

The Highlights - Blind Carbon Copy

'Blind Carbon Copy' is a reflection of modes of communication, primarily email and thus is self-reflexive in its format: written in collaboration, remotely, in real time on an unknown server.

To: "The Highlights"?

From: "Steven Cairns"; "Isla Leaver-Yap"

Subject: Blind Carbon Copy?

Date: 20:06, 02/02/2009?

Body: Email. HTML rich. Information. Language stripped and reconfigured to fulfill the need of instant representation.

What does it mean for an artist to exist on the threshold of technological infinitude - an area ungoverned by time zones and excessive charges? Here we are. Cheap(er) European and Transatlantic flights mean greater mobility for those that can afford it. What's on in Dubai? Cape Town? The post-historical branding of isms and periods looks like it might be on the way out, or maybe we are just waiting for it to come back in. And writing an article with a 473-mile back-and-forth between two co-authors is possible, so, here we are...?

Let's not pretend that this is a form of dialogue or communication. Email never is. It is a sequence of individual arguments, information projected back forth, between the clouds - a mere speck of a consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts. This is not particularly fast communication-not faster than, say, a phone call. Maybe this is an aestheticised idea of what communication can be, where this content is allowed and the content fits the format. It transcends the physicality of postal delivery. Copy this to server.?

One of the most misleading representational techniques in our language is the use of the word 'I', and yet it is at the centre of our communication. iPhone. iWork. iPlay. A working revolution between client and provider. With information technology though, what exactly is the client buying, and what are the parameters of provision??

Information used to exist hierarchically or in a pyramadic model of dissemination. People learned something because they learned something and learned something from somewhere else-a trickle down. Maybe that's not so different from how it is now (...click, click, click page history). The digital evolution of information never became the euphoric utopia that it was meant to be, nor is it simply dystopic. Not yet, anyway. It just evolved from computer-mediation, and that mediation went viral. The informational pyramid still exists, but it is inverted, rotating, and with the user at every summit and embedded in each brick.

Hell, the user is the brick - it is all you see. Many forms of dissemination have also become pedagogical, a slanting mesh of interconnections. But primarily, information is there for artists to access: who's with which dealer now, who's doing what and what it looks like. This user-oriented information model has inspired a renaissance in 're-looking' at seminal artists' work, integral, intellectual anchors for a generation of artists adrift in a sea of information. New media loses its sheen if you can't keep up with it. Yesterday's news is cached online. A bad ten-year-old moment refluxes again. Career-ruining stuff. But think of all that access. All that technology. It permits n-e-w forms, reinvestigates old ones, and submerges others.?

Somewhere between the new, old and forgotten, it's interesting to think that a decade ago Nicolas Bourriaud wrote *Relational Aesthetics*. You could only read it in French then, until 2002, when they printed an English version. That's what we mean by hierarchical - it was challenging. You were reading a complex text about artists whose practice and context had been written about as if it were the present, which has now past. You were on the tail end of the argument, yet endowed with hindsight. Now as its currency recedes even further, *Relational Aesthetics* seems a bit less clever and a lot more criticised. Back then, it was hard-to-find (if you were one of those on the fringes), and now it's an art student cliché.

?Bourriaud is speaking now in instant communication. In London tonight, we await the opening of the Tate Triennial. He's looking at this a bit differently. He reflects on the commodification of information, its accessibility and dismissability - not purely in a monetary sense, but in an intellectual one as well. His curation of the Triennial engages with what he identifies as a new modernity, something global. It's a tough pill to swallow. He has rebranded post-post-modern "Altermodern" - his term (and book) for his theory on a globalised art world. A tricky subject, when you would probably have a tough time getting a definition of "Modern," "Modernity" and "Modernism" along with all the "pre-'s" and "post-'s" out of most people. But beyond the list of Triennial artists, can an individual's practice ever work outside the alternate??



While we write this email, we already know how the message of the modern has slipped between the in-line text and how the alternatives are customised by the user's own engagement. The "modern," so at flux even now, explodes into a constellation of myths where one modernism is replaced by another. How this alternative is rendered, how the hidden ?I' is the thing lurking at the centre of this "Alter" thought, remains to be seen. However, the debate has been highlighted. So what does this mean for the artist, where do they go, what do they do, when and who with? It all seems new, but are we really dealing with old ideas in a time-consuming way? One thing is for sure, we aren't Transhuman quite yet. Transatlantic, maybe.