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# REAL ART ISN'T

An Eisegesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

of

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Actionaut



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## DEDICATION

For now, the future.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
1. REAL ART ISN'T	
Introduction.....	1
Actionaut's Quest .....	6
Actionaut's MFA Artworks .....	11
Exegeisthia.....	16
Ethos .....	16
Concluding Remarks.....	17
Links to Documentation.....	17
2. MAJOR ARTWORKS.....	19
Skyping Buddhas .....	19
Creative Soup Kitchens.....	25
JoyGeo.....	31
CITATIONS.....	43

"Contextual Art is a pure sign, cleansed of stereotypes; a sign which is filled by the present reality. For the act of drinking a glass of water to become art, it has to be performed in the right place, at the right time, and in the right company." ~Jan Świdziński, 1974

"The most obvious, ubiquitous, important realities are often the ones that are the hardest to see and talk about." ~Commencement Speech by David Foster Wallace, 2005

## ***Introduction***

Conceptual art is a vehicle for transformative entrepreneurial praxis. The theme of humans as wayfarers has always seemed to find rich expression throughout the creative arts. Indeed, the pilgrimage and the voyage suggest to me a romantic beauty not unlike the journey towards enlightenment and the long struggle to learn the hidden nature of what lies within us and beyond. In the words of the great *haiku* poet, Matsuo Bashō (1644-94): "The days and months are the travellers of eternity and so are the passing years. Those who steer boats across the sea or drive horses over the earth till the end of their days make their home wherever their travels take them. Many men of old have died on the road, and I too for long have been stirred by the wind that blows the clouds and filled with a ceaseless desire to wander."

Our present context is a globally networked reality -- we might substitute steering boats and driving horses with surfing the web and walking around cities with smartphones. Travel is what networking is all about -- connecting, communicating information, participating in collective experiences, exchanging with others. Compare a computer and a car and you'll find that both get you from one place to another and both are used by millions of people who haven't the slightest idea how these vehicles actually work, how to drive them properly, or steer them successfully from one place to another. For this reason and countless others Nam June Paik in 1974 famously called the Internet the information superhighway. Paik was perhaps the World's first great hacker-artist, and his creative works humanized new media technologies by orchestrating their situation in quirky, compelling, and Zen-like ways.

What Paik, Roy Ascott, Joseph Campbell, Marshall McLuhan, Ray Kurzweil, Steve Jobs, myself and countless others are onto is that technology is intimately related to man's great quest for meaning, and is therefore intimately related to the psychology of enlightenment and our destiny among *manifest existence*. Simply put, people don't build boats because they love boats, but because they long to travel across the sea. Building a boat is designing for the journey, and for me, journeys are about enlightenment -- a way to close the great distances that separate us from each other and from ourselves. What matters is not the particular vessel, but the crossing of the

vast ocean –along with traveling companions, new discoveries, and potential ways to make an impact upon the universe. We are the making of a thing.

We boat builders are compelled onward not because we know what lies beyond the far shores, but rather, it is precisely because we *don't know* that we keep searching and striving. We are all wayfarers in that most of us can travel on our own two feet, but a unique aspect of our *humanness* is our ability to augment our wayfaring abilities through technological ingenuity, our imaginative thinking and our opposable thumbs. As boats are built, tribes are formed and captains step up to organize and lead the tribe. To organize a boat-building venture is an entrepreneurial enterprise, an artistic enterprise not only in terms of designing the boat itself, but perhaps more importantly, in terms of designing the venture, developing the crew, and moving in one direction or another. Captains are the true boat builders, the artisans of creative human swarming. Theirs encompasses an artisanal praxis, an entrepreneurial praxis, a social praxis, and indeed, a spiritual praxis. To embark on the journeys of our existence requires from us certain levels of self-discipline, leadership, vision, and compassion, and these attributes require courage and belief.

Each person's spiritual journey will be different, and most of the pre-packaged narratives that contemporary society feeds to us should be treated with great trepidation, as shackles to cast off and habits to kick -- for there are certainly metanarratives – calcified ideologies -- operating in our lives which conceal behind their rhetoric the mandate to dominate and oppress us; and we should be ever questioning these ideologies regardless of their source or whence they have been propagated; and by "we," I believe culture to be a sentient super-organism and human creativity as the emancipating force that drives this *sentient culture*. *We are sentient culture*. Artists and art in general have a long tradition as the (re-)gentrifying catalysts of our human civilizations, and were it not for human creativity, we would be naked to fight against the oppressive organizations and cabals who seek to reign in such free expression. Even when commandeered for abusive means art serves as an emancipatory force. For example, "Leni" Riefenstahl's Nazi films served not only to spread the evil propaganda of the Third Reich, but also served to inspire the artworks of later filmmakers who used similar techniques to spread more joyful and uplifting messages.

My work explores *manifest existence through integral theory*. It's the broadest frame I can imagine, and truthfully, it's the broadest frame I *can't* imagine which is how I know I've chosen wisely. Reality is about interpretation after all.

As a former journalist I understand intimately the relationship between framing and interpretation. I am indebted to the ideas of Walter Lippmann, American philosopher-journalist extraordinaire of the 20th century who noted that we make judgments about reality by creating "pictures in our heads," outright simplifications of the nuanced complexities of the real world,

often shaped by external forces that provide us narratives and visions already pre-packaged and pre-interpreted. We then may easily lose sight of the fact that these are just interpretations and believe that we are understanding reality “as it is,” certain we have the facts correct, and that our judgments are lucid and free of ideological dogmas.

My specific artistic emphasis involves producing cultural software that seeks to expand consciousness and exist as anti-ideological ideology. If artists are to help produce the pictures in our heads, let me produce joy instead of fear, let me reject the false sufferings of ignorance and in their place sow the seeds of compassion and self-discovery. These are key teachings of transpersonal art theory that I set out to research within this MFA. As Hegel put it, Spirit is not One apart from Many, but the process by which the One expresses itself through the Many.<sup>1</sup> Spirit is infinite creative activity in the process of creation; Spirit is plasma – a current of infinite cosmic communication.

Guy Debord and the International Situationists Movement also indicated that it is through the manipulation and control of the pictures in our heads that we delude ourselves into false certainty. They suggested a hidden language of the collective unconscious – a language made of spectacles. In the words of Lippmann, “For the real environment is altogether too big, too complex and too fleeting for direct acquaintance. We are not equipped to deal with so much subtlety, so much variety, so many permutations and combinations. And although we have to act in that environment, we have to reconstruct it on a simpler model before we can manage it.”<sup>2</sup>

Technology is the activity by which humanity models the environment, and is one of the many currents running through my interdisciplinary creative outputs. The emerging globally networked world is no longer demarcated based on physical attributes alone, but is increasingly inscribed through what I might call *cultural software*, which is demarcated through psychogeographic augmentation; like fractalized consciousness emerging – an apt metaphor for this might be the rhizomic and symbiotic emergence of mycorrhizae fungal systems in ecological science, a theory I’ll expand upon later when commenting on my JoyGeo project. The point here is that all forms of travel, whether boat or computer, are ultimately concerned with extending our consciousness and expanding our realities, and although technology is the means by which we engage in this process, it is actually a much more deeply rooted natural process that is not unique to the human species.

The *now* is a peer-to-peer networked culture. We are all riding on a disruptive yet transformational digital wave cascading the shores of a copy/paste World where mash-ups make memes and memes make meaning. A World where there is newly empowered the capacity for a globalized and sentient movement towards a universal federation unfettered by traditional boundaries and geographic limits – the capacity for the collective unconscious to awaken and become conscious is now within our grasp. Earth as we know

it is being transformed into a gigantic brain operating at cosmic scale, and we are all playing out this fate whether we choose to become conscious of it or not.

As I've meditated on my practice throughout this MFA, I've realized that what I have been most interested in ever since I was quite young is organizing people — catalyzing and then growing tribes. In his influential 1964 book *Understanding Media*, Marshall McLuhan described how the rise of electronic media extends as a global nervous system of humanity, and as visual culture proliferates, he predicted that we would plunge once more into the world of myth. He prophesized back in the 1960s that the West's technological media would “re-tribalize” our cultural evolution and create a “global village.” He says,

*These new media of ours ... have made our world into a single unit....the world is now like a continually sounding tribal drum, where everybody gets the message.... all the time....new media point us away from individual man, and towards tribal man.*<sup>3</sup>

This tribal tendency has been espoused recently by the pop-marketing-guru Seth Godin who's 2009 TED talk on the subject of 'digital tribes' has been viewed over one-million times as of this writing.<sup>4</sup>

Through socio-technological assemblages, my penchant is to create and inspire tribes — collectives of activated consciousness; and what are ships if not vehicles by which tribes might discover the great beyond? What is this tribal-social art praxis if not an entrepreneurial praxis? Through art, I seek to catalyze and nurture communities, to activate collective awareness —all of this theoria situates my creative practice.

Vehicles of human progress come in manifold forms, but the consciousness they serve remains constant, as does the vast ocean of the unknown. Cyberspace, geo-location, augmented reality, real-time telematic omniscience — these are all new human territories, and with any new territory, issues naturally arise concerning politics, ownership, agency, power, surveillance, security, privacy, negotiation and ultimately, conflict and compromise -- from the highest levels to the lowest intricacies of phenomena. New territories equally bring about new spiritual trade routes and cultural marketplaces. I seek to imbue these new territories with meaning, to absorb *what is* and transform it into *what could be*.

Any new media technology opens up new cultural marketplaces, and these represent the great synapses of our meta-species -- the sacred places deserving not only of the artist's purifying and critical gaze, but in need of the artist's transforming vision and innovative taste. Artists are the entrepreneurs who create and cultivate these cultural marketplaces and imbue them with meaning, making them navigable for the rest of humanity. Art *is* cultural software, and the hardware upon which it operates might be found in that great arena of praxis — the marketplace of divine actions where multiple

realities co-exist in beautiful flux, and ultimately, in the pictures in our heads. Mythologist Joseph Campbell said, “Every sacred place is where Eternity shines through Time.”<sup>5</sup>

I certainly believe in the collective unconscious as espoused by Campbell, Jung, and through the transcendentalists back to Kant. The collective unconscious is what Guattari and Deleuze would call rhizomatic, and I certainly believe in this kind of ecophilosophical thinking and indeed I studied ecology and environmental ethics at the Eugene P. Odum School of Ecology at the University of Georgia, and ecological scholarship has had a profound impact on my learning and development. Most important: when I was very young my mother gave me a large volume of Aesop’s Fables and we would read them together every night before bedtime. There, in the moonlight dreamscapes of long-ago yarns, I first caught a glimpse – a taste -- of the Eternal, and I found it in stories – in myth.

The reconstruction of reality is what narrative is all about, it’s what spectacle is all about, it’s what media technology is all about. It’s the stories we tell ourselves, not just the pictures in our heads, but the voices too. Instead of steering ships and driving horses, we’re talking about steering spaceships and teleportation. We stand at the precipice of biological enhancement, cyborgs, and the rise of the transhuman – a time when likely many of the pictures and voices in our heads will be implanted with a microchip or sent wirelessly from a satellite in orbit.

With new vehicles, travel becomes easier as do liberation and emancipation. We can transcend the pre-packaged narratives of Lippmann’s time and continue to liberate the all-important act of interpretation, but these are delicate moments. McLuhan’s extensions of man are now in the process of expanding upon themselves and scaffolding upon themselves at an exponential rate, and the extensions are coalescing within our bodies and minds like the rendering of some great hologram.

I would argue that we are increasingly equipped to deal with the many permutations and combinations operating in our lives. Lippmann told us that we needed to reduce complexity by reconstructing it in more manageable forms, and the Internet, mobile computing, and algorithmic data intelligence are representative of such forms. We are evolving into a global hive mind, and as a mind evolves, so to does the life form it supports. We are moving towards the chrysalis state of spaceship Earth.

Modeling and reconstructing the world is not just about transformative technologies, however. Critically, the stories we tell ourselves – the voices in our heads – can and should seek to be empowering as through imagination and action our ideas become realities. Therefore it is not just the stories we tell ourselves that matter, but the actions that we take that make all the difference. Actions become stories, stories make legends, legends make dreams, and dreams inspire actions. This moment in historical time is an age of unheralded praxis – of organization, communication, and swarm

intelligence – of networking, of collective action, and collective mythmaking. Whereas Lippmann’s time was one of framing humanity as the storytellers of our own reality, our time is one of framing ourselves as the actors who play out those realities; thus, I would argue that the modern world needs artists to play the role of creative super-heroes.

For these reasons and more, “Actionaut” was born. Actionaut is my super-hero alter-ego – simultaneously the writer and actor of my own storyworld. Actionaut is a personification of the infinite as expressed through my lens – he is the creative actor in my head hell-bent on transforming the outside world. I attribute this document, along with my MFA thesis, to Actionaut. So said Nickola Tesla, “Let the future tell the truth, and evaluate each one according to his work and accomplishments. The present is theirs; the future, for which I have really worked, is mine.”<sup>6</sup> This is Actionaut’s story.

### ***Actionaut’s Quest***

There are multiple ways of knowing just as there are multiple maps charting multiple paths amidst multiple realities. Aristotle explicated three basic activities of human endeavor: *theoria*, *poiesis* and *praxis*. Correspondingly he posited three types of knowledge: theoretical, to which the end goal was truth; poetical, to which the end goal was production; and practical, to which the end goal was action. Critically, I have engaged fully in all of these activities during my MFA experience. I explored much *theoria* by reading and experiencing creative and philosophical works of others both ancient and modern. Through the abstract work of *poiesis* I mused not solely by writing a lot (this exegesis was originally over 100,000 words), but also through productive meditation and imagination experiments. Most importantly, it is through *poiesis* that I cultivated my practice and *praxis*. My projects are the outgrowth of synthesizing and orchestrating these multiple ways of knowing towards themes of empowerment and transformation.



Paulo Freire defines praxis in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it." Through praxis, oppressed people can acquire a critical awareness of their own condition, and, with their allies, struggle for liberation.<sup>7</sup>

In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt argues that modern philosophy should be activating us.<sup>8</sup> Arendt calls "praxis" the highest and most important level of the active life.<sup>9</sup> Thus, she argues that more philosophers need to engage in everyday political action or praxis, which she sees as the true realization of human freedom. According to Arendt, our capacity to analyze ideas, wrestle with them, and engage in active praxis is what makes us uniquely human, and it's been said that "Arendt's theory of action and her revival of the ancient notion of praxis represent one of the most original contributions to twentieth century political thought -- viewing 'action' as a mode of human togetherness."<sup>10 11</sup>

To be clear about my own philosophy of art praxis, I believe that art praxis is that which gives form to art praxis – a banal platitude perhaps, but one that reminds us that it is our questing to find, create, and to define art that is itself what makes instances of art in our everyday world possible in the first place. Art is the expression of life, and so praxis, in my view, involves more intentional *living*. It was the Fluxus artist Robert Filliou who quipped that, "art is what makes life more interesting than art."<sup>12</sup>



I began my MFA studies with an interest in transpersonal experience(s) and participatory real-time art, and my further research has led me towards more transformational approaches to art-scholarship. I pursued the transpersonal by researching hundreds of books and films in the last year in an exhaustive quest to quench my curiosity and synthesize the complex intuitions that I have always recognized but struggled to discern. I am most intrigued by post-disciplinary and anti-disciplinary approaches that exist as anthropological explorations of historical theosophy as it relates to art and aesthetics.

Throughout my MFA course I researched works of Spinoza, Nietzsche, Thoreau, Darwin, Jung, Campbell, Kant, DeBord, Arendt, Kierkegaard, Habermas, Adorno, and Deleuze and I took many detours along the way, most notably into the holistic and critical historical accounts of the key art movements that seemed relevant to my practice.

It became particularly important to research the trajectory of real-time participatory art from the Futurists into Dada, Situationism, Fluxus, Happenings, Net.art and the later “relational aesthetics” movements. Among many artists that I encountered, I felt most affinity with the works of both John Cage and Joseph Beuys as well as the more contemporary work of Mariko Mori and the Yes Men collective.

During my research I also fed my interest in mythology and created for myself what amounted to a short course in modern cinema. The work of Fritz Lang, the Italian neo-realists, and Robert Bresson proved especially influential. I also completed several online courses, including a course on Justice offered by Harvard and taught by American political philosopher Michael Sandel, and also a course on Game Theory— both of these voluntary efforts were rigorous and rewarding and their influence on my MFA work was considerable.

The most influential readings for my purposes included those of the French philosopher Paul Ricœur and his phenomenological approach to hermeneutics, writings on systemic art by Jack Burnham, the kinetic writing of the spiritual warrior Sri Aurobindo, the Akashic quantum consciousness of Ervin László, and perhaps most notably, the “father of Integral Theory,” contemporary American philosopher Ken Wilber.

What I realized somewhere along the way is that what I was seeking were the keys to these mapmakers’ Akashic maps. Although the Akashic records is an ancient Eastern construct, I consider it to be similar to Jung’s collective unconscious. I’ve concluded that scholarship is grossly lacking in confirmation bias. Indeed, I’ve concluded the correction to many of the problems of (post)modernity is to situate the cartographer in relation to their map and the maps of others. This desire of mine to situate the cartographers, the axial sages, in relation to the multi-layered Akashic map, is evident in my MFA work, most obviously in my final project, Joygeo.com.

To become conscious of our agency as mapmakers is to hopefully realize our connection to the axial sages and those of the future – more than wayfarers, we are admirals. If my mission was to transcend ignorance and spread enlightenment, then we might say that my MFA research has given me a clearer view of critical targets. My MFA has proven to be a transformational experience both for my tradecraft and identity.

When Richard Feynman said that the imagination of nature was greater than the imagination of man, he meant that if you just keep following the truth, you’ll likely transcend and include the imagination of nature, and the

results will likely be even more magical than what you had at first imagined. So is the case with my MFA experience.

Musician Neil Young, in an interview with the New York Times in September of 2012, said, “For whatever you’re doing, for your creative juices, your geography’s got a hell of a lot to do with it. You really have to be in a good place, and then you have to be either on your way there or on your way from there.”

September was the mid-way month of my Fulbright term – demarcating a liminal space between my coming to New Zealand and leaving. To riff upon Young’s comment, there is not only external geography, but an internal geography – a psychogeography where the pictures in our heads flash before our minds’ eyes’. Similar to sacred geography, we are either on our way towards the source of the pictures in our heads, or we are on our way from there. More simply, we are always either transcending or devolving through regression. Ken Wilber describes this regression in terms of the collapse of spirit to nature as a result of the flourishing (and dominating) industrial ontology of (post)modernity. It is this current of the industrial ontology that I fight against, and yet through.



I set out on my MFA journey to research transpersonal aesthetics. The history of philosophy is where my exegesis investigation led, and the most useful author to whom I am truly indebted is the integral theorist Ken Wilber.

He argues that there are traditionally two competing camps in the world of philosophy, the egoists and the ecoists. The main consideration with both camps, however, is empirical nature, and both ignore the intersubjective internal structures almost completely. This fascination with empirical nature is the great fallacy of all philosophy, and this is critical for aesthetic creative theoria. The predominant concern of much contemporary research is the empirical industrial ontology which operates as recalcitrant dualism where people are either Ascenders seeking to transcend, or Descenders seeking to regress. Simply put, Wilber proves that we need to approach everything from a more holistic, integral and interdependent approach. A systems approach, but even beyond systems-thinking at an even more macro level that includes our internal spheres and the evolution of consciousness. Only at this meta-level, Wilber argues, will we harmonize with reality.

The cosmos, which -- as a concept -- originated with Pythagoras is my favorite philosophical seed because it is the concept upon which all else is layered.

Consider that according to current scientific theory, the cosmos began 13.7 billion years ago in the Big Bang and the current diameter of the observable cosmos is thought to be about 93 billion light years.

From these empirical facts it's quite hard to get at the philosophy that Pythagoras was reflecting upon because scientific theory has inflated our reliance on linear thinking and mathematics. As the great inventor Nickola Tesla noted in 1934, "Today's scientists have substituted mathematics for experiments, and they wander off through equation after equation, and eventually build a structure which has no relation to reality."<sup>13</sup>

Recalling Lippmann once again, most narratives we consume have been given to us pre-interpreted, and we must work to break free of these assumptions. Just because Pythagoras existed so long ago, and just because science is now the dominant means of validating the cosmos, it does not mean that the concepts first proposed by Pythagoras are irrelevant or should remain fixed in linear time; indeed the concept of the cosmos is more salient than ever. Our age is one of spacecraft, quantum computing, transhumanism, and exponential technological advancement unparalleled in human history.

Should there not be any evolution concerning philosophical notions of the divine order of the cosmos in all of this time? Shouldn't there be a new Pythagoras born every day now? We certainly have tools at our disposal that Pythagoras couldn't fathom, and yet who is our modern Pythagoras? What is the boldest expression of the divine order of the cosmos that we've heard of lately? When is the last time most have even considered or discussed this question outside the boundaries of traditional pre-packaged metanarratives? It's absurd to consider the control we've relinquished concerning the pictures in our heads and the outside world, especially the cosmological view by which we frame the entirety of the outside world and our relationship to it, to others, and to ourselves.

## **Actionaut's MFA Artworks**

As you approach my MFA works, keep in mind that I'm discussing/presenting herein only a very small percentage of my total creative outputs achieved during the last year. In fact many that I will *not* discuss are actually my favorite because they represent ongoing efforts. Truthfully, I intend most of my projects to be open-ended. Many works will appear on Actionaut.com in the near and distant future, including STEVE which I conceptualized at the half-way point of my MFA. STEVE is TED's brother.

I am organizing a TED-like event where people talk about their big failures that changed the world. Unlike TED, STEVE is more humble; more brave. At STEVE, people talk about their failures, lessons learned, and ultimately, the emerging themes build a metanarrative not unlike one of my favorite children stories, the 1930 American book, "The Little Engine that Could." What is a story if not data with a soul? What is a brand if not creative engagement with others? STEVE will be a fractal generator of virtuous stories intended to increase the levels of authenticity, courage, and empathy among the metanarrative of our evolving global culture. I've made great progress on this project, but it is an ambitious and audacious one that will require more incubation for proper engagement, but it is indeed a significant transcosmic seed to emerge from my MFA experience.

Another work I will not discuss here in too much detail is called [iownthesoutherncross.com](http://iownthesoutherncross.com). Actionaut has claimed ownership of the Southern Cross star constellation. Actionaut represents only the 2<sup>nd</sup> private individual in history to have successfully completed the legal process to own a piece of cosmic real-estate of this magnitude (see Wes Faires' successful 2003 claim of Orion's Belt). Actionaut now holds complete sovereign rights in the key celestial territories of the Southern Cross (Crux constellation). The Outer Space Treaty of 1967, signed by a majority of the nations of Earth, is the primary governing instrument concerning Space Law. Article 2 states that Outer Space shall not be subject to national appropriation, thus forbidding nations from extending their borders outside of Earth. This does *not*, however rule out the possibility of a private citizen executing a property claim in Outer Space. Thus, I have successfully filed such a claim through the legal process of the United States, and these documents have been successfully recognized and notarized by members of the New Zealand legal community. Copyright ownership of the Southern Cross has also been claimed.

In terms of critically approaching my MFA thesis *artworks*, included herein are a selection of three of what I might call the "major" projects. I am a conceptual experimentalist, and the work I have done in terms of designing my creative super-hero identity, Actionaut, for instance, is actually quite key in terms of dissecting my recent practice, but I have not included Actionaut as one of the three *major* works. I have created Actionaut.com and am building it

into a portfolio website where those curious about the projects might explore supplemental artworks generated during this period and beyond.

**Here I have focused my critical discussion around three works in order of their chronology. These works include “Skyping Buddhas,” “Creative Soup Kitchens,” and “JoyGeo.”**



In terms of the coin that I like to toss around town, I like to imagine myself as a eudemonia merchant. I'd like to think that when and where many eudemonia merchants operate in peaceful and transcending harmony with each other, there will emerge a marketplace of Earthly conscious flourishing, and that this great flourishing would be but the awakening of a transcosmic quantum hologram. Similar to the California ideology or the Italian Renaissance, the present is a transcendent time.

We might imagine this marketplace as plasmatic neurons flashing by at transcosmic speed — hovering close to the source, Time seems to melt away into Eternity, and for just one glorious moment, we see in more detail the operation of Actionaut as if in slow motion compared to the hyper-speed of real-time. We discover upon further inspection that Actionaut is a creative farmer of consciousness, a nursery galaxy radiating spirit-in-action.

I arrived with a very specific goal in mind, which was to produce Internationally networked telematic wormholes in the tradition of Roy Ascott. In my Fulbright grant proposal I wrote, the following:

*I hope to investigate the creative field of telematics. I would like to address the role of telematic phenomena in creating new patterns of communication, new power structures, and new concepts of hyper-reality through computer-mediated simulacra by building telecollaborative networks that empower people to co-inhabit a virtual space that is free from the limits of individual, national, and cultural intelligence. I will ground my research in experimental experience design whereby digital technologies can be put to use to create new paradigms and new art forms that place focus on imagining and expanding the user experience.*

Telematics, as a concept, was a vehicle towards the transpersonal. The first book I read while on the plane to New Zealand was Roy Ascott's *Telematic Embrace: Visionary Theories of Art, Technology, and Consciousness*. It was Ascott who pointed me towards transpersonal themes. My first piece entitled "Skyping Buddhas" represents this evolution from telematics toward consciousness. I knew I wanted to achieve a behavioral synthesis in which artist, observer, and the environment were integrated into an emergent, interactive system of dynamic and spontaneous virtual relationships, but I didn't initially plan to use Buddha readymades and potting soil. I didn't think I'd be building a fractal generator. That happened because of early research, and by happy accident.

After a near-death-experience in a car accident about 25% into my MFA, I then produced "Creative Soup Kitchens" as a way to seek transpersonal themes while limiting new media technologies, stripping away everything except the human network in operation. By this point I was immersed in Sri Aurobindo's, *The Life Divine*, and researching the social practice of contemporary artists like Harrell Fletcher. With CSK I got my hands dirty with human empowerment – not empowerment through some cold technological surface or wireless transmission, but empowerment in the streets, amidst the most vulnerable socio-political realities. CSK taught me about agency, transformational production, and creative empowerment.

After CSK I moved towards locative sound to directly address the pictures in our heads, the voices in our heads, and the stories that we tell ourselves. I produced a series of experimental binaural locative sound productions in a similar mode to Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller; I also was deep into John Cage's catalogue and viewing the film, "The Secret Life of Plants." I also conducted a series of experiments in psychogeography and was pouring through The Architectural League of New York's *Situated Technologies Pamphlet Series*. It was during this time that I began conceptualizing my Actionaut identity.

Between June and November I presented my work at the NASA Ames Research Center in Mountain View, California, the *City of Ideas Festival* in Puebla, Mexico, and the Connecting Young Leaders conference in Auckland. I also served as a delegate to the “Transit of Venus Forum” in Gisborne on invitation from the Royal Society of New Zealand – there I joined hundreds of scientists, entrepreneurs, and dignitaries to further Professor Sir Paul Callaghan’s vision of making New Zealand “a place where talent wants to live.” These travel experiences certainly invigorated my work.

Amidst this time I began producing the “Wellywood Game” project, another MFA work that I will not be discussing in much detail. As you’ll read later, “Wellywood” magically morphed into JoyGeo.com and represents a climax of my MFA experience.

It’s fun to reflect upon my MFA path and how projects have built upon themselves to produce the narrative herein, but I could never have predicted this path or these projects. All has been channeled through me, not from me.

My artworks have been for some viewers disorienting because they express spiritualism, but at first glance might appear to be amoral in nature or insincere in intent. My artworks typically provoke questions and answers, and I consider these provocations part of the artwork.

A description of the internal logic guiding my career trajectory and practice would involve the following: My love of storytelling compelled me towards journalism and documentary film; my love for music is what compelled me towards social-entrepreneurship, interactive-art, and experience design. These career-driven practices then converged into a more innovative conceptual art mode that incorporates performativity and narrative through participatory real-time approaches, and from there evolved into experimental communication software and telematics, and from telematics into consciousness, from consciousness into social practice, from social practice into urban praxis and psychogeographic digital flâneurship and then into locative sound, locative games, transmedia storytelling, and finally all of this channeling back into the empowerment and transformation of situated performativity and situated narratives through social experience design and the development of pervasive communication environments that augment social-interaction trajectories and support collective public action.

In my journalism thesis (2009-11), “Transforming the J-School in an Age of Creative Destruction,” I provided evidence showing the wide-scale radical disruptions occurring not only in the journalistic profession and academia, but across all professions globally. I dubbed this the era of ***The Great Transformation***. I argued that a post-disciplinary reality requires creative innovation and entrepreneurship.

I hoped to re-activate my past research through integral, post-disciplinary approaches and towards an entrepreneurial creative praxis which embraced transpersonal themes and networked media-making.

First among my MFA research questions was, “What is a conceptual artist in this networked-age of great collaboration and transformation?” My answer is that I believe that today’s conceptual artist is a creative super-hero – part social-entrepreneur, part netarchical-capitalist, and part avant-garde post-disciplinarian.

My work is unified via its *integral transpersonal embrace of manifest existence* – situated through people, through consciousness. To summate -- Actionaut is an artist, entrepreneur, and Fulbright scholar whose post-disciplinary practice addresses the entanglements of exponentially advancing technologies and global culture. His current research explores the implications of mobile and pervasive media, communication and information technologies for collective storytelling and social-experience design. His final MFA project, JoyGeo.com, is an augmented reality software platform that empowers new approaches to mobile, locative media design and the engineering of new social interaction trajectories amidst situated global environments, thus leading to new forms of performativity and narrativity. Most of Actionaut’s work seeks to empower innovative and transformative approaches to creativity through transmedia experience design and novel approaches to cultural software production and collaborative/participatory experience design.



## **Exegeisthia**

*“Stranger: In this way, then, divide all science into two arts, calling the one practical (praktikos), and the other purely intellectual (gnostikos). Younger Socrates: Let us assume that all science is one and that these are its two forms” ~ Plato, The Statesman 258e<sup>14</sup>*

It is precisely *because of* the transformational times that we’re living in that the popular codices that guide our actions in modern life should always remain a target for critical intervention. More to the point here, the institutional code directs me that an MFA submission requires a written exegesis, therefore I wish to discuss the very notion of an “exegesis.”

My research questions have addressed the relationship between exegesis, creative research, art-education, and the role of the artist/scholar in (post)modern culture. I concluded that postgraduate art education shouldn’t require an exegesis but an ‘eisegesis’ – a way of communicating not just about our maps, but ourselves. We need methods to extrapolate meaning from confirmation bias instead of deluding ourselves into thinking that everything can be described in terms of “its” – “its” ostensibly empirical nature and the so-called objective analyses of art/aesthetics through the dominating industrial ontology. We need less “its” and more “we.”

As journalists know, bias is not about objective analysis; bias is metanarrative that supports traditional power structures. To seek the “objective” is a fallacy – a utopic ideal at best. Art is eudemonic production that benefits more from eisegesis, not exegesis. An *exegesis* is meant to represent metaphysical truths, but we are all interlocutors in the discourse of manifest existence, and each of us has a different interpretation, a different journey.

Critically, my MFA work is concerned with asceticism and hermeneutic(s) whereby Integral approaches to theoria rightly position metaphysics alongside the industrial ontology of the Western canon.

## **Ethos**

My practice is that of the netarchical-capitalist, conceptual artist, and social-entrepreneur rolled into one. I am Actionaut -- the son of an architect and a school principal -- part creative pragmatist, part reformer -- here to create the future. I’ve been making and organizing others through digital media since I was 8 years old.

Consider Netarchical capitalism<sup>15</sup> -- a recent hypothesis about the emergence of a new segment of the capitalist class which is no longer dependent on the ownership of intellectual property rights (cognitive capitalism), nor on the control of media vectors (see MacKenzie Wark’s *The*

*Hacker's Manifesto*), but rather on the development and control of participatory platforms. I seek to grow and cultivate such platforms.

I'm a child of the 90s – I grew up in a bubble within a bubble within a bubble. In 1999, barely legal to drive, I became the youngest producer hired by CNN, and I happened to read Guy DeBord's notorious *Society of Spectacle* in the same period. Needless to say, it left an impression and was a major early influence in my thinking about mass media culture.

I identify with the Situationists' credo of form following fun, not to mention their positivistic anarchism, liberating use of art as political activism, and the use of the spectacle as a linguistic form for making meaning. It's fitting, therefore, that after all of these years that my professional art practice and research would swing back towards DeBord and the Situationists. The themes of truth, the trajectory of human culture and man's quest for meaning can be found equally among a wide variety of pursuits and endeavors. What matters is the framing and the praxis.

### ***Concluding Remarks***

"If you can look into the seeds of time,  
And say which grain will grow and which will not,  
Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear  
Your favors nor your hate." ~Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, 1606

There is a thirst for the absurd, a challenge. For this, I'm an actor -- Hermes, sent from the heavens as a messenger to update the *Corpus Hermeticum*. This document is a humble contribution to the emergence of the great Perennial philosophy of human consciousness meant to be copy and pasted into the future. Perhaps I might conclude that the seeds I've sown during my MFA research showcase the influence of people on other people – on the collective spectral presence of consciousness. Activation is king.

Joseph Campbell has proven the value of scholar as mystic-poet. My thesis provides answers and questions that are valuable to intelligent interpretations of others. Indeed, what is creative research if not an experimental and entrepreneurial endeavor? It is wayfaring with purpose -- towards holistic eudemonia, towards enlightenment and towards the transcosmic supraconsciousness. I tend towards open-ended narrative, so perhaps I might suggest that you imagine with me phantasmagorical plasmatic neurons firing in a fury of rapture and awe-inducing splendor on a transcosmic scale – gardens of cellular automation humming with life and love and pure consciousness, nursery galaxies radiating with the eruption of hopeful anticipation.

I tend to produce "framework" art, but my joy is not in creating the framework but in having it be used to unleash the creativity of others. In short, I've discovered that empowerment is central to my life's purpose

I've concluded that all conceptual art is entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurship, if framed as such, is conceptual art.

Neil Young recently said that being an artist requires us to do what we do for its own sake," If it doesn't work out, " he says, "I'm sorry; I'm just doing what I do. You hired me to do what I do, not what you do. As long as people don't tell me what to do, there will be no problem."<sup>16</sup>

My research set out to discover the transpersonal maps of the axial sages, and I discovered the importance of empowering confirmation bias – empowering philosophical cartography. My research set out to discover the nuances of creative reality-production, and I discovered the opportunities presented by augmented-reality production. JoyGeo.com is the purest of my major MFA works because it encapsulates and manifests the most refined version of my theoretical beliefs, but JoyGeo is the accumulated result of so much more. Each conclusion is a doorway into the beyond, an end but also a beginning. Our future is one of entrepreneurship, so sayeth the artist.

## Skyping Buddhas

Peter Dallow asserts that:

*In the postmodern situation, there is frequently an attempt to present quotation or appropriation of an existing representation or familiar object as something new (or unknown). The seeming impossibility of originality becomes possible by virtue of art's virtuality – the state of definitional indeterminacy of/in art. New hybrid forms, holographic projections, digital montage, interactive installations, have emerged which even more powerfully offer a space of absence as presence.<sup>17</sup>*

My *Skyping Buddhas* project was a response to Nam June Paik's 1974 work, *TV Buddha*<sup>18</sup>, which consisted of a closed circuit video installation along with bronze Buddha figure facing the camera in meditation pose.



In 1974, Paik's original enigmatic idea consisted of a Buddha statue meditating while facing a video screen showing a live video feed from a camera, located near the top of the video screen (similar to modern-day computer webcams). Included are images of the passers by, creating an infinite participatory loop.



In 1994, Paik's *Techno Buddha* addressed the Internet age. This work consists of a vintage Buddha head, chassis, computer monitor, keyboard, telephone, and Samsung 13-inch TV.

Here, the Buddha itself was constructed from a mish-mash of silicon circuitry, and he is connected to the Internet via a dial-up telephone connection.

Paik was a pioneer of video installation in the early 1960s and a significant figure closely associated with the international art collective Fluxus, especially in its more technological aspects.

Appropriately, in the very same year that Paik produced *Techno Buddha*, Marshall McLuhan published his 1994 seminal text, *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. McLuhan commented that,

*The tasks of conscious awareness and order are transferred to the physical life of man, so that for the first time he has become aware of technology as an extension of his physical body.*<sup>19</sup>

*Skyping Buddhas* is a fractal generator -- a software update for our present moment. Choosing to produce this kind of replicative artwork is influenced directly by the idea of “updating” the framework, similar to a software system. I believe this is a critical distinction, as my goal is not to create a mimetic, but rather an iterative artwork.

This project began through an interest in optical feedback and fractals and their relationship to consciousness – I discovered fractals are the critical link between telematics and consciousness. My intuition pointed me towards a focus on synchronicity developed through divine psychedelic telematic art praxis. Synchronicity — like a memory developed through telematic assemblage that has a magical Eternal potential to transcend Time.

*Skyping Buddhas* emerged from cultivating an almost aetheric touch through telematic and participatory real-time networked media software. A particular telematic experiment that I performed on April 12, 2012 represents a key documented moment of *Skyping Buddha*’s manifestation. During this time in my MFA I was waxing poetic with the telematics of consciousness and conducting experiments while listening to Buddhism music and Sanskrit incantations using optical feedback through Skype running on two computers.



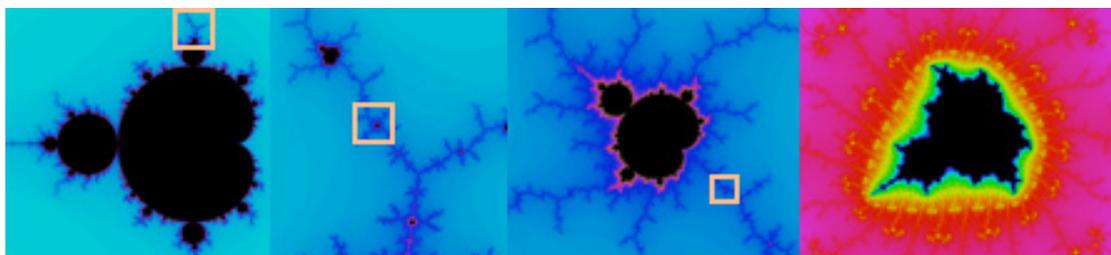
The story goes, I was in possession of a single Buddha readymade statue that happened to be sitting around my apartment, when I placed the Buddha before the camera the virtual fractals seemed to come alive into harmony with the readymade – a magical moment. At the end of my MFA, I

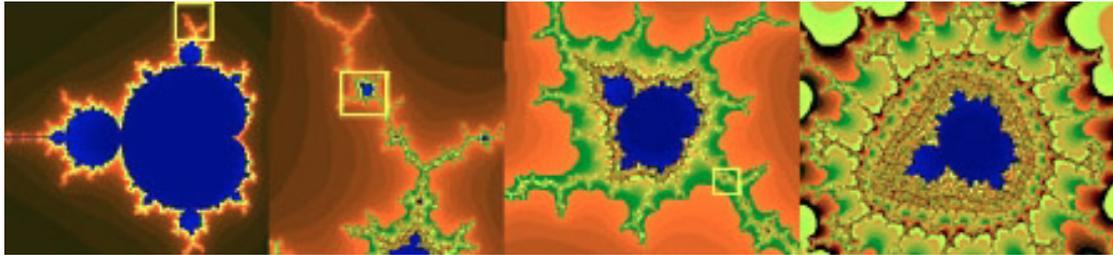
re-played this documentation for the first time, and something amazing happened. Opening the video file on my computer actually triggered a series of strange and out-of-the-ordinary computing events. For instance, the Spotify music application opened and queued a playlist of Buddhist music, even though I was already listening to the new Yo la Tengo album on my laptop in the same room. Connection to my VPN (my virtual private network) was disconnected and it seemed as if re-playing this video had some strange quantum connection and affect – replaying the video seemed to espouse what Einstein called, “a spooky action at a distance.”

Paik’s *Buddha works*, and his era, were concerned mostly about hardware, but we are now living in a software age, and the differences between a hardware world and a software world are quite different. Paik’s *Techno Buddha* exists as a closed circuit, making it schematically similar to the original, and the only reference to networked software is the symbolic telephone wire representing the dial-up Internet age.

Paik’s works are lacking in software, but humanize hardware. My work suggests how we can humanize technology through software, and the subtle natures that we can heretofore access through telematic software. In short, the subtler forces which I sought to harness in my 2012 piece *Skyping Buddhas* can be accessed and demonstrated *only* through software and fractals, and in this frame – the notion of updating the schematic relationships corresponds with the whole structure and normative hierarchy of computer systems architecture.

During the same era that Paik’s original *TV Buddha* was exhibited in art spaces, mathematicians working at IBM in the field of complex dynamics were discovering the Mandelbrot Set. Little did they know of the relational importance of fractals, but on the first day of March in 1980, at IBM’s Thomas J. Watson Research Center in upstate New York, Benoît Mandelbrot first saw a visualization of the set that appeared to explain complex dynamics through fractals that apparently looked exactly like...Buddha after Buddha after Buddh, an infinitely repeating sequence.





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Mandelbrot is significant – it shows that we are now in a software age, an age of fractals. In *Skyping Buddhas* I combined optical feedback with telematic software to bridge the connection between telematics and consciousness art.

The Mandelbrot set is self-similar, meaning that by zooming in on a round feature while panning in the negative-x-direction, infinity becomes visualized and seemingly explained through an algorithm, and such is the nature of the optical feedback being transmitted through Skype in the piece, creating the psychedelic remnants of fractals – showcasing the Mandelbrot Set and allowing participants to enter the image on the screens not as themselves, but as a subtle energy that becomes integrated into the swirling patterns and infinite complexity being transmitted through the quantum field.

In this piece, I directed my focus towards networked video and telematic experience, exploring perception and conception(s) of reality through the exploration of the mental/psychological experience of the *now* as sensed with/in/through the technological extensions of man, not only in terms of the telematic hardware, but critically, in terms of the telematic software.

It's quite possible that the next iteration of this project will be called *Hivemind Buddha*, whether it be produced by me or someone else or both in unison remains to be seen.

What distinguishes *Skyping Buddha's* from Paik's historical antecedents relates to it being a networked real-time artwork. While Paik's work does include participatory access to the art, it does so while preserving the authentic image without much distortion, and/or it uses the camera to absorb the light directly into the lens. His is a closed-circuit assemblage.

In *Skyping Buddhas*, the webcams aren't capturing a direct image of participants, but are capturing changes in light being reflected off the computer monitors –as a participant approaches one of the monitors, only the color of their t-shirt or their shadow (for instance) is recognized through the reflections as they appears on the monitor's image. Thus, participants are included as performers inside a fractal machine representing infinite consciousness.

This method of capturing the subtle nature of our presence and the complex layering of plural presences accentuates the “soft” nature of technology in our lives and showcase how hardware and technology can

actually be deployed to create software, subtle awareness, and subtle presence.

We live in a world of subtle energies, and that goes not only for humans, but for computers. These subtle energies are complex yet simple, mysterious yet all-pervasive, remote yet locative, all intelligence is at once omniscient yet ignorant, and it is in these contradictions where beauty and truth lives in constant flux – spiraling at the speed of light in all directions and yet reflective of some divine order, like the images from Skyping Buddha's fractalized Skype conversations.

The curator of nonTVTVstation, Bjorn Norberg, says that the beauty of real time art is that the presence of the viewer affects the behavior of the art and creates a parallel phenomena similar to the observer effect in physics – whereby the act of observing particles actually changes the path of the particles. He argues:

*The relationship between context, work of art, spectator and artist forms a dynamic web of meaning. They are all particles in a web. A change in one of the parameters affects all the others in a very complex way. ...Where everything else seems to be relative, real time offers a truth. It is part nature, and reality is used as an input, an integrated part of the art, and there is no need for reductionalism. It is understandable but still very complex and it teases you.<sup>21</sup>*

Real-time art is a celebration of the spontaneous and the ephemeral, a celebration of aetheric improvisation – like visual jazz, where the art exists at each moment but disappears just as quickly. It exists, but it is impossible to grasp, even for the artists who create it. In much the same way as Norberg likens real-time art to particle physics, I would assert a similar congruity with the ancient notion of Indra's net – an axial teaching device used to illustrate one of the most important aspects of Buddhist practice concerning the interdependence and mutual conditioning of phenomena.<sup>22</sup> In terms of consciousness, Buddhist philosophy is further along than Western philosophy, which is why Buddha symbolism has become a shorthand for consciousness.

Paik used readymade Buddhas in full-bodied meditating postures whereas I've used only heads on top of potting soil, as if the heads were sprouting forth from the roots of a plant. This corresponds with software, but also consciousness visually representing the notion that I'm getting here at the idea that intelligence doesn't necessarily have to have a body to be present.

In his 2007 history book *Vermeer's Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World*, Timothy Brook uses the following contemporary metaphor:

*When Indra fashioned the world, he made it as a web, and at every knot in the web is tied a pearl. Everything that exists, or has ever existed, every idea that can be thought about, every datum that is true—every dharma, in the language of Indian philosophy—is a pearl in Indra's net. Not only is every pearl tied to every other pearl by virtue of the web on which they hang, but on the surface of every pearl is reflected every other jewel on the net. Everything that exists in Indra's web implies all else that exists.<sup>23</sup>*

Heterotopia is a concept in human geography elaborated by philosopher Michel Foucault to describe places and spaces that function in non-hegemonic conditions. These are spaces of *otherness*, which are neither here nor there -- simultaneously physical and mental, part geography, part psychogeography. It is this kind of non-hegemonic condition I am seeking to develop within my work. Foucault uses the term heterotopia to describe spaces that have rich layers of meaning and interconnectedness. Foucault's articulation of heterotopia represents a critical strategy by which Skyping Buddhas and related telematic consciousness experiments might be analyzed and discussed.

## ***Creative Soup Kitchens***

“It is as citizens that we become human. The wish to live within just institutions signifies nothing else.” ~ Ricœur, *The Just*

Ultimately, critical solicitude rests on mutual recognition of one another as true humans – accepting not only our capabilities, but our vulnerabilities as agents. French philosopher Paul Ricœur defined ‘critical’ solicitude as “...the form that practical wisdom takes in the region of interpersonal relations.”<sup>24</sup> This is a man who spent seven years of his life in Germany at a prisoner of war camp during WWII. If Ken Wilber is the first great integral theorist to influence my MFA, Ricœur represents the second, although he may be the first transpersonal integral theorist of the modern era. Ricœur’s theories into the deep structures of subjective experience and consciousness and his revolutionary approach of hermeneutic phenomenology served to broaden textual interpretation into the domains of mythology, biblical exegesis, psychoanalysis, theory of metaphor, and narrative theory. Ricœur should be taught in all modern art schools of worth, and at the foundational levels. It was through my research into the nature of the art exegesis that I discovered Ricœur, but finding his canon was like finding an abundant secret garden of theoria and we owe him greatly for his rich contributions.

In the Creative Soup Kitchens (CSK) project, Actionaut gave instructions developed through transpersonal psychological theory to a group of homeless people at soup kitchens in Wellington over the course of a month. The instructions were designed to trigger transpersonal themes and activate creative collective potential, and the project culminated in an art auction where over 50 pieces of art (created by Wellington’s vulnerably housed members of society) were auctioned off and over \$1500 raised to benefit directly the vulnerable artists. The event engaged hundreds in the community and generated journalistic coverage in newspapers and on New Zealand national radio as a long-form audio documentary that reached an estimated 192,000 people.<sup>25 26</sup>

With this project I stepped back from my heavy use of technology to produce a transpersonal art project that sought to initiate empowerment at the street-level, seeking the source of transpersonal embrace through the purity of praxis. Thus I have a ludic perspective in my thesis concerning the aesthetics of transpersonal art.

As Ricœur points out, the ethical issues surrounding the nuances of empowerment are insufficient to guide the actor towards proper conduct, and the threat always exists that my actions will impinge upon others. The key question in these circumstances becomes, “How are my actions affecting another’s capacity to act?” This is something that I considered greatly and

only after diligent meditation did I listen to the Universe and move the project forward. I delved into praxis, through praxis.

Through CSK I learned that this key question about affecting another's ability to act requires us to consider our aims and the practices, values, and institutions that our society supports. We must consider these things because any of Actionaut's actions may cause violence in others or even prevent them from acting (i.e. – oppression). Art in praxis or *praxis art* refuses to be judged solely on an empirical basis, but demands more personally interpretive responses.

The critical response to CSK was quite extreme between the *art world audience* and *the broader public*. The critical art response had anxious concerns about agency, and nuanced interpretations concerning modern praxis. Questions like, "How do we judge this work? How do we know if it's successful?"

While researching to respond to these criticalities I stumbled upon Jack Burnham, who, although seemingly irrelevant like a slight blip on the art world's radar was, in fact, simply ahead of his time. I find the thinking of the art critic Jack Burnham to be an appropriate lens with which to ground some of my recent social practice. One of his main arguments in the 1970s was that art was no longer restricted to "canonical or given forms" but could embrace "every conceivable experiential mode, including living in everyday environments."<sup>27</sup> Walter Benjamin had already argued that art had become bound up with the technologies of reproduction.<sup>28</sup> The seeming omniscience of images throughout society had become almost accepted, and as art historian Hans Belting asserts, art had "to offer something more important than images."<sup>29</sup> A crucial element of Burnham's view is that whereas the objects of art data represented the hardware of the system, the critical response and media coverage and trade transactions exist as the software extension of art. In Jack Burnham's words:

*The art object is, in effect, an information "trigger" for mobilizing the information cycle. Making, promoting, and buying art are real-time activities.*<sup>30</sup>

Jack Burnham discussed the cultural super-organism in a similar vein as the Futurist/Artist John McHale, theorists Marshal McLuha and Buckminster Fuller and musician John Cage. Burnham writes, "There are two kinds of artists: those who work within the art system, and those few who (work with) the art system."<sup>31</sup> Les Levine is an interesting example who represents the latter of these kinds of artists – he is a conceptual artist considered a founder of media art in the 50s and 60s, but what makes him intriguing is that he considers business and commerce to be art in its purest form. Levine pioneered the use of the mass media – including advertising,

public relations, and journalism – as existing as an extension of his art, or even as the art itself. Levine has proven that anything can be art so long as it's empowered with PR, and in this way, Levine has strategically sought to vindicate the art system by withholding what so many art collectors seek – namely, quality objects of permanence.

Burnham witnessed the birth of a new trajectory for art when he noted that, “What a few artists are beginning to give the public is real-time information, information with no hardware value, but with software significance for effecting awareness of events in the present. The most important artist [in the future] best succeeds by liquidating his position as artist vis-à-vis society.”<sup>32</sup>

My own projects Creative Soup Kitchens and JoyGeo.com both reflect these sentiments and other more contemporary cultural meanings. CSK was a process-oriented work that empowered homeless people in Wellington's community to create art – and this process not only acted as a form of personal and transpersonal development, but also acted as a way to create awareness about a socio-political issue. CSK was part question, part answer. To recall a statement by Levine:

*All process-oriented works rely on the viewer and the art critic for their final definition as works of art. If it is neither photographed nor written about, it disappears back into the environment and ceases to exist. Many serious artists ... are for the most part involved in making art producing systems. The works themselves are systems for the production of art.*<sup>33</sup>

Based on this view, CSK is a proven success because of the extent to which it engaged the vicissitudes of its own. As Jack Burnham noted, “The art communication and education structure is hardly prepared to handle such a broad conception of art as Levines's... it challenges societal norms in the most fundamental way.”<sup>34</sup> I wonder how much has changed since then?

The soup kitchen project emerged from research, and also spiritual praxis – meditation, lifestyle optimization, personal development, artistic imagination experiments and projects, travel – harnessing the *now*, synchronicity, breathing. CSK emerged from Actionaut's cleansed, alive, thriving state of being.

As Carl Hausman notes, “if there is no disruption of the known there can be nothing unique, and creative development must “undergo interruption and include differences at some point.”<sup>35</sup> The thoughts of the eloquent Claire Bishop were uttered in critique of CSK. I certainly addressed and responded to these utterances during my mid-year MFA symposium, but I doubt Bishop's relevance need be heightened anymore, although I'm grateful for her Luddite fodder.

CSK was built upon contemporary social practice and discourse (see artists such as Harrell Fletcher, Rick Lowe, Tania Bruguera, Michael Rakowitz and Hugh Leeman as well as modern scholarship by Jen Delos Reyes, Claire Doherty, and Tom Finkelpearl). The CSK project thrived on dichotomies and a tapestry of meanings. As recently uttered by public art critic Ben Valentine,

*Social Practice is a field that resists easy categorization. In action, many artists working in this field look more like farmers, social workers, teachers and other non-art professionals. Social Practice places emphasis on process and commitment over a single end-product; collaboration over the artist as the sole maker; engagement especially with new audiences often under-represented in the art world.<sup>36</sup>*

CSK is also meta-art, a framework of cultural software. I often tell people that Actionaut's art is anti-ideology ideology, and CSK is an example where I played with the boundaries between social capital, creative capital, and financial capital. After the CSK story was broadcast through journalistic media, I was contacted by the San Diego Foundation's Arts & Culture Program and an art collective in Utah – both groups eager to deploy similar CSK projects in their communities. The metanarratives created and the project's public engagement represent core facets of the work.

We live in a moment where ideas can come alive and transform human existence like never before, and so one of the key questions posed by CSK was, "How can we create better outcomes for society's most vulnerable citizens through scholarly creative praxis?"

CSK is a cultural software platform, a conceptual work of micro-political tactical-intervention through social entrepreneurship and creative community empowerment. Actionaut's role in CSK relates to notions of Joseph Beuys to whom I am greatly indebted, especially for his ideas around social sculpture and the ability of an artist to take creative and participatory approaches to shaping society, politics, and public life so as to produce a *Gesamtkunstwerk* or *total work of art*.

Unlike Beuys, I don't consider myself as social sculptor, but simply a conceptual artist making meaning through social-entrepreneurship and cultural software programming -- Actionaut as cultural software engineer.

The CSK project led me towards identifying social-entrepreneurship as conceptual art praxis. Whereas contextual art is often defined as art that questions the nature of art, my work seeks to include not only the map, but keys to the mapmaker – embracing answers and questions simultaneously.

CSK was cultural software meant to question the present reality, and yet provide possible solutions at the same time. The solutions, in turn, often end up as questions in their own right and so on. Like my other MFA works, *Skyping Buddhas* and *JoyGeo.com*, CSK is a fractal generator.

I sought to design and run a cultural software patch on the industrial ontological machine – a patch (metaphorically speaking) that seeks solutions to societal problems, brings people together and activates them to question how our socio-political structures approach these problems and approach these metanarratives. If conceptual art is about rebelling against formalism, then consider that software is about rebelling against hardware. As software relies upon and yet transcends and includes hardware as it evolves, so to does conceptual art constantly transcend and include formalism and the aesthetics of the status quo. I submit herein that social-entrepreneurship is conceptual art.

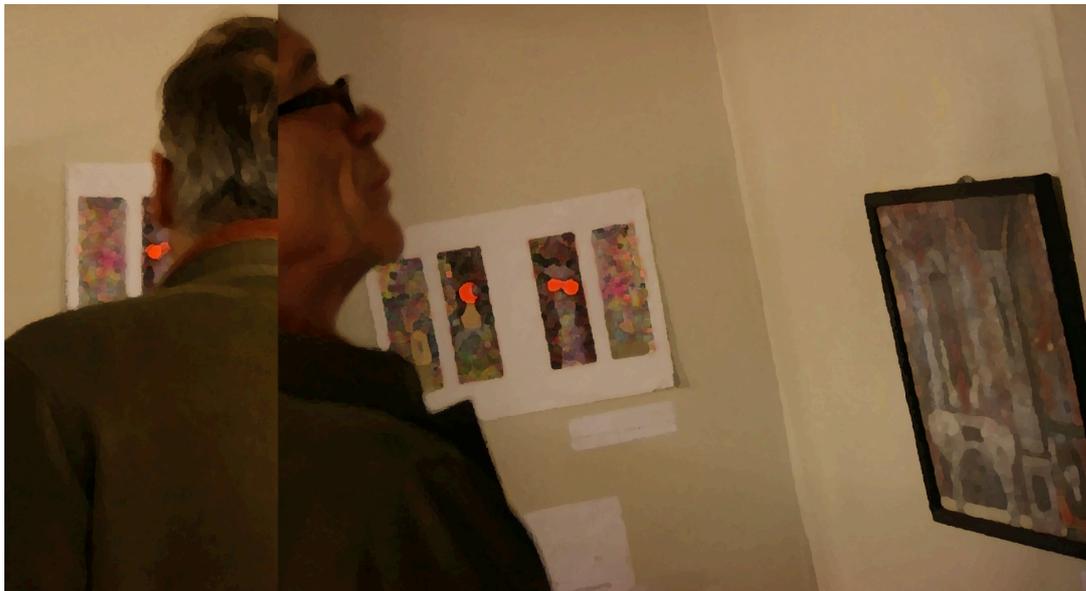
It is nothing new to question the role of artists and designers as the producers of irrelevant material distractions and nuanced delusions, but it's a tradition that I'm certainly interested in investigating. With CSK I sought to turn the *art world* on itself while simultaneously turning the *homeless world* on itself and the *political world* on itself and the *modern art-school world* on itself – the integral vortex of this praxis is where the magic happens; in this case, I convened a silent art auction that took place on Friday June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012 at the 19 Tory Street Open-Source Gallery, with the help of the Wellington Concerned Citizens Collective, members of Wellington's homeless community, and over twenty volunteers from all walks of life. It was anything but silent.



That day art viewers (as opposed to the general public who attended) asked me how the success of this project might be judged, and my response was that it was successful because it provoked that very question, but more directly, it could be judged through its positive social impact. CSK stimulated creative freedom, collective community action, economic growth, transpersonal development among participants, and public awareness

narratives. Like much systems art, it promoted pluralism. These are all ways of *knowing* whether the project was successful or not.

If I'm actually setting out to produce the pictures in our heads, the stories we tell ourselves, the cultural software that tells our operating system what to think, how to behave, how to interpret reality, and how to understand and operationalize ques for meaning – then I wanted to separate this from the technological surface of new media and situated environments. If telematics urged me towards consciousness, and consciousness towards social practice – I needed to explore keeping the social practice separated from the telematics, and this is how I can conclude that consciousness is cultural software – a finding I hope will prove prescient as time goes by.



Producing the pictures in our heads can rely on any number of simulacra -- situations, spectacles, comics, public opinion, journalism, music, projection mapping, live telematics, augmented reality, or quantum brainwashing technologies. The encoding of these elements is what I'm referring to when I talk about my role as a cultural software engineer and netarchical capitalist in relation to my role as conceptual artist and social entrepreneur.

Style and modality is a whole other issue. In terms of styling, I am attempting to orchestrate the collective unconscious, but as a musician, my taste is for the experimental, my penchant is to jazz, and this is because playing music is a living language where you both listen and play at the same time. This sonic space – the music in our head – is where rapture resides – the source of our own pictures, our actuated selves.

## **JoyGeo.com**

“The employment of telematic hypermedia is no less than a desire to transcend linear thought by reaching for a free-flowing consciousness of associative structures. It then becomes the artist’s imperative to explore every aspect of technology that might empower the viewer through direct physical interaction to collaborate in the production of meaning and the creation of authentic artistic experience.”<sup>37</sup> ~ Roy Ascott, 2003

Cultural software is a fungus – mycelium in support of coexistence.<sup>38</sup> JoyGeo.com is the outgrowth of my turn towards urban praxis following the CSK project. Shakespeare said that the “World is a stage,” and following CSK I became interested in producing art for the theatre of the mind – activating others towards the World stage. During this phase I researched and conducted experiments into binaural sound production, psychogeography, locative gaming, Fluxus, Happenings, and what I have come to call digital flâneurship art praxis.

As far back as the 1860s, Charles Baudelaire commented on the heterotopic nature of the flâneur:

*The crowd is his element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. We might liken him to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life.*<sup>39</sup>

JoyGeo is the result of such flickering, in pursuit of such grace – the result of Actionaut’s digital flâneurship praxis. Topically, JoyGeo.com is a software platform, mash-up that allows anyone to produce augmented-reality games that can be played on any smartphone and any operating system. At a deeper level, it plays with presence and tribal memories — traces in the wilderness of Eternity. It is a collaborative platform for collective experience design.

I’m addressing user engagement by making a tool that results in a new geo-locative communication medium that enhances experience production and consumption for other auteurs. Critically, I’m making this tool using existing software and technology components – it’s a mash-up. The mash-up involves the integration of Google Maps API along with Javascript, html5, Ruby on Rails, PhoneGap, and other open-source code structures. The ingredients are bound to change as the platform evolves, but what matters is its target -- the democratization of the production and automation of geo-

spatially triggered mobile computing events and transforms through micro-political technical interventions that question and restructure networked global culture in joyful ways.

Following the netarchical-capitalist approach, JoyGeo is focused upon the development and control of a participatory platform. As with my other work, JoyGeo investigates aspects of technological democratization, empowerment, open-engagement and creative collaboration. JoyGeo is, in a way, a fractal generator that spreads the creative praxis of geo-spatial experience production.

JoyGeo transforms what might be considered a high art (programming augmented reality experiences) by making it accessible in DIY fashion to spectator/viewer/participants. JoyGeo is an apt work with which to conclude my MFA studies as it's both the most recent and most inclusive of my creative research efforts.

One might critique JoyGeo and interpret the project to be a representative of my desire to encourage eisegesis, to encourage confirmation bias. Indeed, JoyGeo quite literally empowers more mapmakers. My wish is for people to put layers of joy onto the real world; I love the diversity of creative expression.

Significantly, my research process adopted the garden as a metaphor for creative marketplace, and so JoyGeo is also an social-entrepreneurial venture presented as conceptual art. With JoyGeo.com, I'm saying that entrepreneurship is art.

Like my other works, JoyGeo poses questions while simultaneously suggesting answers. It's a tool that gives us more control over the voices in our heads and how we interpret reality, and yet it is a tool that literally augments our interpretations of reality and blurs fact and fiction, real and unreal. It serves to territorialize and yet re-territorialize simultaneously. Cognitivist Merlin Donald identifies art objects in and of themselves also as a cognitive construct in that they are representations that influence the ways in which we perceive the world, and JoyGeo certainly provides a rich representation. Perhaps one might use the term *rhizomic* to critique and interpret my work, but I think an even better metaphor might be that of mycorrhizal fungi. This concept derives from my past studies into ecology and environmental ethics and I feel it a profound metaphor by which to consider the transformational effects of cultural software on the hardware world.

Mycorrhizal networks are formed when mushrooms colonize around tree roots and enhance the tree's health and growth through connectivity and by increasing the nutrient absorption efficiency of the root system (sometimes by over 700%).<sup>40</sup> Mycelium is a fungus networking organism and represents software in my metaphor, whereas the roots and the tree and the forest

represent the hardware. Deleuze and Guattari suggested in their landmark book *A Thousand Plateaus* that the symbiotic functioning of the mycorrhizal network and the trees and forest represented a rhizome, and thus the idea of cultural software is opened up to this kind of rhizomic critique. When considering mycorrhizal fungi, the underground mycelium represents the horizontal networking capacity while the existing structures of the environment in total are represented as trees. I'm suggesting that entrepreneurial projects represent the catalyzers of cross fertilization of different hyphae that ultimately lead to mushrooms – embodied and activated consciousness that can spread new spores and seed new hyphae.

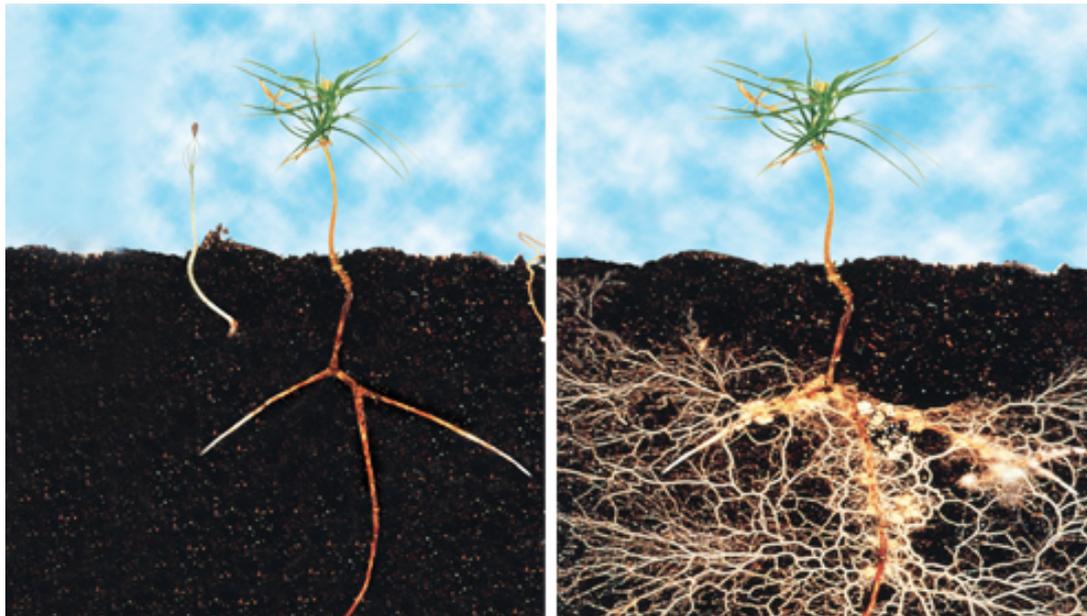
The fungus acts as a conduit, a vehicle through which resources from plants and soil are transported; but also they forage for nutrients in ways that would be too risky and uneconomical for each individual plant to do – the mycorrhizal praxis is similar to the entrepreneurial praxis in this way.<sup>41</sup> Mycorrhizal fungus helps to scaffold the youngest plants in the ecosystem by connecting the mature plants to the young plants in support of bio-diversity and ecosystem growth. Culture plays a similar role by scaffolding generations of humanity, teaching us through stories and creativity of all kinds, accelerating our growth, laying the foundations for sustainable human flourishing, but more importantly, synchronizing us with the rest of the ecosystem in a state of interdependent coexistent homeostasis. By equalizing access to resources, the mycorrhizal fungus promotes cooperation among species rather than competition – similar to information (Information is power, etc.).<sup>42</sup> This rhizomic metaphor represents the web of life in action.<sup>43</sup>

Mycorrhizae are critical because they pose a direct and rebellious challenge to the traditional Malthusian belief that ecosystems are primarily competitive.<sup>44</sup> This has epic implications for the fate of our planet and species. The key to our future is not competitive Darwinism, but symbiosis, mutualism and interdependence. The solutions to the World's grand challenges are not to be found in population control, oppression, and fear, but in creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship – this is what creative culture is all about. Creating cultural software patches that run on the hardware of calcified formal systems is how we, as artists in the modern moment, transform fear and suffering into love and coexistence. Cultural software is the expression of the great fungus, spaceship earth, earth as a mind, earth as super-organism.

My art, in this context, should be viewed through the lens of this entrepreneurial praxis whereby JoyGeo helps spread a mycorrhizal network of consciousness, patching cultural software on the hardware world to seed new hyphae.

My intent, and I believe the ultimate result, is what I might call *sentient culture*. Thus, human culture is a fungus – our great mutualistic super-organism. We may consider that even in the JoyGeo project Actionaut is still

engaged in social practice, working as an entrepreneurial cultural software producer and mycelium farmer. This is quite meaningful to me because I see Universal Nature as the ultimate Creator, and I quite like the idea of considering all human creativity and human flourishing from and through the prism of Universal Nature because this embodiment of creativity is accessible to all of us regardless of falsified-boundaries, because if its one thing we all share, it's our connection to Universal Nature.



With this macroscopic perspective in place, we might now consider the more practical aspects and technological design of JoyGeo and what it means in the context of art and experience production. JoyGeo is a new communication medium, capable of new messages, derived from more participatory geo-locative methods. Fundamentally, JoyGeo empowers anyone to make what might be best described as a mobile location-based interactive augmented reality (AR) game that will work on any smartphone.

JoyGeo is a catalyzer of cross-fertilization of different hyphae that will ultimately lead to new embodiments of consciousness.

Perhaps JoyGeo is simply a transmedia production tool, or more practically called an on-demand audiotour flashmob app. JoyGeo empowers auteurs to produce collaborative, procedural interactive storytelling projects and geo-triggered sonic AR experiences.

As players traverse through a game, sounds automatically play when players pass into the geo-zones that the game author has specified, along with other multi-media artifacts such as text and photos that can be “unlocked” by players as they traverse the zones. Game authors can also require that players submit sound or photos at specific geo-locations to unlock subsequent

geo-locations, and game authors can then re-incorporate collected geo-locative media back into the game.

Players experience games by visiting a unique URL via smartphone. Wearing headphones, participants drift through sonic experiences produced by auteurs. For instance, walking near a public sculpture might queue an audio track to play in which the sculptor discusses the work, or it might be a dance song that helps create a public flashmob.

By democratizing the means of production and consumption of augmented realities, Actionaut seeks a eudemonic marketplace of mobile AR campaigns – layers of joy running their cultural software on top of the “Real World.”

JoyGeo might be used to produce shared creative-urban experiences, or to annotate seemingly ephemeral traces of one’s presence according to psychogeographically demarcated geo-locations. In this way, the project enables citizens to embed social knowledge in the new wireless landscape of situated environments. JoyGeo provides yet another way is a way to augment the voices in our heads.

JoyGeo’s emergence showcases the natural progression of my practice which I call “hacking narrative realities” – a space I’ve been playing in since 2009 as documented in my past works such as “Sound(in)Stall,” “Dilettante Window,” and even “Creative Soup Kitchens.”

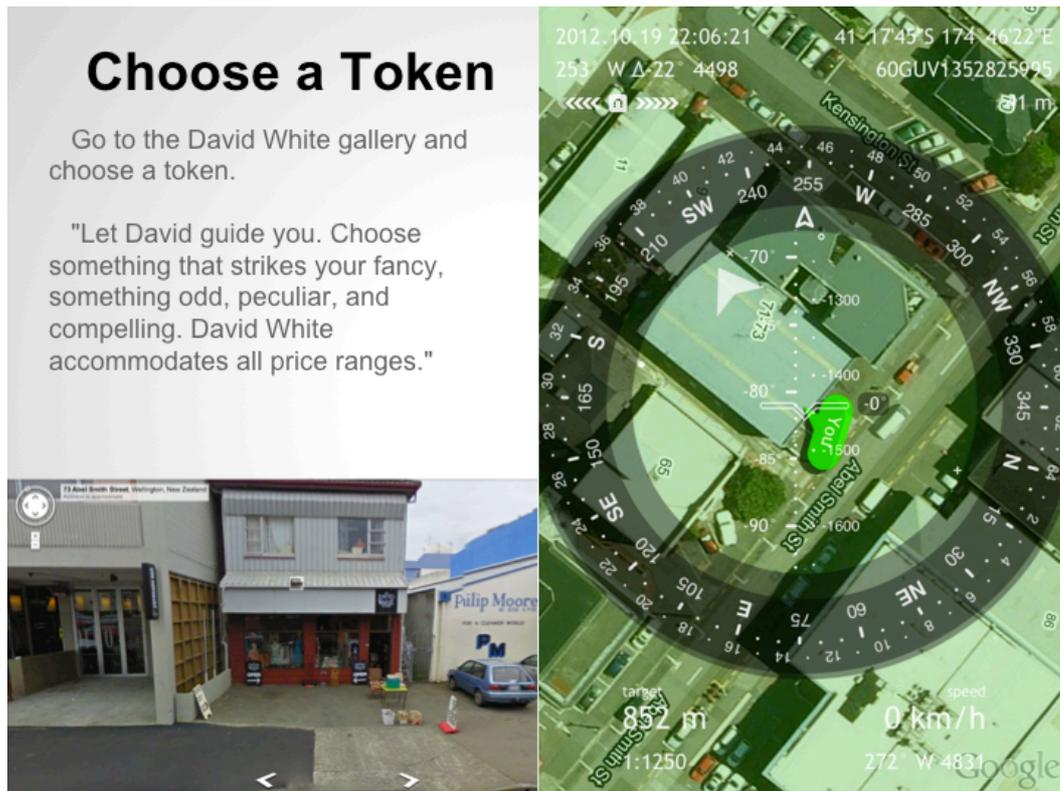
Just as I played with the situated environment of a technologically enhanced bathroom stall in “Sound(in)Stall,” I have broadened my sense of situated environments to include entire cities, global, and even cosmic territories. Not only that, but I want others to play also.

My MFA sparked a desire to transform cities into magical portals into the beyond -- playgrounds for participatory culture.

JoyGeo proposes that anyone can now produce pervasive and participatory entertainment experiences that can leapfrog our modern conceptions of narrativity and performativity – blurring the lines between fact and fiction, real and unreal.

Defined by Guy Debord in 1958 as part of the Situationist International manifesto, the *dérive* is a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances of the urban environment involving playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeographical effects, and is one of the main precursors to the Fluxus movement. JoyGeo emerged from my researching and experimenting with the notion of the *dérive* and asking questions such as, “How might the *dérive* be reimagined amidst pervasive media environments?” and, “What technological augmentation could expound upon the original spirit of the *dérive* while merging it with elements of social-art-games from Fluxus and modern mobile gaming?”

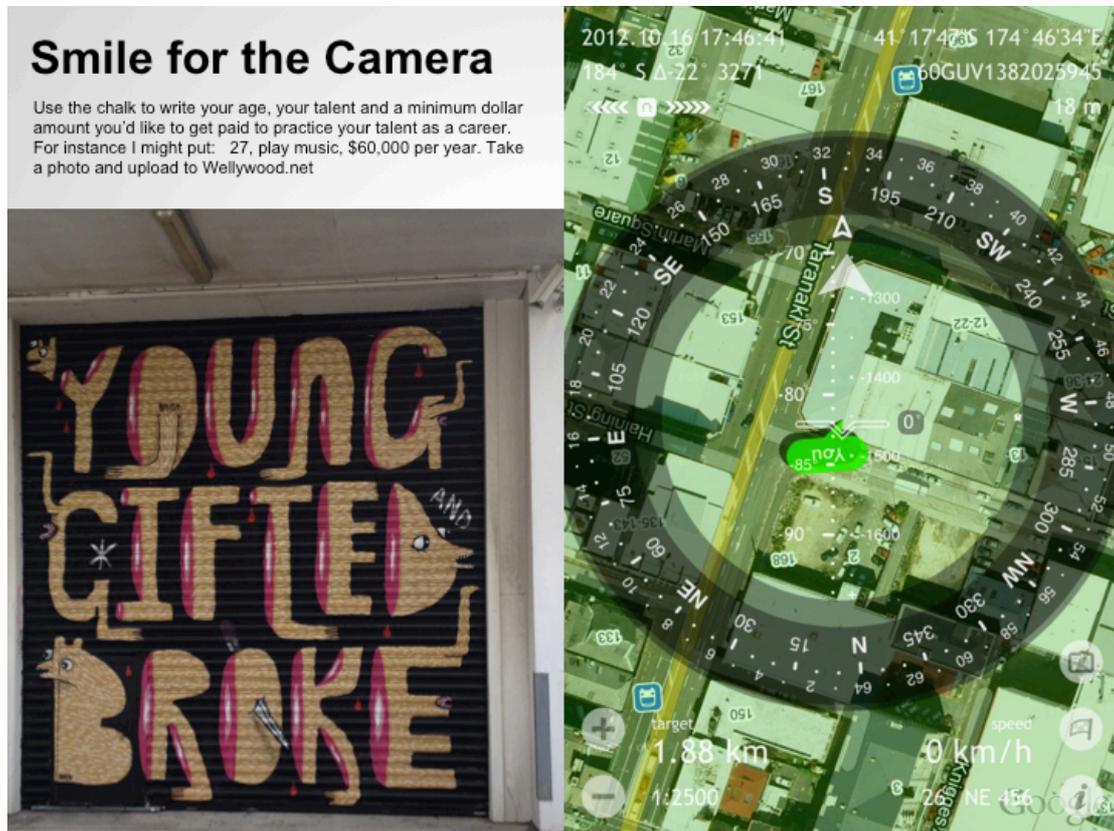
The derives approach frees people to flow -- drawn to attractions of the terrain and the encounters they discover. JoyGeo supports new art forms of more digitized psychogeographic approaches where the attractions and encounters of a *dérive* can be orchestrated and automated through geo-spatial mobile computing events, and ultimately, through the use of a simple cloud-based software platform. I became enthralled in building “scenes” of the absurd for the theatre of the mind, designed to psychogeographically demarcate a specific location through participatory social-games – and activate others towards the World stage.



The last quarter of my MFA I researched locative media art and also game theory. *Locative media* combine both geographic and virtual spaces and assume that spatial perception is crucial to obtaining contextualized information, allowing interaction with elements of the environment, as well as their use in different contexts.<sup>45</sup> In locative media I saw the opportunity to create social-art-games that could both address and redefine urban spaces. I discovered that games make daily life objects and spaces become “communication machines, trading information and identifying objects/people and movements.”<sup>46</sup> In games I saw the opportunity to fashion another fractal generator.

From researching locative gaming I gravitated towards the use of augmented-reality technology as a way to transpose narrative onto physical environments and inspire collective social action. I was attracted to the ability of AR to push the limits of narrative form in similar ways to hypertext. I discovered a shared concern with the spatial and navigational relations

between data fragments, which is central to hypertext. Participants could encounter different versions of the same place/space simultaneously, meaning that the individual experiences of participants can become linked to both the real and imagined environment similar to mycorrhizal hypae.



I set out to find tools that would allow me to build such an augmented-reality sonic game experience, and I found a software product called RJDJ which seemed to streamline the production and consumption process of such a locative art game. RJDJ was a third-party application serving artists and musicians like myself for the last five years and so I immersed myself and began creating a geo-locative-art-game entitled “Wellywood.”

This was the moment of climax in my MFA journey where my destiny presented itself. In October something amazing happened. RJDJ announced that they were removing their RJDJ app from the market and no longer granting public access to their software. They were selling out, and instead of supporting a diversity of creative expression, they announced their intent to only provide customized and corporatized experiences supported by advertising content.

I was initially devastated and enraged. I had put a significant portion of my time into learning their software, and I had put all of this time into making the Wellywood game, only to lose my technology platform and distribution mechanism all in one fell swoop, thus making my intended final MFA artwork

obsolete. Also I felt for the loss of creative expression – not just Wellywood, but other experiences being created by other artists.

Well, in a moment that felt like a Mark Twain story, my destiny flashed before my eyes while jogging the next day. I then decided I would set out to produce my own platform that not only provided me the same functionality as RJDJ, but I would simplify and improve it, designing a system meant for artists and authors, not programmers. My mission thus became the democratization of the mobile-sonic-AR-geo-locative-social-art-game medium. Thus, JoyGeo.com was born. I could never have predicted this turn of events, but I went with it and haven't looked back.

JoyGeo is framework-art and gives rise to a multitude of trajectories, interactions and experiences. My intuition said that JoyGeo could be as transformative for auteurs as film or blogging and I became excited by this possibility.

JoyGeo is an interactive platform, and so engagement is a critical concept to consider in the work. In the context of interactive-art in galleries, artists seem to limit their engagement. As Crabtree and others have noted,

*The majority of interactive exhibits on display in museums and galleries embody a rather meager concept of interactivity. Interactivity for most in the museum world concerns an individual's participation in, and engagement with, the exhibit. Interaction between visitors is less of a concern, if a concern at all. When designers do consider the participation of 'others', they are often treated as passive observers.<sup>47</sup>*

Interestingly, JoyGeo is situated as an online tool that allows others to situate mobile AR technology and experiences amidst the real world – so the platform becomes a situating tool. To put it another way, the platform is not only an articulation of interaction trajectories, but also a way to empower other artists and auteurs to articulate interaction trajectories of their own.

JoyGeo might be approached through the lens of détournement in the sense that JoyGeo simultaneously reminds us of the powerful and potentially oppressive nature of pervasive networking, and yet attacks this power structure by democratizing access and encouraging open engagement with the same teleautomatic mechanisms.

JoyGeo is a tool which emphasizes communality, unification, and transcendence over the commodification, fragmentation, and privatization that so often serve to confine, divide, and belittle us. Globally networked places and spaces are no longer demarcated based on their physical attributes alone, but are also (re-)inscribed through new forms of connectivity and social interaction. One critical approach might suggest questions such as, “How might JoyGeo and other geo-locative works (see Walkspace.org by Conor McGarrigle and all artworks produced through urbanprototyping.org) translate digital interactions into physical interactions through the work?”

First -- there is presence -- direct encounters, time, proximity. Secondly, there is awareness. Thirdly, there's the idea of collective action -- critically exploring social relations. Fourthly there is the idea of empowerment, appropriating new media technology to demarcate physical matter while simultaneously providing cultural software.

Further questions center on social interaction trajectories and the convergence of mobile communications, pervasive media, ambient informatics, and other "situated" technologies.

Critically, I want to pay homage to the esteemed colleagues who have contributed so much to this burgeoning and important field which is a diverse and collective space to be working within which includes artists alongside architects, urban planners, technologists, computer scientists, media scholars, designers, political scientists, cultural theorists, politicians, activists and smart people of all stripes. Cities are collectives, marketplaces, information hubs, places of cultural exchange. To study the future evolution of cities is to study the future evolution of humanity. In the last decade, figures such as Julian Bleecker and Nicholas Nova have speculated on the existence of an "asynchronous city".<sup>48</sup> In as early as 2006, Sheppard, Bleeker, Nova and others were exploring situated technologies.

Many have investigated the potential of locative-sound frameworks in public space and I count a few among the inspirations for JoyGeo, but probably none more important than Mark Sheppard and the work of the UK-based art-design collective Blast Theory.

Mark Sheppard holds a joint appointment in the departments of Architecture and Media Studies at NYU. His work is integral in that it draws on architecture, film, and new media technologies in addressing new social spaces and signifying structures of contemporary network cultures.

Sheppard's research focuses on the implications of mobile and pervasive computing for architecture and urbanism, while my own work with JoyGeo focuses more on the implications of mobile and networked-urban environments for storytelling and social action.

Certainly Sheppard has shown us possibilities, and back in 2004 when he first produced the *Tactical Sound Garden Toolkit* it was starting to become clear that the future of networked society was going to be driven by mobile phones. Sheppard's TSG project is described on his website as follows:

*Given the ubiquity of mobile devices and wireless networks, and their proliferation throughout increasingly diverse and sometimes unexpected urban sites, what opportunities - and dilemmas - emerge for the design of public space in contemporary cities? The Tactical Sound Garden [TSG] Toolkit is an open source software platform for cultivating public "sound gardens" within contemporary cities. It draws on the culture of urban community gardening to posit a participatory environment where new spatial practices for social interaction within technologically mediated environments can be explored and evaluated.*

*Addressing the impact of mobile audio devices like the iPod, the project examines gradations of privacy and publicity within contemporary public space. The Toolkit enables anyone living within dense 802.11 wireless (WiFi) "hot zones" to install a "sound garden" for public use. Using a WiFi enabled mobile device (PDA, laptop, mobile phone), participants "plant" sounds within a positional audio environment. Wearing headphones connected to a WiFi enabled device, participants drift through virtual sound gardens as they move throughout the city.*

Whereas Sheppard gives the TSG source code away to art curators, I seek to capitalize on my source code and make it available to auteurs through a platform. Whereas Sheppard's TSG requires programming knowledge JoyGeo is designed for casual non-programmers. I'm interested in maximizing JoyGeo's impact and the capacity to empower others to make meaning.

JoyGeo is intended as a new digital tool for creative production, and it's not evident that Sheppard has the same intent with TSG; after all, he first created the project in 2004 and yet it hasn't been used very much since. This lack of participatory engagement is largely for technological (and thus, design) reasons, but also, perhaps impact is not Sheppard's intent. Although JoyGeo is a much newer work that hasn't been used as much as TSG up to this point, it's also clear that JoyGeo is designed for more widespread engagement than TSG, but whether it will achieve higher engagement is yet to be determined.

Whereas Sheppard's TSG was focused on overlaying pre-produced soundscapes onto the networked urban environment, JoyGeo is about overlaying transformational stories of collective social trajectories onto the networked urban society. It's could be useful to provide the following table showing the key differences between the projects:

<b>Sheppard's Tactical Sound Garden</b>	<b>Actionaut's JoyGeo.com</b>
Networking with Wifi only	Networking with 3G, 4G, and Wifi
Downloadable software <b>app</b>	Cloud-based software <b>platform</b>
Passive, open-source approach to engagement	Active, entrepreneurial approach to engagement
The experience is contained to specific wifi hotspot locations (micro coverage)	The experience is contained only by cell phone coverage (global coverage)
Urban-only experience	Urban or rural experiences supported
Sound-only	Multi-media supported
Garden theme	Storytelling game theme
Only short sound clips are supported	Long sound clips are supported
All sounds are chosen by curator	All sounds are chosen by participants
Does not support narratives or games	Supports narratives and games
Does not encourage active engagement	Does encourage active engagement
Map areas are restrained and limited	Unlimited, global map support
No user-generated-content supported	User-generated-content is supported
Non-social in approach	Pro-social in approach
Not very intuitive or easy-to-use	Very intuitive and easy to use

Of most relevance here is the fact that I don't wish to produce framework artwork in order to show off the hardware apparatus and comment so-much on the situated tech, but rather, I'm enabling people to imbue the human experience with more meaning by making a tool. It is with software art that we find the opportunity to humanize, and to transcend technology, and it's a key element that distinguishes the work of Sheppard and myself. I think we both seek to empower synchronicity through mobile new media technologies, but I think he's more concerned with the place, and I'm more concerned with the people. Both are important.

Another major influence upon my work with JoyGeo comes from the art-design collective Blast Theory, and their 2007 piece, *Rider Spoke* which was first shown at the Barbican in London and has since been presented in Athens, Brighton, Budapest, Sydney and Adelaide. From Blast Theory's website, the project is described as follows:

*Rider Spoke is a work for cyclists combining theatre with game play and state of the art technology. The project continues Blast Theory's enquiry into performance in the age of personal communication. The piece invites the audience to cycle through the streets of the city, equipped with a handheld computer. They search for a hiding place and record a short message there. And then they search for the hiding places of others. The piece continues Blast Theory's fascination with how games and new communication technologies are creating new hybrid social spaces in which the private and the public are intertwined. It poses further questions about where theatre may be sited and what form it may take. It invites the public to be co-authors of the piece and a visible manifestation of it as they cycle through the city. It is precisely dependent on its local context and invites the audience to explore that context for its emotional and intellectual resonances. Rider Spoke has a high threshold for the audience: you must be willing to cycle, alone at night, through the city. This sets the stage for a very personal and intimate form of participation. Instead of "User Generated Content", the artists' have approached the project as inviting "Publicly Created Contributions".<sup>49</sup>*

Similar to the work of Blast Theory, JoyGeo empowers collective community theatre actions that operate as game layers on top of the real world. *Rider Spoke* and JoyGeo both narrativize the real world, both projects invite "publically created contributions." Other notable works in the vein of JoyGeo include *Here & There*, by the Sociable Media Group at MIT, *tjep*, by Margot Jacobs and Lalya Gaye, and *Recycled Soundscapes*, by Karmen Franinovic.

JoyGeo is designed for indeterminacy and cybernetic social interference – and by underspecifying the system, and underspecifying the

performativity of different situations, I hope to allow for the best creative uses to organically emerge from the system through social participation.

Through the empowerment of others, I'm encouraging the cultural super-organism to accelerate towards hypermorphosis through my poetic-praxis, and ironically, my tactic is to urge (post)modern culture towards the state of progenesis, which at first glance might seem like the exact opposite of the hypermorphic state, but which is in fact a natural tendency of transformational forms and systems of consciousness.

My hope is that JoyGeo.com – the platform itself and the future ventures that it has inspired will lead to ongoing communal narratives, cross-platform narrative assemblages, and a diverse outgrowth of creative expression and collaborative co-creation. I hope to harness a collective co-production of symphonic narratives and mobile urban productions that might include physical activities, public art works, activism, historic re-enactments, live music theatres, flash mobs, protests, geo-locative comics, geo-soap-operas, sonic graffiti, augmented realities, and other emergent forms. My purpose is to make big ideas come to life in the service of creativity. Sheppard pointed the way by suggesting that we are now living in augmented gardens, and through JoyGeo, I want to encourage everyday people to go ahead and plant some sonic seeds – so that we might better curate the pictures in our own heads.

It is the act and facilitation of crowd-fuelled curation that I feel may be the next step in my praxis. The voyage of creative human empowerment is one that I'm grateful and thankful to be contributing to. Cheers to freedom!

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