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CROSSING OVER:

THEATRE BEYOND BORDERS / TELEMATIC PERFORMANCE

This article discusses “Crossing Over,” a pedagogical art / performance project linking university students around the world that investigates the notions of cosmopolitanism and mobility as ways to constitute meaningful social networks by exchanging virtual performances—and suitcases—over the internet. The questions that the project asks are critical in light of the globalization of information that the World Wide Web and other crossing over points represent. While globalization opens borders to all manner of material exchanges (including people), endless digital data stream through the Internet portal providing opportunities to trade on personal information. We explore and share our identity at our peril. “Crossing Over” also explores the idea that there is an intrinsic relationship between embodied presence and one’s place in the world. Performing or representing who we are is indistinguishable from the place from which we come. The Internet shows us that the experience of presence is manifold and strongly manifest in virtual environments. Cyberspace is not a non-place—it is the ever-mutable backdrop, the mirror held up to a virtual spectator—who will always see something more than a mere reflection—will see differently based on his/ her place in the world.

Dans cet article, l’auteure examine « Crossing Over », un projet pédagogique artistique axé sur la performance auquel ont participé des étudiants universitaires du monde entier. Ces derniers ont examiné les notions de cosmopolitisme et de mobilité en tant que fondements de réseaux sociaux porteurs de sens en échangeant des performances virtuelles—et des valises—au moyen d’Internet. Le projet soulève des questions très importantes en cette ère de mondialisation de l’information par l’entremise d’Internet et d’autres points de convergence. Si la conjoncture actuelle ouvre nos frontières à toutes sortes d’échanges matériels (y compris les gens), le flux incessant de données numériques sur nos portails Internet nous permet d’échanger des données personnelles. Or, c’est à nos risques et périls que nous nous livrons à l’exploration et au partage de notre identité. Le projet « Crossing Over » explore l’hypothèse selon laquelle il y aurait un rapport intrinsèque entre la présence « incarnée » et la

place que chacun occupe dans le monde : jouer ou représenter qui nous sommes est un processus indissociable de notre lieu d'origine. Sur Internet, nous voyons que l'expérience de la présence est multiple et qu'elle se manifeste fortement dans un environnement virtuel. Le cyberspace n'est pas un non-lieu : c'est un arrière-plan en constante évolution, un miroir que l'on présente au spectateur virtuel. Ce dernier y verra toujours plus qu'un simple reflet de lui-même, selon sa place dans le monde.



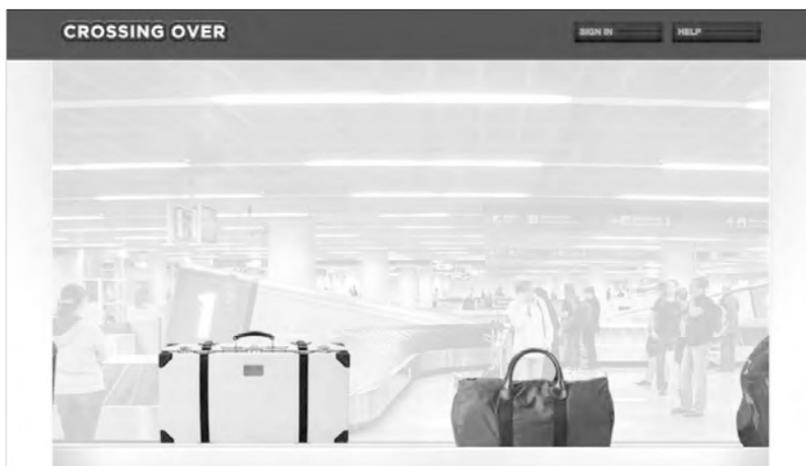
What we do, how we choose to act and interact and 'spect-act,' perform and play and replay, will differ for each of us, at each moment, and for many political and personal reasons. One thing only is certain: we will be faced with such choices in 'real life' and in any number of digital or virtual performative spaces as well—even in our own imaginations and dreams: in the spaces of our own desires. (Goodman 294)

This paper discusses *Crossing Over*,¹ a pedagogical project that traversed borders between geographic locations, art making, theory, and research disciplines using the internet to explore virtual "performance" and interlocative technology to build social networks. Central to the project was the notion of "site" as both a material and theoretical platform for exploring cultural stereotypes and negotiating difference. *Crossing Over* also explored ethical research procedures in the arts to assist students to develop an awareness of how one constitutes oneself within/against a discrete socio-cultural landscape and the implications of this structuring in relations to others. In this first iteration of *Crossing Over*,² Scenography and Intermedia students from the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Regina communicated with students studying Scenography, Acting, and Design for Virtual Theatre and Games at the School of Art, Utrecht (January 2008). The process used a designated website as a repository for the project, which was funded through the Centre for Teaching and Learning at the University of Regina and developed by a graphic designer experienced in pedagogically oriented web projects.³ Through this device, participants exchanged narratives based on a fictional scenario of forced migration.

A visit to the website (<http://www2.uregina.ca/crossingover/>) shows how the exercise unfolded. Student players in both loca-

tions were required to fill in an online immigration form in order to construct a real or imaginary identity. Each packed a “digital suitcase” with personal belongings (images, sound fragments, text, etc.) to equip them in their new life and to transport across a virtual border (or in this case, to upload to a baggage conveyor belt on the website). With the click of a mouse, students in the arrival country claimed suitcases from the conveyor belt and opened them, thereby making the contents available for public scrutiny. Following this point of entry, emigrants were no longer in control of their destinies, as the recipient of the luggage was left to sort out its contents and plot a putative future based on knowledge of the current socio-political contingencies in the arrival country. The process attempted to replicate the crossing of international borders for immigration, emigration, or asylum seeking and suggested the tensions that occur when the fragments or “facts” of one’s existence are publicly displayed and possibly misinterpreted. Through the process, students were asked to consider their own country’s migration and refugee policies, their own response when confronted with “otherness,” and the problems associated with communicating the signifiers of one’s identity in a public forum in ways that may deleteriously affect outcomes.

While the *Crossing Over* project was largely a fictive exercise, the issues it considered are critical in light of the globalization of information that the web and other “crossing over” points represent. Indeed, while globalization purports to open borders, in fact physical borders become increasingly difficult to negotiate. Post



Homepage of project website (<http://cat.uregina.ca/crossingover/>).

Credit: iStockphoto LP

9/11, they provide opportunities to police identities. While this perspective is readily appreciated by those from countries that experience residual cold war politics or are currently caught in regimes of power, even for “safe and secure” Canadians, the story of Maher Arar illustrates the precariousness of border crossings close to home.⁴

More broadly, the project required students to consider various notions of borders and boundaries: as, for example, productive spaces not, as Martin Heidegger writes, “at which something [subjectivity] stops but [...] from which something *begins its presencing*” (150-1); as places of surveillance; or as spent places no longer constitutive of identities in a world in which internet culture has intervened with rhizometrically imagined social networks no longer defined by material delineations (think MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, etc.).

Finally, the project examined the use of the internet as an arena where the performance of identity is the central creative component. In this model, the internet is perceived as playground, stage, and laboratory for performance and spectatorship—and as an interstitial space where these categories blur. Research questions included a) “What are our roles and responsibilities as artists in the posting of personal information in the public forum, an exercise that the internet amply and readily facilitates?” b) “Is the internet a means of creating social networks that recognize the ethical implications of being both concurrently in and of a particular place and citizens of the world?” and c) “What constitutes *performance* on the internet?”

Conceived as part game and part performance, the exercise provided a social networking opportunity, provoked intense discussion, required creative engagement, and taught video recording, editing, and uploading skills for participating students. Our methodology was flexible, building in time for indeterminacy and chance, an approach appropriate to emergent research in studio-based practice and to students not yet familiar or comfortable with scientific systems and rigorous ethical procedures. The challenge of working in two distinct situations, two countries, and many languages made it impossible to conduct the workshops under strictly controlled circumstances or to apply rigorous scientific analysis to the outcomes. In mapping it out, we envisioned a narrative construct rather than a scientific paradigm. I will detail the creative project and return to these issues later in the paper, but before that I would like to provide a few thoughts on the nature of performance gestures in relation to the

internet, as well as the question that drove my personal involvement: “What do we mean by web-based performance?”

In the gaming environment, the notion of virtual space as performance platform, where identities and narratives are constituted and performed, is not new. The network or playing field that such online activity creates provides a range of exchanges that occur on an abstract level within a global community of players. This performing community is defined by a strong sense of *presence*⁵ in an imaginary world that doesn't actually exist outside the minds of the user.⁶ As media theorist Kwan Min Lee writes in “Presence Explicated,” presence is “defined as a psychological state in which virtual objects are experienced as actual objects in either sensory [physical] or nonsensory [social] ways” (27). Aspects of being present within a participant gaming community are grounded in a time-based reality; thus being present represents a location and constitutes a feeling of social presence and self-presence. However, in what appears to be a contradiction, being present also implies inhabiting a virtual space independent of time and location and is characterized by a high degree of anonymity. In these terms, HCI (Human Computer Interaction) represents a radical revisioning of the way we communicate and experience presence in proximity with the stage as we traditionally know it. One of the differences, new media theorist Heide Hagebölling explains, is in HCI's non-linear structuring of information in which “[i]nteractively conveyed contents are organized segmentally and nonsequentially” (3). The alignment of linear communication is replaced by tree or rhizome structures, and the relations that HCI affords are parasocial; this implies a willingness to be present in at least two places at once, to willingly suspend disbelief for a duration of time, and to empathize with issues and personae purely as narrative and spatial constructs. While this sounds, in many ways, like the experience of theatre going, for all who attend live events and engage equally with the internet, the differences are intriguing and profound. The idea of presence is, of course, defining of the live theatre event and is frequently characterized, however reductively, in opposition to other forms of media representation, as the energy that supposedly exists between performers and spectators in a live event. This binary largely excludes the consideration of the internet as a platform for normative performance practices and, indeed, this research was prompted by the desire to question or blur the ontological distinctions between forms of presence and spectatorship in live theatre and in emergent forms of internet performance.

In their article “Designing the Spectator Experience,” the authors explore the growing interest in cultural, artistic, and entertainment applications of interactive technologies and the expanding role of the spectator within the computer interface system. The spread of computers “into museums, galleries, theatres and... clubs, combined with the spread of mobile devices in the streets means that interaction with computers is increasingly a public affair” (Reeves, Benford, O’Malley, and Fraser 741). Taking a broad view of what it means to perform with an interface, the article addresses a range of performed activities that include explicitly staged interactions by musicians, actors, and artists; implicit performances where users almost unconsciously perform their interactions (like using a cell phone or a bank machine) for others to see in a public setting; and explicitly designed interfaces such as theatres, exhibitions, galleries, amusement arcades, theme-parks, and museums, where observing others interact or manipulate technology is very much part of the experience, as are the demonstrable effects. Within this range of experience, the role of the spectator swings from total exclusion from certain performer/computer interfaces (a photo booth), to full inclusion in which people congregate around a shared digital display (Single Display Groupware/ SDG), or inclusion in the experience of watching someone interact with technology with no direct knowledge of the content or experience (an immersive head-mounted display) (Reeves, Benford, O’Malley, and Fraser 744). Of importance, in their discussion, the spectator and the performer exist in real time with technology playing a supporting, if defining, role in relation to the overall experience. While the taxonomy they employ (spectator / performer) is familiar, the variation between the HCI experience and other signifying practices are under considerable scrutiny by performance and media theorists and by practitioners and educators across a range of overlapping disciplines such as theatre and gaming.⁷ Lizbeth Goodman, Director of SMARTlab Digital Media Institute at the University of East London, writes, “the future of the theatre in the age of replay culture is inextricably connected to advances in new technology” (289) and that “any event is increasingly [...] likely to be represented, shared, archived, and stored in digital form” (290). Hans-Thies Lehmann encapsulates several modes of media reflexivity employed by theatre artists: *occasional* and peripheral to the event, *inspirational* in aesthetic form, and *constitutive*—used as a means of problematising and self-reflection (167-8). While theatre has demonstrated its interest in media possibilities,

HCI and the internet, beyond being powerful vehicles for disseminating information, commerce, gaming, documenting, and facilitating social networks, have not yet fully demonstrated their [cyber] performative or dramatic potential.

In *Computers as Theatre*, media theorist Brenda Laurel writes about new media technologies that enable *presencing*, technologies that, as Donald Norman puts it in his foreword to Laurel's book, "offer new opportunities for creative, interactive experiences and, in particular, new forms of drama. But these new opportunities will come to pass only if control of the technology is taken from the technologist and given to those who understand [...] human interaction, communication, pleasure and pain" (ix). The key to finding one's way through the plethora of sometimes numbing technologies is "interaction" (x). There is much to learn in the world of HCI from the perspective of certain kinds of theatre where the notion of direct engagement or interaction is defining and where all participants are both actors and spectators; where participants are, to engage Augusto Boal's term, Spect-Actors.⁸ Laurel insists that the full potential of the computer lies not only in its ability to perform sophisticated calculations but, like theatre, in its capacity to represent actions in which humans participate in a fully articulated common forum where one might experience a range of human emotions, circumstances, and dilemmas, in order to explore human interconnectivities and the possibilities that exist where subjectivities and cultures intersect. This brings me back to the discussion of *Crossing Over*.

Cosmopolitanism: the theory behind the practical exercise

During the *Crossing Over* workshops (which were held for a week in Regina followed by a week in Utrecht), the practical exercise of exchanging digital suitcases was buttressed by readings taken from a range of theoretical and journalistic sources and by viewing several films. In Kwame Anthony Appiah's *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (one of the main texts used), he challenges readers to recognize the importance of their values and the way they resolve the conflicts among those values, and to re-examine assumptions regarding the divide between "us" and "them" (xi-xxi). In examining ethical behaviour in a complex and changing world, he provided a vision and a mandate for *Crossing Over*—a theoretical starting point for students in Canada and Holland, countries tested by policies that, despite the variance of size, favour open but controlled immigration and, as a result, sometimes suffer moments of

unsettling culture clash. In an attempt to discuss disparate values, he purports that there are both local and universal values to be considered; the model that he puts forward is that of a conversation between people from different ways of life that is only productive if it remains open, ongoing, and civil. John Gray writes that this view of cosmopolitanism

has two intertwined strands: the idea that we have obligations to other human beings above and beyond those to whom we are related by ties of family, kinship or formal citizenship; and an attitude that values others not just as specimens of universal humanity but as having lives whose meaning is bound up with particular practices and beliefs that are often different from our own.

This, according to Appiah, is why cosmopolitans endorse as a key aim, that we “learn about other people’s situations and then use our imaginations to walk a while in their moccasins” (63).

Using Appiah as a jumping off point, *Crossing Over* participants entered a dialogue with counterparts on the other side of the Atlantic that considered the circumstances of moving from one’s own comfort zone to a new environment where assumptions around language, religion, gender, and culture might be shaken. In Holland, where a burgeoning Muslim population challenges general notions of Dutch identity, this scenario was particularly relevant. In Canada, as well, the question of how far one needs to go to “reasonably accommodate” newcomers is discussed vociferously in editorials and talk shows. To make these dilemmas concrete for the students, we also looked at examples of filmmakers whose work has brought such issues to the forefront in the two countries. For example, the assassination of Dutch video artist Theo van Gogh in November 2004 in retaliation for *Submission*, the film he made dealing with the abuse of Muslim women (specifically, the Somali refugee and liberal Dutch politician, Ayaan Hirsi Ali) within their own faith practice, was something that Saskatchewan students knew little about. Upon its release, the film triggered an outcry from Dutch Muslims, precipitated a public debate about the freedom of artists to investigate highly sensitive racial issues, and resulted finally in Van Gogh’s murder.

The Dutch students, on the other hand, were largely unaware of the effects and pressures of immigration on Canadian society. We used *L’Ange de Goudron / Tar Angel*⁹ a

Quebec film about the fate of a family of Muslim immigrants in Montreal, as an example of work that had stirred reaction and debate within Canada. Through this exercise, we encouraged a discussion around the rights and responsibility of artists within society to address such complex issues as global migration, the status of the refugee, the tipping points between cultures, and the efficacy of borders in an increasingly digitalized and borderless society.

The digital suitcase projects developed out of this engagement in interesting ways. Canadian players first conceptualized and researched scenarios, and then packed and uploaded suitcases that were largely semi-factual, earnest representations of real circumstances: “I live with my parents in Regina but am looking for new challenges in a more moderate climate and a more dynamic city”; “I am a recent immigrant to Canada from China and am now accompanying my parents to Holland to seek work—here goes”; “I am a Visual Arts student seeking to broaden my horizons, looking for rich cultural experiences.” Dutch players took more liberties. This may have been a function of how the project rolled out in Utrecht; due to the higher workshop numbers, students were paired up. This resulted in them developing composite fictional profiles that tended to be more whimsical or more dramatic than those the Canadian players provided. For example: “a unilingual Dutch speaking, nihilist novelist wants to emigrate to Canada but worries he may only find work in a box-packing plant and that no one will understand his work”; “a Czech academic in Holland wants to accept the offer of a scholarship at a Canadian university but worries she will not be able to say a proper goodbye to her homeland and family before she leaves”; “a pregnant Afghani refugee to Holland is seeking residence status in Canada to flee an abusive husband.” Visiting the website clearly illustrates this variance in approach.

Performing Private Lives

The device of the suitcases produced a range of unique performative gestures and introduced students in Canada and Holland to each other and to a range of readings about subjectivity, identity, and privacy. Not surprisingly, it also revealed how sophisticated and skilled today’s internet users are in manipulating technology to their own purposes.

Arguably, the social networks that proliferate on the internet, such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter, invert the way we

look at and represent ourselves, the way we communicate, and how we delineate the borders between public and private, ourselves and others. Less about family ties, geographic proximity, race, or faith, these networks are rhizometric in nature and constitute temporary shifting interest groups based on fads, instant gratification, and the confidence that comes from knowing you have hundreds of “friends,” each with an accessible online profile. Indeed, such networks are premised on the conspicuous display of personal details—names, phone numbers, lists of friends, what we eat, read, drink, think about, and who we sleep with. Its veneer of privacy, the understanding that only chosen friends may see private information, is thin and porous by design—a device to allow the performing of oneself, either real or fictionalized. According to media critic Ivor Tossell, “Facebook has taught us that the truly private aspects of online life are the things we do out in the open, on a public website, under the pretense of anonymity.”

The notion of privacy, though much invoked, is hard to define. It encompasses domestic spaces, bodies, thoughts, communications, and behaviours—contexts that are usually made inaccessible to the public eye by social, legal, and physical constraints. The practices that delineate the private—the way we dress and conduct private conversations—are so quotidian that they only become visible when things shift, rendering the private public. The concept of privacy grabs our attention only when it is under threat. With the rise of online commerce, many retailers and banking institutions have experimented with advanced methods of plotting and archiving consumer behaviour, while increased use of the internet has created new platforms for voluntary and involuntary self-disclosure. There is a sense that access to private data is a form of social currency, the exchange of which is burgeoning in confusing, fascinating, and sometimes frightening ways.

Indeed, interrogating the unexamined exchange of information on the internet, both in daily use and in art practice, was a central research issue within the *Crossing Over* exercise, and correct ethical procedure became an important area of discussion as students profiled themselves and others on the web site, often without the shielding device of pseudonym or avatar. As a class project that used humans as research subjects, we were mentored by and finally received official clearance from the University of Regina Research Ethics Board. This was the first time the Canadian students had to articulate their artistic prac-

tice in a REB formal proposal. No equivalent ethics clearance was expected of their Dutch counterparts, although students there were better versed in issues of internet privacy and artistic copyright than were the Canadians. In itself, this aspect of the practical exercise succeeded in developing awareness around the ethics of art practice on the internet and, in Appiah's words, "what [consideration] we owe to strangers" (157).

Keeping options open

As a place of symbolic interaction, the internet is not a platform for the representation of fixed or stable identities; it keeps options open, avoids fixation, and allows experimentation. The notion of the internet as a place of free-floating signification, where identity is perpetually reconstructed, redefined, and no longer tethered to overt or outward signs, is supported by cultural theorist Douglas Kellner's claim that identity today is a freely chosen game, a theatrical presentation of the self (58) which, I suggest, is a result of modernity's problematic taking up of the notion of identity as the primary trope of the twentieth century. Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman writes that, without this focus, "[i]dentity would not have congealed into a visible and graspable entity in any other but the 'disembedded' or 'unencumbered' form" that is so embedded in postmodern discourse (19). Such a fragmented way of being in the world, he claims, requires individuals to be flexible and adaptable—to be constantly willing to change tactics on short notice, to abandon commitments and loyalties without regret, and to pursue opportunities according to their availability (23-26). The individual must act, plan, and calculate the gains and losses of action (or inaction) under conditions of endemic uncertainty. This speaks to what is perhaps the defining and alluring characteristic of the internet—its status as unencumbered space, as a place to consider who one is and where one belongs among a variety of styles and patterns.

In 1991, Laurel wrote that "media opens new possibilities for experience" (194) and speculated that virtual reality would, in due course, contain more functions than databases and games (195). Two decades later, much has changed and such a statement is reductively self-evident. Indeed, while the internet today provides a multitude of opportunities for rich social interaction and stealth learning outcomes, the opposite is also undeniably true. It offers countless portals and opportunities for considering options and confronting difference, not all of which are congru-

ent with the ethics of cosmopolitanism. Yet the consideration of these ideas, framed within practice-based research, offers, I believe, a productive, albeit playful, exercise in implementing ethical strategies and rehearsing life skills necessary to function in an interconnected global community. The students who participated in *Crossing Over* were quick to recognize the limits of the paradigm we proposed but were prepared to struggle with the ethical question Appiah posits: how and to what degree are we responsible for others and how far do we extend kindnesses to strangers?—as well as the related questions we proposed: how do these questions relate to art making and new modes of dissemination and performance?

While these may or may not constitute quantifiable outcomes, the following excerpts are a representation of the responses submitted by the participants:

I really find it interesting to work in groups with multiple languages and cultural histories. It reminds me that every person is different. And I've noticed, again, how much I like to speak English and practice this. It's also important to, in some way, self-reflect about the situation in our own country. (Steffie van Lamoen / Utrecht)

I've noticed I really didn't know anything about Canada—not very much now either, but a little bit more and I would love to learn more about it. This project challenged me on making interactions with other students. Also, it created some brainstorms about the themes that were discussed during the project, such as emigration, religions and the different life styles of the societies. (Ines Monteiro / Utrecht)

What I gained from the conversation with those in another country is mostly an understanding of cultural differences. I also learned how cultural expectations, especially coming from my perspective, could be completely wrong. Lastly, I think it would have been interesting to be able to connect specifically with the students who finished our videos, and vice versa. It think it would have been interesting to have a conversation with them, perhaps via email, to hear what their reactions and feelings were of the completion of the videos. (Lisa MacDonald / Regina)

I would like here to return to the notion of scientific methodology in relation to art education briefly introduced earlier in the essay. I am convinced that introducing students to these rigours

at the outset of their formative training is important and necessary and will produce artists whose practice can be measured qualitatively and quantitatively. This will serve to align methodically fine arts disciplines with the rest of the academy and will facilitate funding in the institutions in which we teach and study. It may also have some negative effects by imposing creative constraints. But as an arts educator, the question still remains for me: is it really possible to accurately quantify and carry out a rigorous analysis of outcomes based on emergent practice-based research in the arts? Is it possible or necessary to articulate aims and anticipate outcomes using a scientific research model, when indeterminacy is a critical part of the creative process? While *Crossing Over*, I believe, substantively addressed the research issues dealing with artists' responsibility, privacy on the internet and cosmopolitanism, the initial question—"what is the nature of performance on the internet?"—still provokes consideration and will require further investigation into the nature of *liveness* and internet *presence*. Although the answer to this question is still tantalizingly remote, I feel that it is bound up with the understanding that the internet is 'situated.'

Conclusion

Reflecting on her web-based performance piece *I Never Go Anywhere I can't Drive Myself*, artist Leslie Hill (with Helen Paris) suggests that the "shift from a place-oriented to a 'place-less' society," where we can be anywhere at anytime through fibre optic communication, may be the most profound societal change in the twenty-first century (102). While physical location is less and less a determining factor in our ability, as artists and performers, to produce work, the question of *presence*, in the Benjaminian sense of an object's unique existence in the place where it happens to be, is critical (102-3). In this sense, there is an intrinsic relationship between embodied presence and its place in the world. Performing or representing who we are is never distinguishable from the place from which we come.

The internet has shown that the experience of presence is manifold and strongly manifest in virtual environments. Cyberspace is not a non-place—it is rather the mirror and ever-mutable backdrop held up to a virtual spectator, one who will always see something more, something different, based on his/her place in the world. Lizbeth Goodman suggests that the technology of the future will move beyond Facebook and Twitter toward more sophisticated user-generated content that will be

facilitated by a stream of new “socially driven software” (Interview) that may change the world for the better, furthering intercultural understanding, engaging marginalized voices ... a cosmopolitan goal. ✨

NOTES

- 1 Conceptualized by Dr. Kathleen Irwin and Professor Rachelle Viader Knowles, both of the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Regina, and conducted in collaboration with Professor Henny Dorr, Head of the MA program in European Media from the School of Art Utrecht.
- 2 The second iteration of this project was completed through Sabanci University in Istanbul in September 2011 (<http://www2.uregina.ca/crossingover/>).
- 3 Corwin Derkatch designed the website and collaborated on the development of the interactive component. Wade Sakundiak has redesigned the website for the Regina/Istanbul workshop.
- 4 Maher Arar (born 1970), a telecommunications engineer, lives in Canada, holding dual Syrian and Canadian citizenship. He was deported to Syria and tortured, in an apparent example of the United States policy of “extraordinary rendition.” He was detained during a layover at John F. Kennedy International Airport in September 2002 on his way home to Canada from a family vacation in Tunis. He was held in solitary confinement in the US for nearly two weeks, questioned, and denied meaningful access to a lawyer. The US Government suspected him of being a member of Al Qaeda and deported him, not to Canada, his current home, but to his native Syria, even though the nation is known to use torture on suspects. He was detained in Syria for almost a year, during which time he was, according to the findings of the Arar Commission, regularly tortured, until his release to Canada. The Canadian government had concluded that he was tortured based upon unsworn interviews with Arar and others. Standards set down by the Istanbul Protocol for determining the effects of torture were not used. Nevertheless, the Canadian government has publicly cleared Arar of any links to terrorism and given him a CAN\$10.5 million settlement. The Syrian government reports it knows of no links of Arar to terrorism. The United States government, however, refuses to clear Arar’s name and continues to have both him and his family on a watch list. His US attorneys at the Center for Constitutional Rights are currently pursuing his case, *Arar v. Ashcroft*, which seeks

compensatory damages on Arar's behalf and also a declaration that the actions of the US government were illegal and violated his constitutional, civil, and international human rights. Maintenance of Mr. Arar on the watch list helps the government's defense of the lawsuit, particularly if details are withheld for reasons of national security.

- 5 Literature relating to the systematic study of human interaction with media and simulation technologies uses, sometimes interchangeably and sometimes non-interchangeably, the terms telepresence, mediated presence, co-presence, and presence. Although the nuances of this terminology are becoming increasingly refined, here, I will employ the term *presence* as used by Lee.
- 6 As cited by Vorderer, Klimmt, and Ritterfeld, 392.
- 7 In their program, Acting and Design for Virtual Theatre and Games, HKU (School of Art Utrecht), students investigate the practical and theoretical intersection of dramaturgical strategies employed by theatre makers and game designers. The Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Regina is assessing the viability of a design program that would embrace graphic design and gaming.
- 8 Augusto Boal's "Theatre of the Oppressed" is perhaps the initial or prime example of an interactive theatre practice working on the level of direct engagement and social activism. Boal's work originated in Sao Paulo, Brazil before he was exiled to Argentina in 1971. Through the publication of his major work, *Theater of the Oppressed* (1973), the influence of the popular theatre movement that he initiated, was felt throughout Europe and North America.
- 9 *L'Ange de Goudron* made by Quebec film director Denis Chouinard (2001).

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