opinion pieces, in order to create a documentation that reflects the status of the current thinking. That these different tendencies may or may not be proved right in the future is not the reason for the collection, instead what I believe is important and relevant is to create a historical snapshot by focusing on the artists and authors developing artistic practices and writing on augmented reality. For this reason, Richard and I posed to the contributors a series of questions that in the variegated responses of the artists and authors will evidence and stress similari-

ties and differences, contradictions and behavioral approaches. The interviews add a further layer of documentation which, linked to the artists' statements, provides an overall understanding of the hopes for this new artistic playground or new media extension. What I personally wanted to give relevance to in this volume is the artistic creative process. I also wanted to evidence the challenges faced by the artists in creating artworks and attempting to develop new thinking and innovative aesthetic approaches.

The whole volume started from a conversation that I had with Tamiko Thiel – that was recorded in Istanbul at Kasa Gallery and that lead to a curatorial collaboration with Richard. The first exhibition *Not Here* at the Samek Art Gallery, curated by Richard Reinhart, was juxtaposed to a response from Kasa Gallery with the exhibition *Not There*, in Istanbul. The conversations between Richard and myself produced this final volume – *Not Here, Not There* – which we both envisaged as a collection of authored papers, artists' statements, artworks, documentation and answers to some of the questions that we had as curators. This is the reason why we kept the same questions for all of the interviews – in order to create the basis for a comparative analysis of different aesthetics, approaches and processes of the artists that work in augmented reality.

When creating the conceptual structures for this collection my main personal goal was to develop a link – or better to create the basis for a link – between ear-

lier artistic interventions in the 1960s and the current artistic interventions of artists that use augmented reality.

My historical artist of reference was Yayoi Kusama and the piece that she realized for the Venice Biennial in 1966 titled *Narcissus Garden*. The artwork was a happening and intervention at the Venice Biennial; Kusama was obliged to stop selling her work by the biennial's organizers for 'selling art too cheaply.'

"In 1966 [...] she went uninvited to the Venice Biennale. There, dressed in a golden kimono, she filled the lawn outside the Italian pavilion with 1,500 mirrored balls, which she offered for sale for 1,200 lire apiece. The authorities ordered her to stop, deeming it unacceptable to 'sell art like hot dogs or ice cream cones.'" [1]

The conceptualization and interpretation of this gesture by critics and art historians is that of a guerrilla action that challenged the commercialization of the art system and that involved the audience in a process that revealed the complicit nature and behaviors of the viewers as well as use controversy and publicity as an integral part of the artistic practice.

Kusama's artistic legacy can perhaps be resumed in these four aspects: a) engagement with audience's behaviors, b) issues of art economy and commercialization, c) rogue interventions in public spaces and d) publicity and notoriety.

These are four elements that characterize the work practices and artistic approaches – in a variety of combinations and levels of importance – of contem-

porary artists that use augmented reality as a medium. Here, is not perhaps the place to focus on the role of 'publicity' in art history and artistic practices, but a few words have to be spent in order to explain that publicity for AR artworks is not solely a way for the artist to gain notoriety, but an integral part of the artwork, which in order to come into existence and generate interactions and engagements with the public has to be communicated to the largest possible audience.

"By then, Kusama was widely assumed to be a publicity hound, who used performance mainly as a way of gaining media exposure." [2] The publicity obsession, or the accusation of being a 'publicity hound' could be easily moved to the contemporary group of artists that use augmented reality. Their invasions of spaces, juxtapositions, infringements could be defined as nothing more than publicity stunts that have little to do with art. These accusations would not be just irrelevant but biased – since – as in the case of Sander Veenhof's analysis in this collection – the linkage between the existence of the artwork as an invisible presence and its physical manifestation and engagement with the audience can only happen through knowledge, through the audience's awareness of the existence of the art piece itself that in order to achieve its impact as an artwork necessitates to be publicized.

Even if, I do not necessarily agree with the idea of a 'necessary manifestation' and audience's knowledge of the artwork – I believe that an artistic practice that is unknown is equally valid – I can nevertheless understand the process, function and relations that have to be established in order to develop a form of engagement and interaction between the AR artwork and the audience. To condemn the artists who seek publicity

in order to gather audiences to make the artworks come alive is perhaps a shortsighted approach that does not take into consideration the audience's necessity of knowing that interaction is possible in order for that interaction to take place.

What perhaps should be analyzed in different terms is the evolution of art in the second part of the XXth century, as an activity that is no longer and can no longer be rescinded from publicity, since audience engagement requires audience attendance and attendance can be obtained only through communication / publicity. The existence of the artwork – in particular of the successful AR artwork – is strictly measured in numbers: numbers of visitors, numbers of interviews, numbers of news items, numbers of talks, numbers of interactions, numbers of clicks, and, perhaps in a not too distant future, numbers of coins gained. The issue of being a 'publicity hound' is not a problem that applies to artists alone, from Andy Warhol to Damien Hirst from Banksy to Maurizio Cattelan, it is also a method of evaluation that affects art institutions and museums alike. The accusation moved to AR artists of being media whores – is perhaps contradictory when arriving from institutional art forms, as well as galleries and museums that have celebrated publicity as an element of the performative character of both artists and artworks and an essential element instrumental to the institutions' very survival.

The publicity stunts of the augmented reality interventions today are nothing more than an acquired methodology borrowed from the second part of the XXth century. This is a stable methodology that has already been widely implemented by public and private art institutions in order to promote themselves and their artists.

Publicity and community building have become an artistic methodology that AR artists are playing with by

making use of their better knowledge of the AR media. Nevertheless, this is knowledge born out of necessity and scarcity of means, and at times appears to be more effective than the institutional messages arriving from well-established art organizations. I should also add that publicity is functional in AR interventions to the construction of a community – a community of aficionados, similar to the community of 'nudists' that follows Spencer Tunic for his art events / human installation.

I think what is important to remember in the analysis of the effectiveness both in aesthetic and participatory terms of augmented reality artworks – is not their publicity element, not even their sheer numbers (which, by the way, are what has made these artworks successful) but their quality of disruption.

The ability to use – in Marshall McLuhan's terms – the medium as a message in order to impose content bypassing institutional control is the most exciting element of these artworks. It is certainly a victory that a group of artists – by using alternative methodological approaches to what are the structures of the capitalistic system, is able to enter into that very capitalistic system in order to become institutionalized and perhaps – in the near future – be able to make money in order to make art.

Much could be said about the artist's need of fitting within a capitalist system or the artist's moral obligation to reject the basic necessities to ensure an operational professional existence within contemporary capitalistic structures. This becomes, in my opinion, a question of personal ethics, artistic choices and existential social dramas. Let's not forget that the vast majority of artists – and AR artists in particular – do not have large sums and do not impinge upon national budgets as much as banks, financial institutions, militaries and corrupt politicians. They work for years

1. David Pilling, "The World According to Yayoi Kusama," *The Financial Times*, January 20, 2012, http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/52ab168a-4188-11e1-8c33-00144feab49a.html#axzz1kDck8rzm (accessed March 1, 2013).

2. Isabelle Loring Wallace and Jennie Hirsh, *Contemporary Art & Classical Myth* (Farnham; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 94.

with small salaries, holding multiple jobs and making personal sacrifices; and the vast majority of them does not end up with golden parachutes or golden hand-shakes upon retirement nor causes billions of damage to society.

The current success of augmented reality interventions is due in small part to the nature of the medium. Museums and galleries are always on the lookout for 'cheap' and efficient systems that deliver art engagement, numbers to satisfy the donors and the national institutions that support them, artworks that deliver visibility for the gallery and the museum, all of it without requiring large production budgets. Forgetting that art is also about business, that curating is also about managing money, it means to gloss over an important element – if not the major element – that an artist has to face in order to deliver a vision.

Augmented reality artworks bypass these financial challenges, like daguerreotypes did by delivering a cheaper form of portraiture than oil painting in the first part of the XIXth century, or like video did in the 1970s and like digital screens and projectors have done in the 1990s until now, offering cheaper systems to display moving as well as static images. AR in this sense has a further advantage from the point of view of the gallery – the gallery has no longer a need to purchase hardware because audiences bring their own hardware: their mobile phones.

The materiality of the medium, its technological revolutionary value, in the case of early augmented reality artworks plays a pivotal role in order to understand its success. It is ubiquitous, can be replicated everywhere in the world, can be installed with minimal hassle and can exist, independently from the audience, institutions and governmental permissions. Capital costs for AR installations are minimal, in the order of a few

hundred dollars, and they lend themselves to collaborations based on global networks.

Problems though remain for the continued success of augmented reality interventions. Future challenges are in the materialization of the artworks for sale, to name an important one. Unfortunately, unless the relationship between collectors and the 'object' collected changes in favor of immaterial objects, the problem to overcome for artists that use augmented reality intervention is how and in what modalities to link the AR installations with the process of production of an object to be sold.

Personally I believe that there are enough precedents that AR artists could refer to, from Christo to Marina Abramovich, in order develop methods and frameworks to present AR artworks as collectable and sellable material objects. The artists' ability to do so, to move beyond the fractures and barriers of institutional vs. revolutionary, retaining the edge of their aesthetics and artworks, is what will determine their future success.

These are the reasons why I believe that this collection of essays will prove to be a piece, perhaps a small piece, of future art history, and why in the end it was worth the effort.

Lanfranco Aceti
Editor in Chief, Leonardo Electronic Almanac
Director, Kasa Gallery

Site, Non-site, and Website

In the 1960's, artist Robert Smithson articulated the strategy of representation summarized by "site vs. non-site" whereby certain artworks were simultaneously abstract and representational and could be site-specific without being sited. A pile of rocks in a gallery is an "abstract" way to represent their site of origin. In the 1990's net.art re-de-materialized the art object and found new ways to suspend the artwork online between website and non-site. In the 21st century, new technologies suggest a reconsideration of the relationship between the virtual and the real. "Hardlinks" such as QR codes attempt to bind a virtual link to our physical environment.

Throughout the 1970's, institutional critique brought political awareness and social intervention to the site of the museum. In the 1980's and 90's, street artist such as Banksy went in the opposite direction, critiquing the museum by siting their art beyond its walls.

Sited art and intervention art meet in the art of the trespass. What is our current relationship to the sites we live in? What representational strategies are contemporary artists using to engage sites? How are sites politically activated? And how are new media framing our consideration of these questions? The contemporary art collective ManifestAR offers one answer,

"Whereas the public square was once the quintessential place to air grievances, display solidarity, express difference, celebrate similarity, remember, mourn, and reinforce shared values of right and wrong, it is no longer the only anchor for interactions in the public realm. That geography has been relocated to a novel terrain, one that encourages exploration of mobile location based monuments,

and virtual memorials. Moreover, public space is now truly open, as artworks can be placed anywhere in the world, without prior permission from government or private authorities – with profound implications for art in the public sphere and the discourse that surrounds it."

ManifestAR develops projects using Augmented Reality (AR), a new technology that – like photography before it – allows artists to consider questions like those above in new ways. Unlike Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality is the art of overlaying virtual content on top of physical reality. Using AR apps on smart phones, iPads, and other devices, viewers look at the real world around them through their phone's camera lens, while the app inserts additional images or 3D objects into the scene. For instance, in the work *Signs over Semiconductors* by Will Pappenheimer, a blue sky above a Silicon Valley company that is "in reality" empty contains messages from viewers in skywriting smoke when viewed through an AR-enabled Smartphone.

AR is being used to activate sites ranging from Occupy Wall Street to the art exhibition ManifestAR @ ZERO1 Biennial 2012 – presented by the Samek Art Gallery simultaneously at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, PA and at Silicon Valley in San Jose, CA. From these contemporary non-sites, and through the papers included in this special issue of LEA, artists ask you to reconsider the implications of the simple question *wayn* (where are you now?)

Richard Rinehart
Director, Samek Art Gallery, Bucknell University

Leonardo Electronic Almanac
Volume 19 Issue 2

A. J. PATRICK LISZKIEWICZ

interviewed by
Lanfranco Aceti & Richard Rinehart

Is there an 'outside' of the Art World from which to launch critiques and interventions? If so, what is the border that defines outside from inside? If it is not possible to define a border, then what constitutes an intervention and is it possible to be and act as an outsider of the art world? Or are there only different positions within the Art World and a series of positions to take that fulfill ideological parameters and promotional marketing and branding techniques to access the fine art world from an oppositional, and at times confrontational, standpoint?

I'd argue that all such borders are defined in relation to our bodies, which is to say that they are subjective and permeable to the extent allowed by our bodies. If this is the case, then interventions do not require that our bodies assume exterior, objective positions to the "Art World," nor to any other space. They merely require that we acknowledge our own embodiment, and our own limitations, in and through our actions.

"In *The Truth in Painting*, Derrida describes the *parergon* (*par-*, around; *ergon*, the work), the boundaries or limits of a work of art. Philosophers from Plato to Hegel, Kant, Husserl, and Heidegger debated the limits of the intrinsic and extrinsic, the inside and outside of the art object." (Anne Friedberg, *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 13.) Where then is the inside and outside of the virtual artwork? Is the artist's 'hand' still inside the artistic process in the production of virtual art or has it become an irrelevant concept abandoned outside the creative process of virtual artworks?

Virtual artworks exist only as temporary processes and events enacted through a complex of agencies, human and otherwise. One might say the same of any artwork. While artworks rely upon objects and things, they "exist" as artworks only in relation to hu-

man agents. Virtual interactions still correspond to the movement of mice, and the clicking of buttons, so the artist's "hand" is still inside the process, but in the same way it always was. The artist's hand serves, as all hands do, to grab and wave and gesture at things.

Virtual interventions appear to be the contemporary inheritance of Fluxus' artistic practices. Artists like Peter Weibel, Yayoi Kusama and Valie Export subverted traditional concepts of space and media through artistic interventions. What are the sources of inspiration and who are the artistic predecessors that you draw from for the conceptual and aesthetic frameworks of contemporary augmented reality interventions?

My debts as an artist are too numerous to list, but I'd certainly count Fluxus among the artists I've found inspiring and instructive. I'm also profoundly indebted to many remarkable teachers: Marilyn DeLaure, Anne Rubenstein, and Bruce Smith at Allegheny College; the late Carey McWilliams at Rutgers; Josephine Anstey, Sarah Bay-Cheng, and Mike Basinski at SUNY Buffalo; and now people like Tara McPherson, Steve Anderson, Holly Willis, Aniko Imre, Richard Lemarchand, Peter Brinson, Jeremy Gibson, and Craig Dietrich at USC. I've been very lucky as a student, with the important caveat that I wish I'd had the chance to know Anne Friedberg. She's deeply missed by many of my teachers and colleagues here at iMAP.

In the representation and presentation of your artworks as being 'outside of' and 'extrinsic to' contemporary aesthetics why is it important that your projects are identified as Art?

Frankly, it's not important to me that my projects be identified as "Art." I just hope that some people enjoy my work and find it useful.

What has most surprised you about your recent artworks? What has occurred in your work that was outside of your intent, yet has since become an intrinsic part of the work?

My work continually surprises me because it's largely driven by play. In fact, every time I try to create work that isn't driven by surprise, I completely and utterly fail. This is especially true when I write. I've had to accept that I'm the kind of person who needs to discover my work as I make it, and I wouldn't have it any other way. ∎
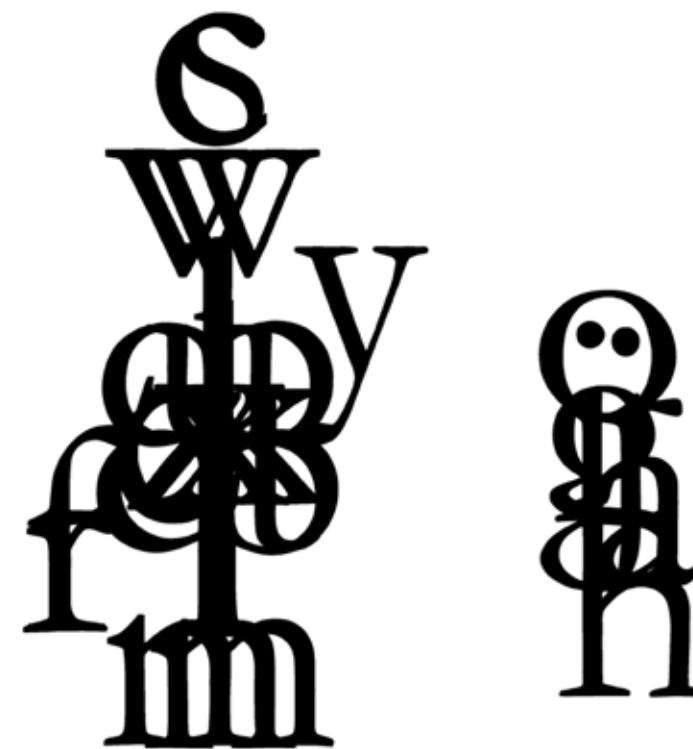
A. J. PATRICK LISZKIEWICZ

statement & artwork

People make sense of the world through play. For Johan Huizinga, this was the defining characteristic of the human species.

For me, this is a call to create playful work that invites users to re-examine and change their surroundings. In my work, I try to find spaces to intervene in traditional narrative and rhetorical processes. I see interaction and play as a way through the postmodern moment, toward a future created by remixing, rewriting, and replaying the present.

In my intermedia collection, AFEELD (http://afeeld. com), I use invented forms to bridge the gap between poetry and video games in an effort to reveal that play is a *poetics*, a practice of making meaning. The static concrete poems in the first section, ALPHABET MAN, suggest that our languages and our bodies are the inseparable materials we use to construct our worlds. I carry this suggestion into the third section, COUNT AS ONE, a collection of constrained compositional spaces inspired by the work of Alain Badiou. Users must compose these pieces in order to read them, by click-ing the play space to stamp linguistic patterns, and this allows users to gesturally move past revealing my meaning and toward authoring their own. In the fourth section, the concrete game *M!ndsweeper* remixes the

Untitled (from ALPHABET MAN), 2010, A. J. Patrick Liszkiewicz.
Static concrete poem. © A. J. Patrick Liszkiewicz, 2010.
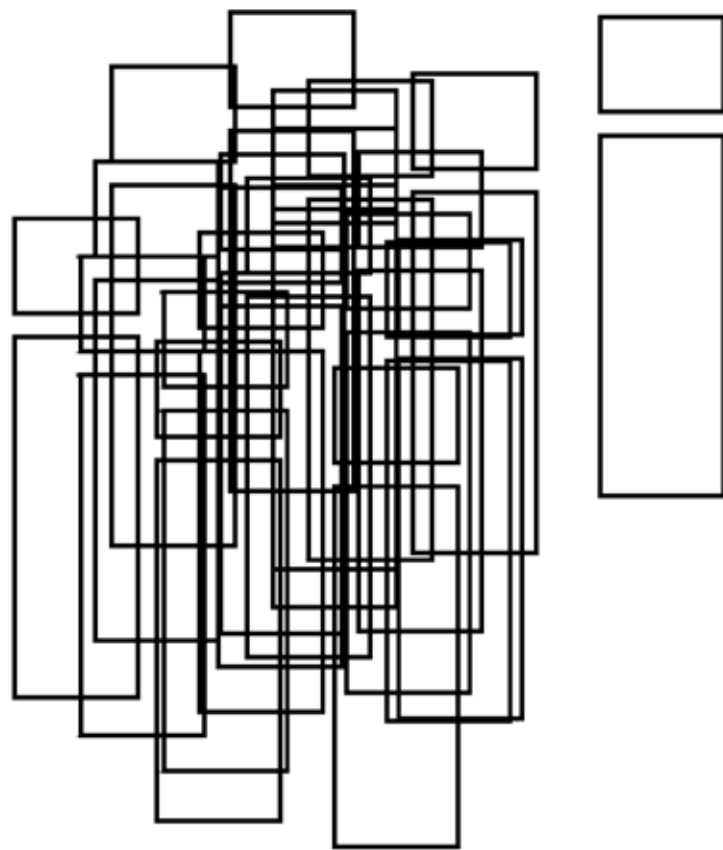
Untitled (output from COUNT AS ONE), 2010, A. J. Patrick Liszkiewicz.
Static concrete poem created using interactive concrete poem.
© A. J. Patrick Liszkiewicz, 2010.

Bullet Hell, 2012, A. J. Patrick Liszkiewicz and Anton Hand.
Still from video game. © A. J. Patrick Liszkiewicz and
Anton Hand, 2012.

classic PC game *Minesweeper*, replacing the informational numbers with groups of consonants that change after each round of play. To play this game is to engage in a kind of purposeful forgetting in the tense space between competing acts of signification.

This space of purposeful forgetting, of tension and competition, is the space of human play. As the title poem in AFEELD suggests, we cannot understand a space until we insert ourselves into it, but this act inevitably transforms the space into human context. Much of my work is an effort to playfully reveal and comment upon this transformation. In this effort, I am often joined by Anton Hand, Luke Noonan, and Lucas Miller, my collaborators at RUST LTD. (http://rustltd. com).

RUST LTD. is an indie game studio and media art collective dedicated to foregrounding the impact of humans on the world. We design games around common video game tropes--such as control, victory, and violence--and problematize these tropes through gameplay. In *Bullet Hell* (2012), for example, the user is asked to help a bullet avoid striking its target. In *The Hold* (2012–13), users must maintain control and shift perspective as they try to escape an absurd, Escher-like spaceship. RUST LTD. creates a variety of games, but our work often leads us into other virtual spaces. In *Minecraft Memorials* (2011–12), the members of RUST LTD. install memorials to real-life coal mining accidents on multiplayer *Minecraft* servers. These performative installations are designed to recontextualize *Minecraft* and other virtual worlds as dependent upon real hu-

man labor, as well as coal and other non-renewable resources.

Lately, we have begun intervening inside web browsers and extending their functionality, in an effort to playfully reframe the browser window as a critical and artistic vantage point. If users install The *Lt. John Pike Memorial Browser Extension* (2012), former UC Davis police officer John Pike will occasionally walk across their browser windows and casually pepper-spray eve-

rything in sight. Though this occurrence will be very infrequent, it will remind users that browser windows and other virtual spaces exist to allow them to see and better understand the world. We can make sense of the world through playing together in these spaces, even if our vision is blurred, even when the world stops making sense. This belief guides my work, and the work of my collaborators at RUST LTD. ■

The Hold, 2012, RUST LTD. Still from video game. © RUST LTD, 2012.

Minecraft Memorials (USC installation), 2011, RUST LTD. Still from virtual intervention. © RUST LTD, 2012.

The Lt. John Pike Memorial Browser Extension, 2012, A. J. Patrick Liszkiewicz and Lucas Miller. Still from virtual intervention. © A. J. Patrick Liszkiewicz and Lucas Miller, 2012.

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