

SCALE

A black silhouette of a pair of feet, positioned as if they are holding the letters of the word 'SCALE'.

01.02



toc

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- * Harrell, D. Fox. <redfox@ucsd.edu> "Algebra of Identity: Skin of Wind, Skin of Streams, Skin of Shadows, Skin of Vapor." 2004.
- * Colbert, Corrie. <ccolbert@ucsd.edu> <<http://www.corriecolbert.com>> "Shear Design." 2004.
- * Borevitz, Brad. <bborevitz@ucsd.edu> "Post Mortem: Reexamining the Exhibition 'Paradigm Proliferation Promiscuity Perversion'." 2004.
- * Dragulescu, Alex. <adragulescu@ucsd.edu> "Havoc." 2004.
- * Trifonova, Temenuga. <ttrifonova@ucsd.edu> "Of Marmots." 2004.
- * New Media Ghetto. <<http://newmediaghetto.org>>. 2004.
- * Hope, Matt. <mhope@ucsd.edu> <<http://www.matthope.org>> "Hornmassive" and "3 Speaker Plans." (5 images). 2004.
- * Deegan, Patrick W. <pdeegan@ucsd.edu> <<http://www.caltranzit.net>> "Caltranzit: Taxi Babel review." 2004.
- * Stuber, Neil. <nstuber@ucsd.edu> <<http://www.neilstuber.org/>> "Earwitness account of the Super Cell Sound System." 2004.
- * Stuber, Neil. <elpsproductions@ucsd.edu> <<http://www.neilstuber.org/>> "Perfect SUV." 2004.

Algebra of Identity: Skin of Wind, Skin of Streams, Skin of Shadows, Skin of Vapor

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1. Braiding

Here, I braid three cords together, identity, algebra, and poetry. Identity is the subject matter, algebra is a metaphor for looking at identity in a different way, poetry is used as the enactment of the view of identity described with the algebra. I also use algebra as a tool to aid in development of computational techniques for implementing a new form poetry – a form which is thematically fixed but variable in particular expression and metaphors.

The subtitle of this paper:

Skin of Wind, Skin of Streams, Skin of Shadows, Skin of Vapor
is meant to evoke a restricted notion of identity, and the insubstantiality of that notion. A focus on skin is obsessive and solipsistic. I am expected to talk about it in a talk on identity. When ethnic identity is made binary and colorized, we talk in bodily terms, of skin. It is evocative – it is a membrane, protecting, projecting, coating, an exterior, a superficial, obvious and immense organ. I shan't disappoint these expectations of skin obsession, but when I talk about the traits of ethnic identification these are just symbols for attributes of aspects of social identity.

Wind whips, shrieks, or is unnoticeable. Streams bears small creatures below rocks, rush with energy and transparency. Shadow obscures, cools, relaxes. Vapor: moistens, hides, causes ships to crash, is fluid but hangs in the ether. If we can imagine these four skins, we can also imagine skin of tangled roots, illicit love, unscratched itches, crossed senses, angels, or demons. I shall get back to this later.

What I am trying to conjure is a sense of the fleeting nature and contingency of identity as it is typically conceived of. I propose why some current notions of identity seem damaging, and discuss alternative ways to address it. My belief is in internalizing and exposing this very contingency, accepting this as the reality in how we perceive ourselves, others, and the concept of identity as a whole.

In the beginning I would like to motivate the discussion of identity.

2. Identity

It is crucial to be cognizant of the network of forces determining your identity. Though it is not possible to regulate one's identity, it is necessary to be one of the forces contributing to its expression.

An example:

Alison Saar , Sam Gilliam and Martin Puryear are three artist found in the same categorized section of *ARTODAY*¹, a book on contemporary art.

Regarding Alison Saar, the author writes:

...Alison Saar has also looked at African fetish statues as a source of inspiration. ... The problem with all these attempts to make a new Africa in America is that the spectator is aware of the artist's self-consciousness, of an attempt to create a kind of 'primitivism' which doesn't come into existence spontaneously.

Of Sam Gilliam, the author writes:

Gilliam is, and has always been, an abstract painter, whose work eschews overt symbolism. ... Gilliam has caused considerable irritation amongst African-American militants, and has sometimes been accused of 'Uncle Tom-ism' because of his insistence on being judged purely as an artist, not as a generic representative of minority culture.

Of Martin Puryear the author writes:

Martin Puryear, now perhaps the most celebrated African sculptor, is similarly insistent, despite the fact that he is one of the few African American artists who has direct experience of Africa ... Attempts to align his work with African artifacts have been made by enthusiastic critics, but seem fruitless in the face of Puryear's own statement that, when in Africa, he felt like an outsider – not part of the customs of the people among whom he lived.

Clearly from this collection of statements (which I assert reflect not only the opinions of one art critic, but a general tendency in art critical writing in general) the author has already taken the stance that the racial identity assigned to these artists takes precedence over the content and formal issues of the work by placing these artists all in the "Racial Minorities" section in the book (which happened to be the second to last section, the last being "Feminist and Gay"). The organization of the book indicates the author's hierarchical view of the relative importance of different groups of artists. New York artists deserve their own section (which does not include artists from New York that happen to be of racial minority groups), and British artists are important enough to be segmented by content, there is a section on British Figurative Painting, as opposed to ethnic identity. Curiously, contradictorily, the author simultaneously racially classifies these artists, emphasizes racial debates surrounding the artists, and denies the artists self-determination in assertions of heritage. The African American artist cannot be seen non-racially, but can only be seen as an African American artist who wishes to be seen non-racially. At the same time, the African American artist cannot be seen in connection with any ancient historical tradition or culture, as such attempts are "self-conscious or tenuous."

With such forces seeking to constrain social and individual conceptions of people, it is imperative to seek techniques and perspectives capable of disarming such constraints. Many times even socially aware and proactive groups define themselves and their

relationships to others in binary terms. Black, white. Majority, minority. Patriarchy, oppressed. White-privileged, affirmative-actioned. A world of binaries is concrete and actionable.

In the racialized world of black vs. white, the catch-all category of “other” is typically understood in terms of whether the current person under consideration is more black-like or white-like, or as an Indian-American colleague encountered while traveling through rural Colorado “you ain’t black, you ain’t white, so what is you?”

Aligning under binary banners makes the power struggle very clear, though it is disenfranchising for those who seek a sensitive expression of personal identity. A mathematical analog to binary thought, Boolean logic, is quite powerful, in its limited domain². It is sound. Anything that you can prove in a reality described by Boolean logic is entailed by that reality. This means that in any possible world it is true if you can prove it. Furthermore, it has the converse property that anything you can say in Boolean logic that is true in all worlds, can be proved. It is complete. When I say possible worlds, I mean being able to look at all of the possibilities for what is true and what is false.

Of course, this line of thought is only metaphorical when it comes to identity, but it has interesting repercussions when we indulge this thought experiment. This type of binary thinking leads toward finality of thought, imperial statements, and reification of ideas. There is no way to express a concept such as she is “woman and not a woman” so that it is true. Though socially it is perhaps possible to think of situations where such a statement might pertain. An interesting note is that as soon as logic is expanded to include generalizations, with statements such “for all women who are sports fans,” the logic is no longer complete. The power is taken away.

I invoke mathematics here as a device to allow us to move away from the standard binary way to view identity. I seek new blends involving identity, new ways to combine thoughts, without deviating from the subject matter. Discussion of algebra provides a means to do so.

3. Algebra

Algebra may be considered, in its most general form, as the science which treats of the combinations of arbitrary signs and symbols by means defined through arbitrary laws³.

– George Peacock, *A Treatise on Algebra*, 1830.

‘Watch out, men! You are not so pretty that you can handle a woman’s blade!’ But as Raven turned the blade by the lantern (Bayle squinted because two threads of light lanced from the gnarly hilt), she was still grinning. ‘Ah, you men would take everything away from a woman – I’ve been in your strange and terrible land long enough to know that. But you won’t have this. See it, and know that it will never be yours!’ She

laughed. (It wasn't one blade on the hilt, Bayle realized, but two, running parallel, perhaps an inch apart: as she brandished it, the lantern flashed between either side⁴.)

– Samuel R. Delany, “The Tale of Potters and Dragons,” *Tales of Nevèryon*, 1978.

In the Delany quote, the sword, a violent and masculine symbol, has been transformed into a vulval feminine symbol in a matriarchal mythology, no less violent. It is a combination of signs and symbols defined through (seemingly) arbitrary laws of culture. Algebra deals with the rules for how things can generally be combined. Since I often work using this framework, these days I am sensitive to blending in many domains⁵. The blending of concepts is contingent and fleeting⁶. The national obsession of the U.S.A., identity, is no exception. One obvious breakdown in traditional notions of identity is creation of new ethnic identities by merging. Identity also occurs in peculiar ways in different contexts, for example in a market economy it is treated often as a commodity as we encounter phenomena such as identity theft. It is important and crucial to recognize and challenge inequitable power structures. One way to do so is through understanding identity as a dynamic network as opposed to a system of binary relations. The challenge is to do so within a social context based upon the binary relation of standard vs. other.

In the research of the Meaning and Computation Laboratory at UCSD we use algebraic semiotics, an approach to meaning and representation that combines algebraic specification with social semiotics, to represent sign systems⁷. We also use it to implement construction of metaphors using ideas from conceptual blending theory in cognitive science. We construct blends of concepts. Ideas such as identity now can be blended with ideas such as commodities (in identity theft), screen based icons (as avatars), and where identity is blendable itself (concepts such as Hispanicity, whiteness, or gay, lesbian, transgendered unity). Identity of one individual can be blended with identity of another. For example O.J. Simpson is often referenced in news reporting on the Kobe Bryant case because both are African American sports figures. Note that this analogue between sports figures is the result of a blend: Ishmael Reed notes in a recent article from his *Konch* magazine⁸ that the music mogul Phil Spector was accused of murdering a white woman, the same Phil Spector who reputedly rescued Tina Turner from the abusive Ike Turner, but Spector has not been often compared to Ike Turner. A feature of blending is compression, the relationships between individuals are compressed and changed. Compression⁹ often occurs in blending where the blended space is used to visualize something of a large scale in terms of a smaller one. In the Kobe Bryant/ O.J. Simpson example, two individuals are taken to be analogous because of their existence in a larger group, black male sports figures. They are identified only because they are used as representations of a larger concept – the violent black male. Phil Spector could not show up in the compressed blend in this case, because he is not a representation of that group. Tokenism can be seen in these terms – one individual is used to represent the many.

It is important to remember that blends are created on the fly; they constantly change; they are active. They execute and allow for thought experimentation. They exist in

larger networks and are extremely dynamic and contingent. This contingency seems especially relevant for discussing identity concepts. When we encounter others, our conceptions of their identities are composed as blends. When someone says “well I am really not that into sports,” or “my mother is Asian,” or “I have converted to Judaism,” our conception of that person is transformed on the fly. The network of concepts that make up the perceived identity of that person is changed. Currently I am working on an algorithm to explore the construction of blends on the fly for generating media. It is possible to imagine how such work could be used to inform precise discussion about identity concepts.

4. Poetry

Blending and metaphor are conceptual tools that can be used to address this fluctuating view of identity. New views of an identity can be introduced using metaphor and taken through transforming phases with evocative effect. For me, the use of exaggerated metaphors in poetry and literature can illustrate this idea. In my own work this is a central device that I use. In my novel, a fantasy entitled *Milk Pudding Flavored with Rose Water, Blood Pudding Flavored by the Sea*¹⁰, characters constantly change identity and metaphorically transform. The fantasy in the tale arises from elaborating these metaphors more than any other type of magical or paranormal effects. For example, in the first half I describe the tale of a type of black knight youth traveling from city to city. Metaphor is used to describe the view of him through the lens of that particular town.

In one example, Jal-R takes on a new role in the chapter “Men and Mothers,” his description is established and transformed as the passage progresses. After this passage he transforms further:

The voices were indecipherable. The number of people from far-away and near-away lands was greater than in years past. The effect was disorienting as he walked through the market. Many of the strangers shrank from him. His was a stark figure; black silhouette with a flowing shadow cloak slipping behind him. Despite recent sneers from his compatriot Black Riders, most townsmen and women treated him with grand respect. The strangers’ fear came from the clear bearing of power and battle with which he carried himself. He was a warrior, there was no doubt. All talk of the diminishing public regard for the riders was moot in the wake of his heavy black boots. He was an undeniable force, a Black Rider. He was the essence of a rider, he walked and a thunderhead—ominous threat surrounded him. Today his merchant friends knew better than to approach him or joke at his expense. He walked as if on a mission. The hilts of two daggers swung at his sides. Knives formed delicate decorations on the calves of his boots. There was no color on him besides a touch of pink in the embroidered rose at his chest and reflections in the hints of silver at his feet, waist, and cowl. He opened the door to a nondescript long hall and stepped inside to crying and a sanitary aroma.

A bit later:

Jal-R rocked the infant against his black padded breastplate. It had been a trial to coax the baby girl to sleep. He often felt ill at ease here and his queasy heart surely passed its vibrations to the children. The other professional mothers felt threatened by the alien image of brutality nursing their charges, muscling himself into their world. All in the longhouse felt as if their hearts beat through black gauze when Jal-R was there... a dark sense of roles askew. Jal-R was unaware of many of these perceptions of him, but the cloud that gathered each time he walked in there was impossible not to notice. It mattered little, he told himself, he had resolved to learn at least some of the arts of the mother to provide for Ayoli.

My engagement with the idea of unstable, metaphorical, and transforming identity did not begin with the Jal-R Black Rider character. Reconnecting this poetry to the subtitle of this talk, I also wrote of an expansive view of skin. My obsession with skin peaked when I was around 19 years old. I created more than 30 types of skin and imagined life in each of these¹¹.

These were skin such as: the skin of the man whose skin turned to paper, the man whose skin was made of everything funny, the balloon-skinned girl, the man whose skin was made of sexual experimentation, the girl with noisy skin, the man whose skin was pink but people called him white but didn't mean the color of pure driven snow, the man whose skin was brown but people called him black but didn't mean evil.

One such poem follows:

Skin normally has thin blue veins in it
But the man whose skin turned to paper
Knew that the thin blue lines on his skin
Were made from ink and not the flow of blood.
The lines were parallel to each other,
Yet because his skin curved
It was hard to tell whether the lines
Were standard or college rule,
And due to the fact that the man whose skin turned to paper
Had skin that was not a chalky white,
The thin red vertical line that ran perpendicular to the blue lines
Was difficult to see.
One hole through his head
One through his duodenum
One through his tibia
So that although the size of a normal man
He fit in a three-ringed folder.
One pencil in each hand
So that, enabled by ambidexterity,
He could twice as quickly write and record
His thoughts and ideas

Images called doodles or tattoos.
Writings, poetry, and self-indulgence
Make a set of verse, a body of work
That begins: skin normally has thin blue veins in it.

For me, exaggerated, densely metaphorical, and shifting views of identity traits have a liberating effect. It expands a sense of possibility for self-identification. It also stimulates a skeptical view of social identity politics in that it engages the political issues, but also declares their divergence from reality.

5. Improvisation & Conclusion

The output of my recent research program combines this type of poetry with the use of algebraic techniques to construct metaphors on the fly. I wrote a computer program, in the LISP programming language, that uses algebraic semiotics as a foundation to generate poems that can be reconstructed on each reading algorithmically, while maintaining core concepts and themes. I think of this work as development of improvisational texts (active media). The metaphors are fluid. In the long term I see these as being interactive with the generation of new metaphors driven by user interaction with a graphical or gamelike interfaces. At the end of this section I have included the output of a run of a preliminary version of the algorithm.

The system works by establishing a set of theme domains, such as skin, angels, demons, old Europe, and old Africa, composed of sets of axioms. It constructs conceptual spaces, using the algebraic semiotic framework, and blends these to construct metaphors using a conceptual blending algorithm. These are then combined with a narrative template based on a model from socio-linguistics research, a formalization of Labov's structure of narratives of personal experience¹². This narrative template is integrated with metaphors generated on-the-fly, and the result is outputted. The core of the work is in metaphor generation, not natural language processing. What comes out of it are conceptual spaces and axioms, not English sentences. For the purposes here, I implemented a front-end to construct a type of poetry, but in particular the guided combination of concepts is the focus of the work. I see the output as experimental research and not a final product. I conclude with this generated poem in the same mould as those I created nearly ten years ago: "The Girl with Skin of Haints and Seraphs." I present the poetry both in forms lightly edited for grammar, and in the forms originally output from the code execution. The generation of this poem unifies the topics in this talk. It is meant to evoke a fleeting and ever-changing sense of identity, inspired by the algebraic view mentioned earlier. It also uses algebraic semiotics as the underlying computational model for conceptual blending. Lastly, it produces a template for production of poetry with the same type of metaphor and thematic concerns with identity as in the poems I just read. Poetry inspired to take a broad view of sundry identity signifiers such as skin. Here is lightly edited output for "The Girl with Skin of Haints and Seraphs:"

in the shadows and the white greek-goddess. in the shadows she peeped
out: charcoal-skin girl.

the young lady would prevail. horned-haint female vapor steamed from her pores when she rode her bicycle
death was better, inside she was resolved to never find a proud lost love
each night she decided a smug life is no worse than smug death.

And here is the LISP output upon which it was based:

(in the shadows) (and (greek-goddess / white)) (in the shadows) (she peeped out (charcoal-girl / skin))
(the young lady would prevail) ((horned-haint / female) vapor steamed from her pores when she rode her bicycle)
(death was better) (inside she was resolved to never find an (pride / loss) love)
(each night she decides (smugness / smugness) life is no worse than (smugness / smugness) death))

Lightly edited output:

her arrival onto this earth was marked with a winged-creature shooting piercing-arrows.
she began her days looking in the mirror at her own mathematics spiked-tail face. black greek-goddess feelings no longer mattered to her when she was elderly. she was demoralized. they would call her white epidermis. she could laugh. they would call her the original white-lady. the original-lady invented mathematics in her core, in the rain, when she was no longer a child, and original-lady charcoal-woman marks streaked her thighs, life was a sight gag. she only cries melaninated soul tears these days.

Lisp output:

((her arrival onto this earth was marked with (winged-creature / winged-creature shoots piercing-arrows / piercing-arrows)) (she began her days looking in the mirror at her own (mathematics / spiked-tail) face) ((greek-goddess / black) feelings no longer mattered to her when she was elderly) (she was demoralized) (they would call her (white / epidermis)) (she could laugh) (they would call her (original-lady / white)) ((original-lady / original-lady invented mathematics / mathematics) in her core) (in the rain) (when she was no longer a child (original-lady / charcoal-woman) marks streaked her thighs) (life was a sight gag) (she only cries (melaninated / soul) tears these days))

Lightly edited output (produced and performed live during a talk given at the Powering Up/Powering Down Festival/Conference held by the critical arts and technology organization *Teknika Radica*, January 30 -February 1, 2004):

her tale began when she was infected with smugnessloveitis. she began her days looking in the mirror at her own itchy entitled face. her failure was ignoring her tormented angel nature. life was an astounding miracle. nordic-beauty death-figure vapor steamed from her pores when she rode

her bicycle. that was nothing lovely. when 21 she was a homely woman.
she decided to persevere; in the rain, she fears only epidermis imperialists.
she believes that evil pride devours and alternates with pride of hope. it
was no laughing matter. she snuggles in angel skin sheets and sleeps.
inside she was resolved to never find a smug or paranoid love.

Lisp output:

((her tale began when she was infected with (smugness / love) -itis) (she
began her days looking in the mirror at her own (itchy / entitlement) face)
(her failure was ignoring her (tormented / angel) nature) (life was an
astounding miracle) ((nordic-beauty / death-figure) vapor steamed from
her pores when she rode her bicycle) (that was nothing lovely) (when 21
she was a homely woman) (she decided to persevere) (in the rain) (she
fears only (epidermis / imperialists)) (she believes that (evil / pride
devours / alternates-with hope / pride)) (it was no laughing matter) (she
snuggles in (angel / skin) sheets and sleeps) (inside she was resolved to
never find an (smugness / paranoia) love))

¹ Edward Lucie-Smith, *ARTODAY*, Phaidon Press Limited, 1995.

² Herbert B. Enderton, *A Mathematical Introduction to Logic*, Academic Press, Inc.,
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972.

³ George Peacock, *A Treatise on Algebra*, 1830., from K. Meinke and J.V. Tucker,
Universal Algebra, pp. 189-411 in: S. Abramsky, D. Gabbay and T.S.E. Maibaum (eds.),
Handbook of Logic in Computer Science: Volume 1, Oxford University Press, 1993.

⁴ Samuel R. Delany, "The Tale of Potters and Dragons," *Tales of Nevèrÿon*, Bantam
Books, 1979.

⁵ Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner. *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the
Mind's Hidden Complexities*. Basic Books, 2002.

⁶ Joseph E. Grady, Todd Oakley, and Seana Coulson. "Blending and Metaphor." In
Metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics, G. Steen & R. Gibbs, Editors. John Benjamins, 1999.

⁷ Joseph Goguen. *An Introduction to Algebraic Semiotics, with Application to User
Interface Design*. In *Proceedings, Computation for Metaphors, Analogy and Agents*,
Chrystopher Nehaniv, Editor, 1998. Yakamtsu, Japan, April 1998.

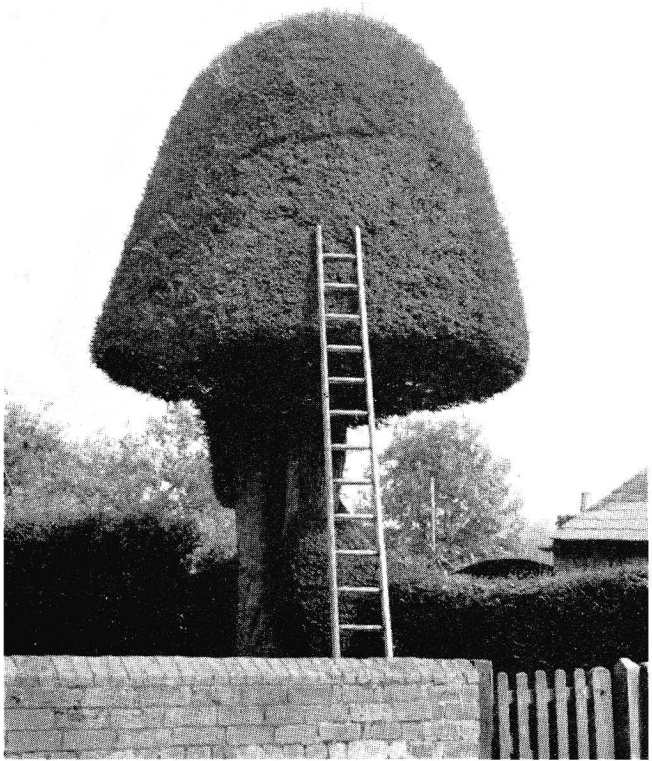
⁸ Ishmael Reed, "CNN's Ku Klux Feminists Unleashed On Kobe," *KONCH Magazine*,
July 2, 2003.

⁹ Fauconnier, Gilles and Mark Turner. "Compression and global insight." *Cognitive
Linguistics*, Vol. 11, 3-4, 2000.

¹⁰ D. Fox Harrell, *Milk Pudding Flavored with Rose Water, Blood Pudding Flavored by
the Sea*, unpublished.

¹¹ D. Fox Harrell, *Conceit*, unpublished.

¹² William Labov. *The transformation of experience in narrative syntax*. In *Language in
the Inner City*, University of Pennsylvania, 1972. from Joseph Goguen, "Notes on
Narrative," course website: Social and Technical Issues of User Interface Design,
University of California, San Diego.

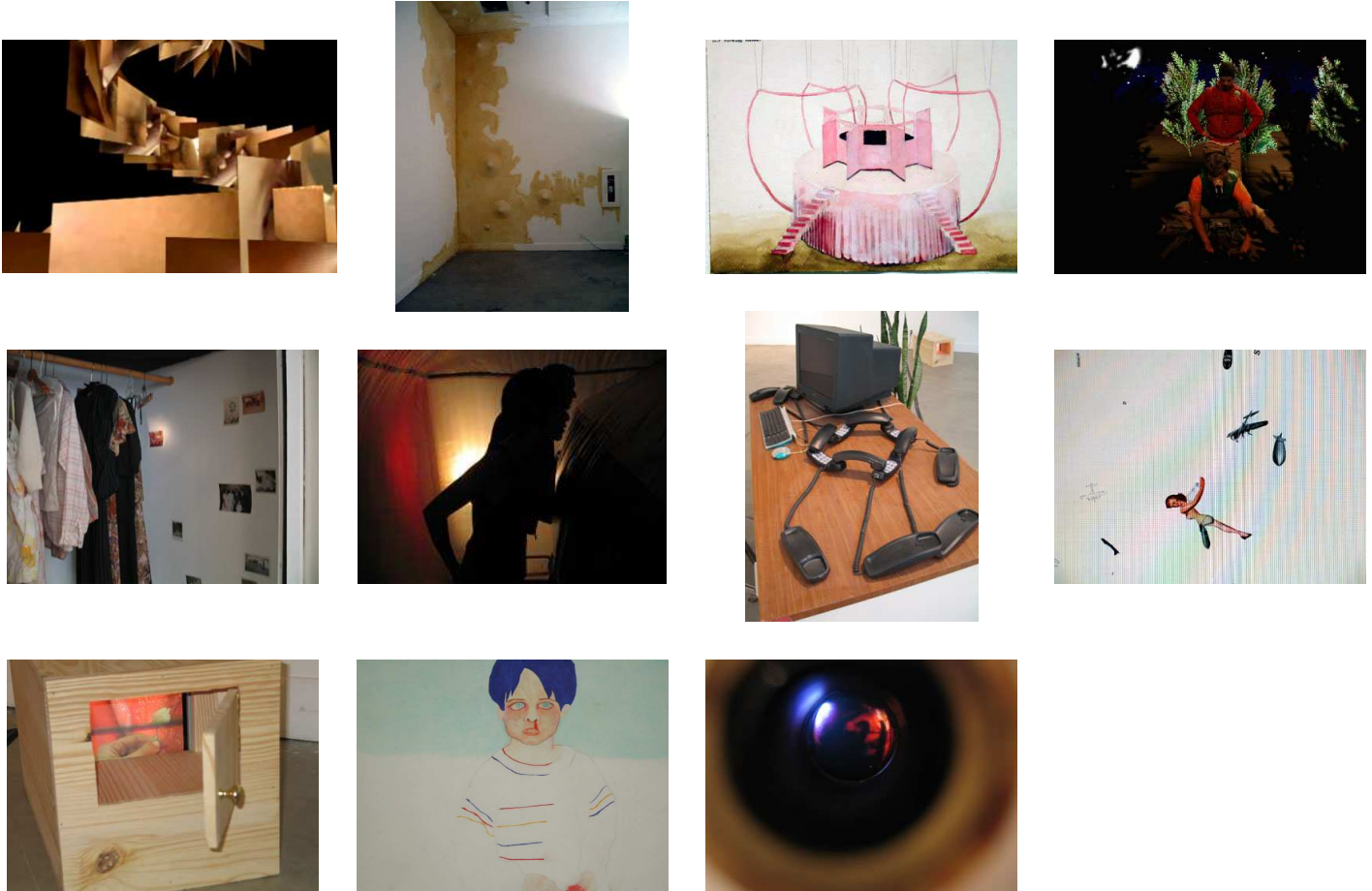


Power-driven clippers are now available in several designs, and are immensely labour saving. Yet on inquiring of those responsible for maintaining some particularly good examples, I have always found that they are not used. The touch of artistry needed can only be obtained by the human hand using shears.

Post Mortem: Reexamining the Exhibition

Paradigm Proliferation Promiscuity Perversion

Brad Borevitz



Did this succeed? Or, in what way can it be said that this succeeded? The latter I think is a better formulation of the question since it admits that this is not merely a description, but a quest by an interested party. Still, it is awkward to assess the outcome of a group project from the perspective of a single participant, and even more so from the point of view of the project's initiator. It is too easy to sink into a parental melancholy, which measures the distance between ambition and achievement, or perhaps more aptly, which simply compares the preconception and actual result.

It was a project I wanted to do—a “post-queer” show that would involve all the queer artists in the visual arts program at UCSD and engage the ideas about the structures of software and sexuality that were floating around in my head—I invited the first

participants, framed the discussion and provided the technical infrastructure, but this was still very much a collaborative project. The project was not the idea, the invitation, the provocation (a document elaborating my ideas), rather, the project was the discussions we had over a period of six weeks prior to the show and the event of the show itself, where the products of participant's work and thinking mingled and created new meanings through the gestalt of the show, that is, in the context of each other's work.

It was clear to the group, like it had not been initially to me, that the show should include artists who were not queer-identified. It was also obvious that the "provocation" document was incomprehensible to the participants. The result was that a new invitation, written in clearer language, was sent out to a wider range of people whom the initial participants identified as having a stake in issues of sexuality broadly construed. These changes were crucial to the project and contributed significantly to a richer dynamic in the group.

Some have commented on the apparent incoherence of the show. On the one hand, I am tempted to explain this in terms of the participant's different levels of understanding, different interpretations, and different degrees of acceptance of the terms of the project. Those differences are certainly there. It also must be true that the ongoing work of each participant presents a kind of inertial drag on the attention and transformation that project requests from its participants. However, I think that even if from certain perspectives the show threatens not to cohere, the formal differences, and conceptual misunderstandings end up being productive. Meanings coalesce by contrasts and frictions within fields of difference. The slipperiness of the scene is where its successes should be read.

What follows is an explanation of the ideas around which the project is organized. These are the ideas as I understand them after the show, and although there is some continuity, there is also a difference from how I wrote about them before it; they have evolved and I have been (at least somewhat) transformed.

The invitation to the show "Paradigm Proliferation Promiscuity Perversion" (PPPP) posits the possible exhaustion of queer politics as the starting point for an examination of the specificities of the contemporary moment in terms of its potential sexual politics. But while the charge is couched in terms of potentialities and possibilities suggesting some kind of empirical solution to the given problematics, the very title of the show betrays its suggestion of a particular set of directions for movement away from the current situation, which is characterized implicitly as somehow uncomfortable, undesirable and ultimately untenable. That very notion of the uninhabitability of the present, sets up topology as the governing paradigm of the endeavor—and paradigm itself, the first term in the ridiculous concatenation of terms that nominates the project, also implies a dependence on spatiality as the primary condition within which to understand both presence and possibility (change, transformation, etc.).

We are in revolt. Or, are we in revolt? Or, we should be in revolt! It is a deleuzian maxim that the body without organs is in a state of mutiny against the organization of its surfaces. Any organization of the body, any normalization of disciplinary regimes, provokes resistances and builds pressure towards escape. We are always fleeing the present. It is *a priori* uninhabitable. The inscription of order on the

body is exactly what the body flees. This generic description of revolt seems inadequate to the specificities of a sexual politics. Accepting it, how then can it be asserted that, for example, homophobia or the defense of marriage act is a particular violence that deserves a calculated strategic intervention in the political arena or that it is distinct from any other revolt (e.g. in terms of race, anti-imperialism, etc.). Alternatively, it could be that those very calculations are a kind of capitulation to the framing terms of the inscriptive forces within culture. To set up battle lines at the junctures that are given is to accept and reify those lines and be captured within a static game: apparent motion that is really only a holding pattern.

A game of strategy is one in which the idea of the goal is always already at hand and determinative. Tactical maneuvers are less teleologically driven in that they take short term, immediate aims as the necessary determinants of action. Tactics are contingent on situations and succeed as they escape the present. Tactics make use of the situation in order to escape it. A machine as it runs is constantly escaping its previous state.

PPPP proposes four specific escape mechanisms from the dominants of the present sexual environment that are found within that same milieu. It is not an exhaustive list and the possibility of invention *ex nihilo* doesn't necessarily have to be excluded either. It is significant though that these routes are found inside—that the prison of the present, the situation at hand, is plural and fractured and contains entrances to lines of retreat within itself. (Raymond Williams' concept of the co-presence of dominant, residual, and emergent forms is relevant.) Each named approach addresses a set of strictures within the hegemon with a tactic that is also available from within the same scene. In this way the quadratic equation of PPPP points us towards the entropic inevitability of the institutions under examination. If they are prisons, they are prisons always already rife with rebellion—even before we enter them, and it is only left to us to join with the exiting flow.

In the term paradigm we are referred to the model of the typical, exemplary, and the normal. Within the structures of the dominant, paradigm demands a mimetic slavishness. Conformity to the trumped up consensus around ideal types is the rule. So gender and sexual behavior are regulated against a comparison with singular models of appropriate performance and deviation is punished accordingly. The concept of paradigm within Saussure's semiotics, however, suggests an alternative reading of paradigm as a substitutional strategy instead of a regulative mechanism. Systemic obedience, rather than demanding mimesis, demands multiplicity and difference. The intelligibility and coherence of a system depends on the presentation to consciousness of a series of differential variations of form so that structure can be understood as a kind of emptiness or receptivity the filling of which determines not a singularity but a set, a series, even a potentially infinite sequence of members that share perhaps only a singular trait making them suitably fit within that space. (It may even occur that occupancy of that space alone is the necessary trait to produce membership in the set.) Along these lines, the ideals of gender and sexual norms lose their regulatory efficiencies and become occasions for playful substitutions and tactical subversions. Models demand replacements that are faithfully *not* the same. The impossibility of perfect mimesis is illuminated by attention to its necessary failure, which may then be celebrated as successful substitution.

Proliferation addresses the pronatalist tendency within the dominant—that is, a model of reproduction that is defined in terms of a dialectic singularity: the union of male and female principles with the significance and result of procreative efficacy (*i.e.*, mimesis). Proliferation suggests, by contrast, multiplication by means of a viral process of contagion where mimetic replication is secondary to simple increase. Moreover, the means are not specific. Even productionist imperatives might be bypassed so that colonization and conversion, recruitment and adoption could be considered just as valid methods of increase as the creation of new instances.

The previous paragraph gives us reason for suspicion: it sounds disturbing like a description of the mechanisms of capital within the age of globalization and in a moment of exuberant speculative engorgement. And this brings to mind the question of the politics of forms: can a given form be definitely assigned a political valence regardless of context and ends? Provisionally, I would be inclined to say that situational and instrumental approaches to form make more sense, but I'm not quite ready to abandon all attention to the political implications of particular forms (These observations are indebted to remarks made by Grant Kester in his recent seminar). In a conversation with Norman Bryson, he came at this problem from the perspective of epistemological uncertainty: how can we really know if what we are doing is radical and libratory? It is often equally possible that we have been unknowingly recruited into a strategy that is deeply conservative whether by design or in effect. It is better to be honest about that problem of undecidability. (It is *almost* always better to be honest.)

The proposition of promiscuity attacks the hoary chestnut of monogamy still serving as a powerful regulative concept even as its practice is reserved for an ever dwindling number of elite monastic zealots and nostalgic antiquarians bent on preserving for posterity its sacred icons and reliquaries. Even within the mainstream, divorce, infidelity, and serial monogamy (not really monogamy at all) describe the common character of contemporary affective bonds. There are few examples of relationships that are between a man and a woman, that progress from chaste courtship (without prior sexual experience in either partner), to social sanction within the institution of marriage and subsequent sexual consummation, and then to exclusive sexual and affective bonding inside the procreative/economic/social/political unit of the domestic sphere uninterrupted until the death of one or both partners. The preservation of monogamous ideals only serves ideological purposes.

Perversion recommends constant change and takes aim at static and essentialized notions of sexuality, or, for that matter, truth. The idea that to change something is to ruin it, to make it false, to make it wrong, must be overturned in order to escape. Creative possibilities are often found within strategies of bending and turning what is at hand to new purposes not intended or even necessarily conceived of previously. Intention is not something that should be inherited from the past, but the means and the materials of contemporary intentionality of necessity must be.

The artist participants in PPPP understanding the above at some level and convinced of its validity in diverse degrees as the result of a series of conversations responded in a variety of ways that perhaps do not seem obviously related. The works though should be read together and against one another other. Though they are running in different directions, they are fleeing from the same catastrophe.

If the PPPP show succeeds in any measure, it succeeds as a whole; it does so by oblique strategies and by the very ways that it fails to cohere into a totalized project. The idiosyncrasies of the individual projects and the participants are preserved within the recontextualizing frame of the exhibition. PPPP does not demand that all the artist understand the given terms of show's call for participation in the same way—just that the participants allow themselves to be troubled by their habitation of the present enough to want to invent escapes from it.

In a conversation with Norman Bryson, he suggested that the exhibition is interesting because of the way that it treats sex in the indefinite—as something that can't quite be known. Sex becomes not a discrete, identifiable thing, but rather a vague feeling and suspicion—a tingling in the loins. Something that is provocative and raises questions: Is this sex? Do people do *that*? Would *I* like to do it? What *is* this sensation? Do I like it? Is it sex? Something about that perspective feels satisfying because it seems absolutely consonant with the show's implicit or incipient politics. Those politics might be summed up as a kind of claustrophobic reaction, a desire to escape the threat of the reification of the sexual.

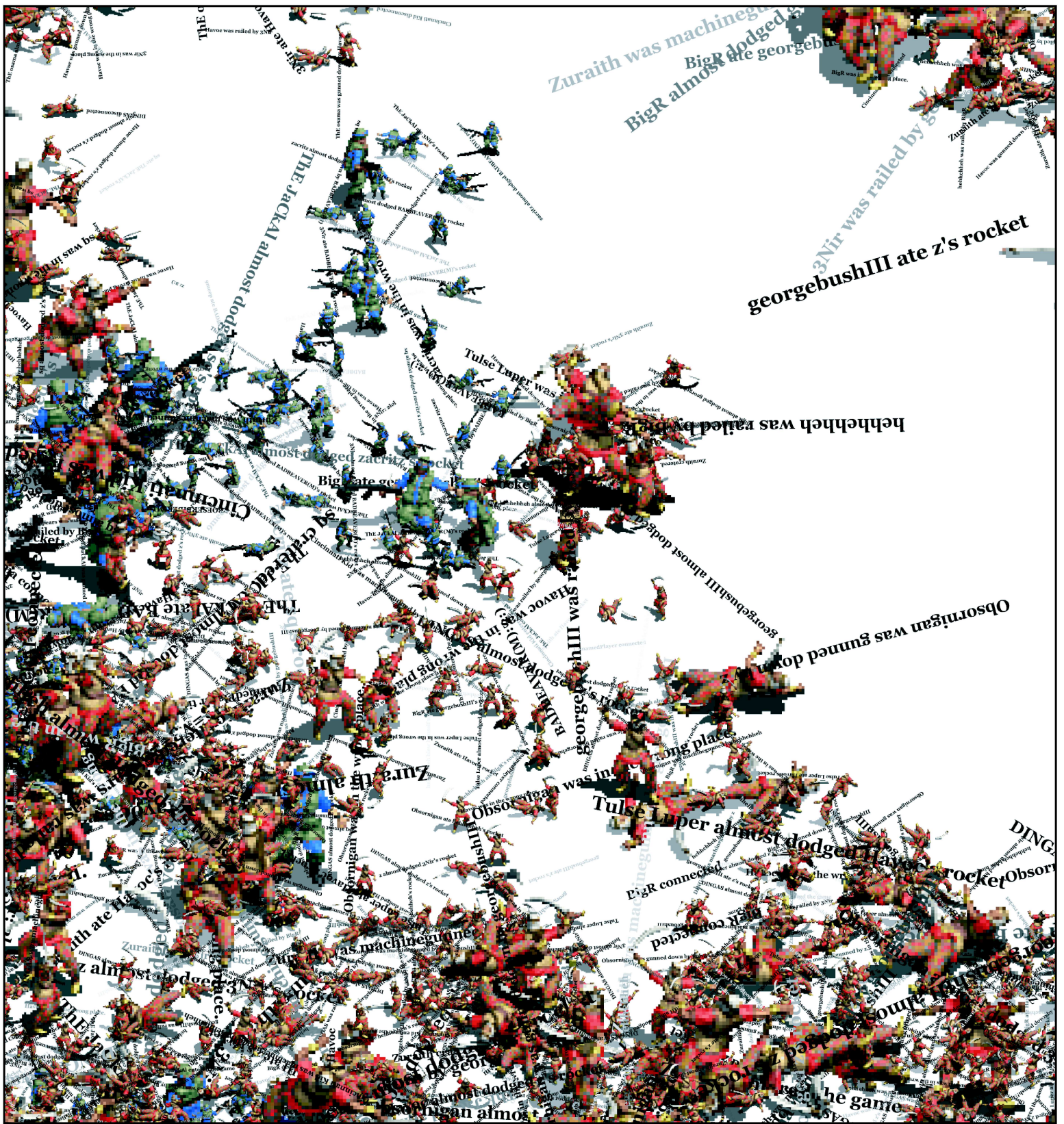
The exhibition *Paradigm Proliferation Promiscuity Perversion* took place February 9th through 21st in the Marcuse Gallery of the Visual Arts Facility at the University of California San Diego.

Exhibition Website: <http://instance.ucsd.edu/pppp/>

Author's Website: <http://www.onetwothree.net/>

Author's Email: bborevitz@ucsd.edu

About the Author: Brad Borevitz is an artist and writer whose focus is the nexus of possibility surrounding the intersection of exhausted modernist traditions of abstraction, sexuality and computation. He is currently studying for a MFA in the department of Visual Arts at the University of California San Diego.



havoc series

alex dragulescu

www.sq.ro

"le dance macabre" of pathfinding algorithms: persian immortals and marines, hacked from the game civilization 3 are caught in a loop of death. from all possible angles, they hit the isometric ground. some are heros -- still alive at frame 1 of the animation, some are buried under many layers and paths. no one will be missed. the immortals pray for the upgrade. as the game, advances, all units of the non-western civilizations (samurais, aztec and zulu warriors will be annoiated as paratroopers or marines. they follow blindly the orders of their leader: the heap sorting algorithm. thousands of pixel corpses are piling up with every cpu cycle. their graves or their temporary victories will marked by text extracted from in-game logs. the war is always on. just join our server.

Of Marmots

A little marmot, forlorn, with drooping ears and a drooping spirit, advances clumsily along an abandoned bicycle path in a fading model of Central Park. He has no name. It does not even know it is a he. I am attributing the male sex to it for the purpose of convenience. It has no notion of a purpose. After all its head is too small to house the notion of a notion, let alone that of a purpose. It has no tail either (no doubt, the result of an unfortunate misadventure). But it has esprit. It has lots of it. It (l'esprit, not la marmotte) is presently shooting out of its little round eyes, fixed, with ever so much determination, on the fading path in front of it, and if you happened to be standing on the path at this very moment, you would have been smitten with the intensity of its glance, the ferocity of its gait, the seriousness of its little face, which made it appear even smaller. It trudged along, carrying the sadness of the entire world on its furry back, occasionally stopping to take a break, leaning against a plastic tree, drawing a quick inventory of its burden, making sure that the universal sadness was still one and universal, that not a single drop of it had fallen away or gotten mixed up with ennui. There was another marmot in charge of universal ennui. Its name was Neville. It was named after Edward Gorey's Neville who died of ennui. Neville. At this moment, Neville was trudging along down some other long-forgotten path, amidst quasi-trees, whose acrylic green had faded back to its natural prototype, whatever that was. La marmotte did not remember what it was. It felt its nostrils twitching. Something was burning. It smelled like plastic. The little marmot let go of universal sadness and lay back over it, smoothing down a few wrinkles here and there. It made a point of being comfortable even when it was wallowing in universal sadness. It lay there thinking, musing, pondering, reflecting, meditating, considering how many synonyms of what it was doing it was capable of summoning. Its hair moved ever so slightly in the rubbery wind flowing steadily over its prostrate little body. For the first time, the little marmot felt how little it was and how universal its unlikely mattress. It fell asleep. Quietly it dreamed of Neville.

Neville was sick of being in other people's dreams. Not to mention marmots'. Marmots' dreams are the worst. Neville stopped. It looked down, thereby activating the super-small digital map implanted in the toenail of its sixth toe. It had never been proud of that sixth toe (no doubt the result of an unfortunate misadventure or a misfortunate fortuna, one or the other) but it had to admit that it came in handy in times like this when superfluous gadgets were all that an honest marmot could rely on as it trudged along, earning its daily pumpkin. Neville sighed. It hated pumpkins. Finally the little screen of its reliable toe lit up. Absent-mindedly Neville performed a movement that would later be described as 'scratching' as it bent down to look closer at the screen. It was an interactive toe-screen. Neville touched it but its paws had become so overgrown with hair that the image on the screen was all fuzzy. Let's take a step back and silently enjoy this image for a second: a little marmot, looking down, its hair casually falling over its beady little eyes, with an inquisitive look on its face, the lower lip protruding slightly forward. Neville liked to pout. It did so unconsciously when it was faced with an exceptionally complicated problem. The image on the screen cleared up and lo and behold, amidst the stationary representations of quasi-trees (or was it the trees that were stationary, not the representations), something moved. Neville looked closer. And closer. And closer. Finally, using a special feature of its eyes, of whose existence no one else was aware, Neville zoomed into the image. A tiny hairy dot moved in the lower left corner of the screen. Zoom. Zoom. The dot was still too tiny to identify as this or that. Hairy was the only characteristic one could attribute to it. Neville was too intrigued by the image on the screen to consider attributing anything to the dot. Neville took a step forward. The dot moved. Neville took another step forward. The dot moved again. Not only that but now it was bigger. Neville looked at its feet, startled but pleasantly so by the discovery of unsuspected

zooming capacity in its right foot. Excited and nervous, Neville wrapped the ennui around its head and continued pressing forward. The dot continued getting bigger and bigger without however acquiring any definite physical characteristics. At this point the dot was filling the entire toe-screen. Neville felt the fur on its back drenched in sweat. Under different circumstances Neville would have stopped and rubbed off the sweat but suddenly a feeling of something came over Neville. A strangely familiar feeling, indefinable and because of that familiar. Neville thrust its lower lip even further forward, as if trying to convince itself that it was determined enough not to give up now. How could it give up now? Just when it seemed to have found evidence of another creature, perhaps a fellow marmot, so near...what...a few paths over perhaps? It had never occurred to Neville that there were other paths, other marmots, who knew, perhaps marmots with seven toes. The idea of another marmot stoically trudging along a bicycle path parallel to Neville's threw Neville into some kind of nervous excitement very similar to that usually associated with female characters in a Dostoevsky novel. Yet this other indefinable feeling returned again, replacing the aforementioned short-lived nervous excitement (which, if I may say so, did not really become Neville). Neville was now moving very slowly. At one point it sank to the ground. On one of the branches of a nearby plastic weeping willow, a most colorful plastic parrot stared silently at the little pile of Neville. At this very moment, the dot on Neville's toe-screen disappeared and the creature it represented—our old acquaintance, as you might have guessed, *la marmotte*—stepped on Neville's sixth toe. Naturally, Neville had already died of ennui.

Temenuga Trifonova is a scholar of film, literature, and philosophy, presently at UCSD.





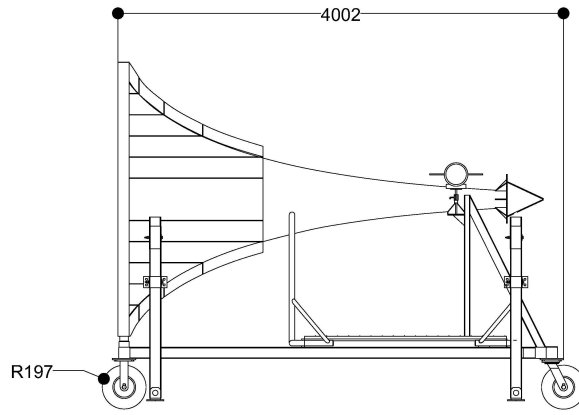
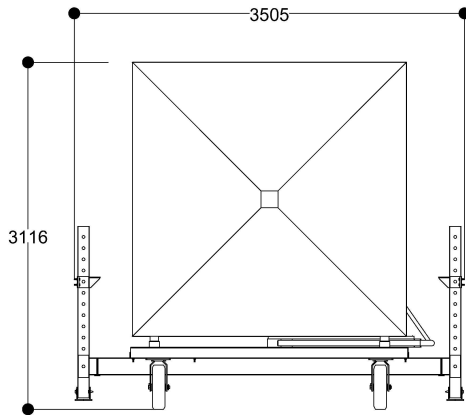
HORNMASSIVE specification sheet

Drawn: Matt Hope Date: Feb 02 2004

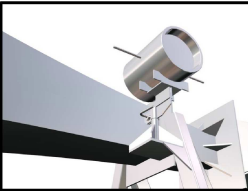


Front elevation

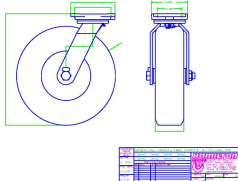
Side elevation



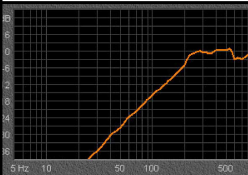
Operational weight	5000 Lbs/2000 kg/ 2 Tons (approx)
Power consumption	900 watts 110volts (US) depending on loading
Power output	600 watts rms (continous)/ 1200 watts (program)
Top speed	road going speed 3 mph/ 5 Km
Dimensions	3.5m x 3.1m x 4m
Construction materials	Mild steel (superstructure) 6061 Aluminium (equipment)
Surface materials	Polymer vibration depressant (Noise Killer 118)



Monitor system



Caster units



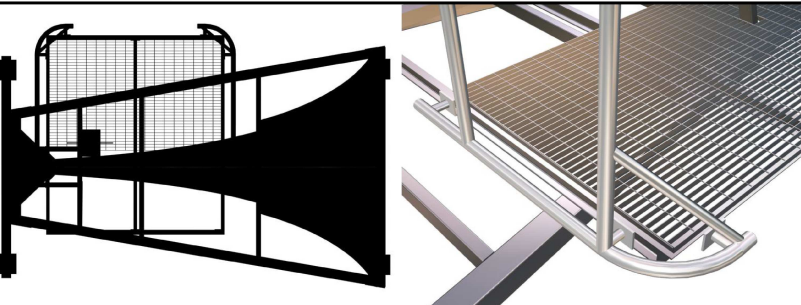
Frequency resp



Speaker chamber



Visualisation (wire/shade mode)



Overhead view

Visualisation of DJ decking



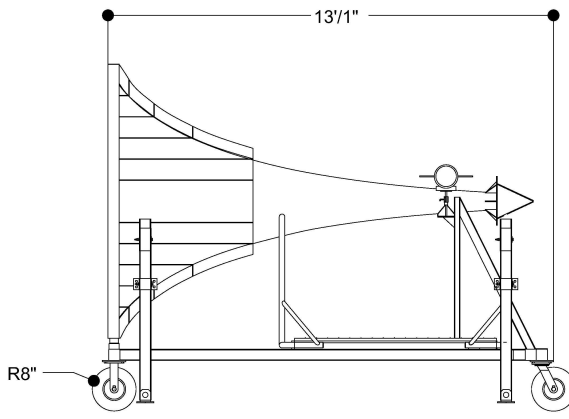
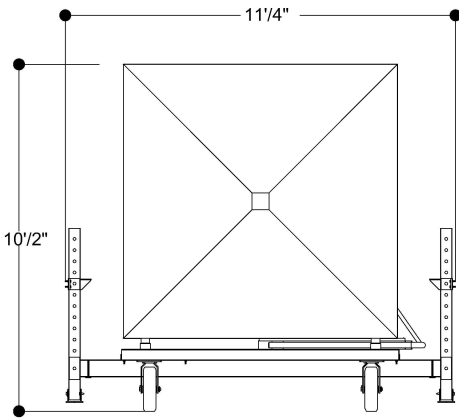
HORNMASSIVE specification sheet

Drawn: Matt Hope Date: Feb 02 2004



Front elevation

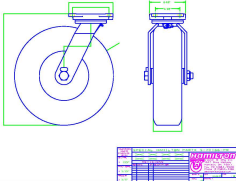
Side elevation



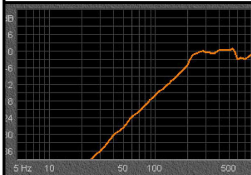
Operational weight	5000 Lbs 2 Tons (approx)
Power consumption	900 watts 110volts (US) depending on loading
Power output	600 watts rms (continous)/ 1200 watts (program)
Top speed	road going speed 3 mph/ 5 Km
Dimensions	13'1" x 11'4" x 10'2"
Construction materials	Mild steel (superstructure) 6061 Aluminium (equipment)
Surface materials	Polymer vibration depressant (Noise Killer 118)



Monitor system



Caster units



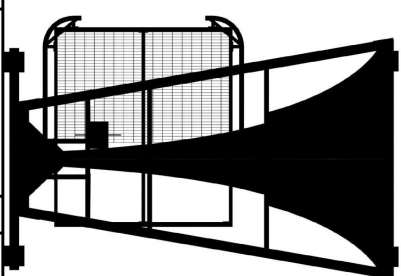
Frequency resp



Speaker chamber



Visualisation (wire/shade mode)



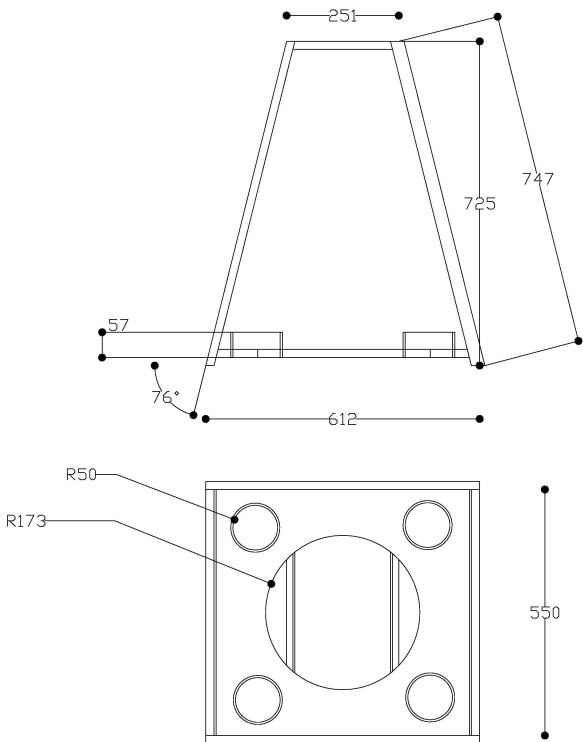
Overhead view



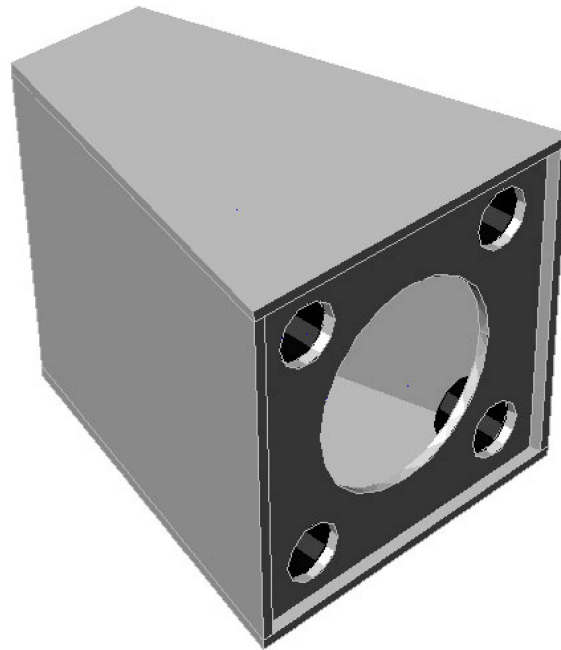
Visualisation of DJ decking

Matts plans 15" Coaxial wedge system

Drawn 04/01/2004



All sizes mm



Wedge monitor for Eminence 15 cx coaxial driver.

NOTE: All sizes in mm

Material: 18mm (3/4") ply/ MDF

Ducts: 100mm (4") pvc pipe

File: ventedCX_15_01.bb6

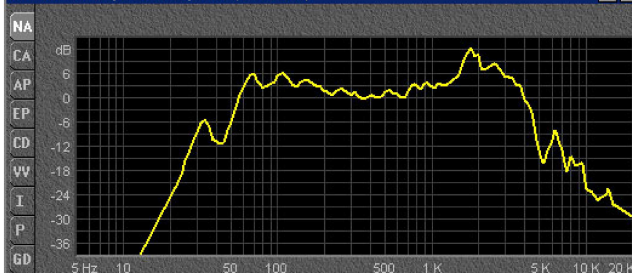
Driver Properties

Name: Beta-15cx - LF
 Type: Two-way coaxial d
 Company: Eminence Spe
 No. of Drivers = 1
 $F_s = 38 \text{ Hz}$
 $Q_{ms} = 8.6$
 $V_{as} = 302.6 \text{ liters}$
 $X_{max} = 3 \text{ mm}$
 $S_d = 823.7 \text{ sq.cm}$
 $Q_{es} = 0.65$
 $R_e = 5.65 \text{ ohms}$
 $L_e = 1.02 \text{ mH}$
 $Z = 8 \text{ ohms}$
 $P_e = 100 \text{ watts}$

Box Properties

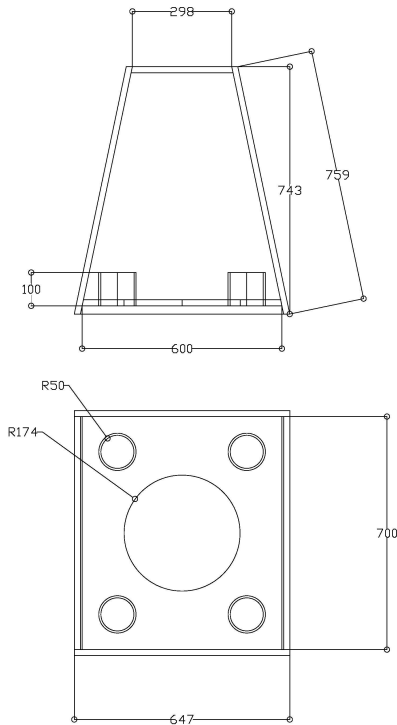
Name:
 Type: Vented Box
 Shape: Pyramid, truncate
 $V_b = 157 \text{ liters}$
 $F_b = 52.21 \text{ Hz}$
 $Q_L = 5.966$
 $F_3 = 49.44 \text{ Hz}$
 Fill = normal
 No. of Vents = 4
 Vent shape = round
 Vent ends = two flush
 $D_v = 100 \text{ mm}$
 $L_v = 56.59 \text{ mm}$

Normalized Amplitude Response (dB-SPL/Hz)

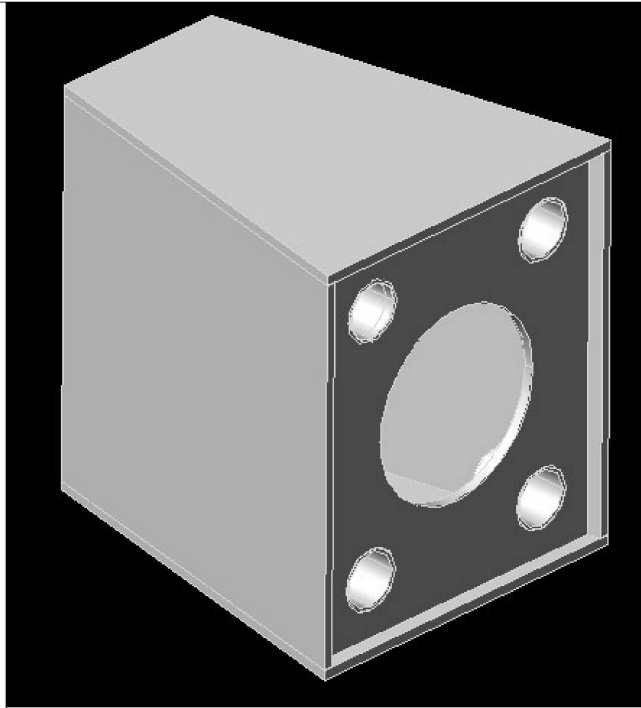


Matts plans 15" Kappa mini bass bin

Drawn 02/03/2004



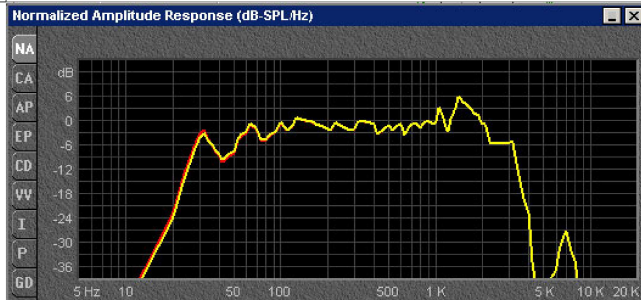
All sizes mm



Wedge monitor for Eminence Kappa15
Bass driver, 450 watts rms
NOTE: All sizes in mm
Material: 18mm (3/4") plyl MDF
Ducts: 100mm (4") pvc pipe

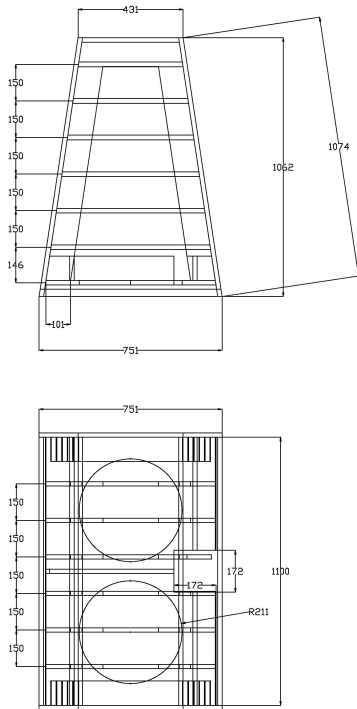
Driver Properties
Name: Kappa-15
Type: Standard one-way driver
Company: Eminence Speakers
No. of Drivers = 1
Fs = 36 Hz
Qms = 10.6
Vas = 278 liters
Xmax = 1.5 mm
Sd = 823.7 sq.cm
Qes = 0.31
Re = 5.21 ohms
Le = 1.05 mH
Z = 8 ohms
Pe = 450 watts

Box Properties
Name:
Type: Vented Box
Shape: Pyramid, truncated
Vb = 213.4 liters
Fb = 36.7 Hz
QL = 5.578
F3 = 42.13 Hz
Fill = minimal
No. of Vents = 4
Vent shape = round
Vent ends = one flush
Dv = 100 mm
Lv = 200 mm

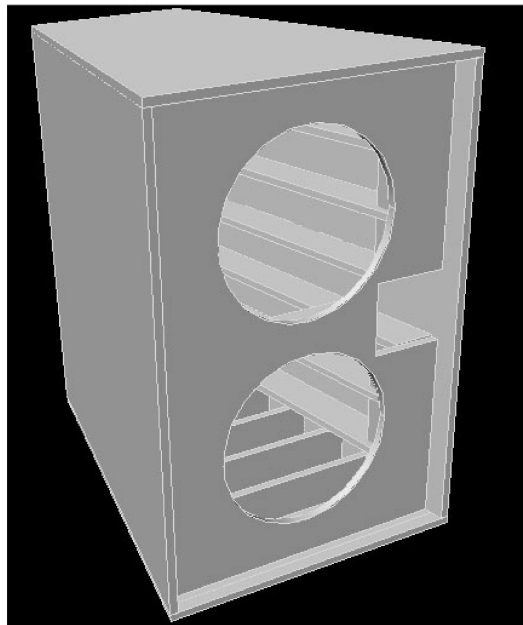


Matts plans 2 x 18" BC 2K bass bin/this is very loud..and low

Drawn 02/03/2004



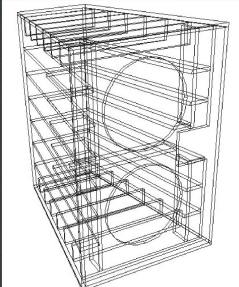
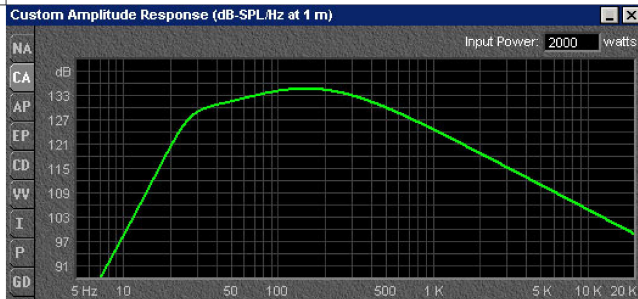
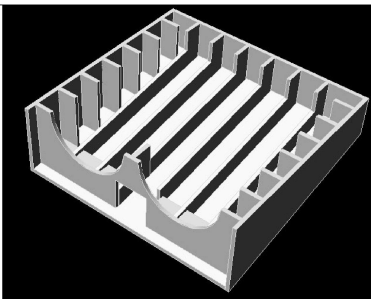
All sizes mm



Bass Bin 2 x 18" BC PS46
 Total watts 2000 rms
 NOTE: All sizes in mm
 Material: 18mm (3/4") ply

Driver Properties
 Name:
 Type: Standard one-way driv
 No. of Drivers = 2
 Mounting = Standard
 Wiring = Parallel
 Fs = 28 Hz
 Qms = 7.6
 Vas = 386 liters
 Xmax = 6 mm
 Sd = 1134 sq.cm
 Qes = 0.33
 Re = 5.3 ohms
 Le = 2.4 mH
 Z = 8 ohms
 Pe = 1000 watts

Box Properties
 Name:
 Type: Vented Box
 Shape: Pyramid, truncated
 Vb = 576.3 liters
 Fb = 27.35 Hz
 QL = 5
 F3 = 42.23 Hz
 Fill = minimal
 No. of Vents = 1
 Vent shape = rectangle
 Vent ends = one flush
 Hv = 172.6 mm
 Wv = 172.6 mm
 Lv = 20.81 mm



Lost in Translation: Caltranzit's Taxi Babel (review)

Caltranzit's recent project, *Taxi Babel*, is one instance of its collaborative practice that focuses on the contested space of the San Diego, US – Tijuana, MX border. In the gathering space around and within a 1975 Chevy Malibu, Caltranzit's members directly address the real and conceptual presence of the border. In their car, artists from both countries interact with one another, traversing the border alongside the endless stream of other vehicles that cross, while traversing normal institutional and intellectual boundaries that often inhibit such engagements of collaborative practice. The diverse group, composed primarily of individuals and groups in Tijuana, and students in UCSD's Visual Arts MFA program, has a grand vision. However, their collaboration as it was performed during *Taxi Babel* ends low on content and high on spectacle.

Taxi Babel was no small moment for Caltranzit. The performance took place during the Museum of Contemporary Art's TNT, exposing the collaborative to a much larger and more formal audience than they have encountered to date. Amidst the mar-mar-march of Paul Kos' retrospective, and the Hessian sculptures of Anne Mudge, MCASD's regular opening-goers were treated to a strange assortment of people in orange jumpsuits standing around a "Taxi" stand that appeared to be a hijacked lemonade stand, a long line enduring the curated live music, ticket peddlers in the form of young women dressed in black, and a random encounter with a babler next to the museum's only bathroom. Tickets for a ride in the red-velvet covered taxi were easy to come by. Barring the racket from the bands (cacophony added to babble) and the chilly ocean gusts, the *Taxi Babel* line waited patiently outside for a ride to, well, no one was really sure; the webcast of the performance on the MCASD's foyer window offered no geographical anchor, only the grainy images of an event with tea light candles.

Waiting patiently is perhaps an understatement. Caltranzit apparently misjudged the logistics of the performance: the taxi carried only four people at any given moment, and the duration between each departure and return was about twenty minutes. Using my math powers, I calculated that about twelve people each hour were shuttled to and from the cryptic location. The line was, at any given point during the evening, between twelve and thirty people long (Californians, it should be noted, love to wait in queues). This meant that my advancement from thirtieth to the front of the line in a mere one hour and fifteen minutes had more to do with absconders from the line than efficient transportation. Then again, efficiency was not the issue at hand: the long line resembled in miniature the long line at the international border; the only difference being that at the border I know why I'm waiting (even if I find both lines to be ridiculous). But let me be fair, I knew why I was waiting: I wanted to take part and witness a group of artists whose subject (the border) is one in which I have a great deal of interest. That, and I must admit, I treasured the idea of riding in very sexy refabb'ed Malibu; the car is hot.

The time finally arrived and I got into the car with my colleague and a couple who was behind us. (It turns out that finally, by this time, Caltranzit put their back-up fleet of vehicles into carrying more passengers.) We shuttled off in the rumbling belly of the land-based boat, exhaust leaking back into the cabin. A man drove the car, uttering hardly a word, while another woman explained to one of the passengers in a hushed voice barely audible from the rear seat some of the aspects of the Caltranzit collaborative (the make up of the group, its conceptual intentions, etc.). No one spoke a word to my colleague or me. We drove through downtown San Diego, following the public buses, getting accosted only once by a man with a beat-up eye waiting at a bus stop (he'd just been robbed, he said, and wanted a dollar; me and my fellow car riders sat silently watching him like he was the spectacle, and then drove off when the light turned green). Eventually we arrived at a café on the other side of downtown. The café was in a narrow two-story house. Our

first sight as we approached was the audience who had preceded us: their glum faces turned happy as they watched us pull up. This was an ominous sign.

As I walked up to the café door I could see three people standing and staring at us from the barista's counter. One of those staring was a woman in a bright green dress with China-red lips who looked fresh from the set of a David Lynch film (I fully expected the obligatory dancing dwarf to emerge at any moment). The strangeness, I figured, seemed relevant. As I turned to go up the stairs I saw three more babblers reading from books; I walked by them wondering if their books were really that interesting. At the top of the stairs a maîtresse beckoned our group into a cozy room where, in the middle of the room, a table with three seated women were dressed in what might most succinctly be described as mystic-hippie attire. Three other chairs across from the women were empty, so my colleague and I, and another gentleman sat down while other audience members stood in the surrounding darkness watching.

I was still warming up from the long wait, glad to be out of the wind and in a warm room. The maîtresse brought three menus and placed one before each of us. Three choices were provided: "Poemales," tarot, and frutas (fruits). The maîtresse left and then returned to take our order. The gentleman to my right ordered the Poemales, I asked for the tarot, and my colleague ordered the frutas. (My colleague was tempted to ask for one of the dishes already ordered, but she refrained in the spirit of the performance.) The maîtresse then took the menus and departed. The three women seated across from us suddenly stood up and moved about the room, sitting back down in front of us in a different order (presumably according to our menu choices). The maîtresse then returned with three wine glasses. She produced an uncorked bottle of wine and pretended to pour wine into our glasses (this was the second in a series of disappointments, as by that time my headache caused by the long cold wait could have been ameliorated by a glass of wine). The maîtresse then left and returned with an empty bowl, which she placed in front of the gentleman who had ordered the Poemales.

The woman seated across from the gentleman began to speak in Spanish. He did not understand, but eventually was prompted to choose between three types of poem-tamales, finally picking one from the category of "love." The woman then opened the Poemale and began to read aloud in a dramatic fashion. When she reached the end of the poem she carefully refolded the poem and handed it to him. She then asked him, in Spanish, to open it and read it. Of course, this command from the woman had little effect on the gentleman except to make him feel incredibly embarrassed; he replied to her in English that he didn't speak Spanish, and then once more in Spanish: no hablo español. All to no avail as the woman kept repeating her command, and was soon accompanied in a chorus from the other two women. These sirens bleated their commands over and again, until helplessly the gentleman looked at me and asked for help, whereupon my companion, who is fluent in Spanish, quietly told him that they were asking him to read the poem. Quickly he unrolled the poem from its corny binding and read the poem. His slow, mispronounced reading of the poem produced a startling effect: the most heart-felt honest moment of the entire performance came from his recital. His fear combined with his good-sport willingness made every utterance unaffected, unscripted, and enjoyable.

My turn came next as the maîtresse took the plate from the gentleman and placed it in front of me. I was nervous after having witnessed the sirens' work on the gentleman. The woman across from me began to speak in Spanish, "Thanks for being here, thanks for coming to share our language..." After concentrating very hard, I chose the first tarot card from a deck placed before me: Death! The card accurately reflected my sentiment. "Words are only sounds, signs, signals," the woman continued--her tarot mysticism saddling up next to classic semiotics. My dish concluded as she handed me my fortune while she announced: if you wish to learn more about

our language then study these words.

My colleague was next. The plate landed before her and then she listened to a grand performance of pathos. Among other psychosexually charged statements from the performing woman, the pomegranate, apparently, was my colleague's groin. All the fruits in the woman's basket elicited an epithet. The woman plucked a grape, set it on the table and flicked it with her finger (in the dim light the grape flew across the table and hit my torso). She then took a peeled orange and bit into it; the orange's juice drizzled down her hand and arm in a sticky, pulpy ooze. She offered it to my colleague who politely declined, "no gracias." The woman repeated louder than before, "Tómelo!" (Take it!) My colleague reaffirmed, "no gracias." Finally the maîtresse, hovering quietly at the side whispered in the ear of my colleague, "I think you should take it, ma'am." My colleague acquiesced, took the orange, and set it in the bowl before her. The three sirens were quiet. The maîtresse took my colleague's bowl, leaving the orange behind, and then announced that the performance was over. Relieved, we all silently left the room and walked back down the staircase now emptied of babblers babbling. Then, once outside, in less than a minute, the taxis reappeared and returned us all to a museum now emptied and closed; the janitors were busy cleaning up the opening's detritus, and a line of taxi hopefuls were still standing in the cold.

To be fair, some of the issues of language and its (forced) incomprehensibility are the same that often affect both sides of the border. Still, the performance was a grandiose but uninteresting reprisal of concept shallow performance art. The babblers were mildly interesting, but more or less disconnected from the piece (though a weak argument might be offered that disconnection was their purpose, it's difficult to support any connection to that). The taxi was fabulous, but ultimately the ride was much like other first rides (in cars or otherwise): I expected more and got less, and where I was delivered, I was not so certain I enjoyed. The café's settings were pleasant, though the references to mystic experience were a cliché. The three women at the table all performed their scripted parts well, but the performance might have benefited from a reduction in pathos.

Concepts of mis/interpretation are very relevant to border issues. The politics of misinterpretation are nearly identical with the border dynamic. To this degree, addressing these issues is important. Asking the audience to re/interpret (translate, translive) 'from the heart' via mystic pathos is less interesting to me, since acting 'from the heart' forms too many systems of oppression at present. Demanding an act of misunderstanding (on the part of the performing women) perpetuates the border, reinstantiating its impassibility with each lost utterance. The gentleman's tenuously read poem transcended the women's linguistic dominance, not only through his heartfelt reading, but also in the act of willing helpfulness provided by his co-immigrant, my colleague. There in the space of performed oppression and our enforced symbolic silence (with the exception of my fluent colleague), an alternate space of resistance appeared. The mysticism was merely esoteric, the women were border guards, and each of us (me, my colleague, and the gentleman) did not communicate in our own way: the gentleman and I seemingly and unknowingly forced the sirens to repeat their commands until they were performed; the actors could not move forward until we complied. Likewise, there was change in communication through my colleague's refusal of the orange. How would one classify my colleague's conscious refusal, in Spanish no less, of their commands? Was the barrier language, or was the barrier the edifice of the performance?

I've traveled to a fair number of countries without speaking the native tongue, and through the goodwill of the country's residents, and some laughable charades on my part, I've always been able to communicate. That experience was denied in the space of the performance where dialogue was impossible because the performers had no desire to engage us. While this is a part of the very real nature of border politics, it hardly constitutes the sum reality. In fact, the performance nearly

essentializes in its focus on miscomprehension (in our case). Even the border between MX and US has its performative array (those of us who have passed through the membrane know the variations of script well). Granted, others may have experienced the performance differently, but that's not something I can reasonably address here. Spanish speakers also experience the political border between MX and US differently and I'm not at all convinced that this performance can equivocate that experience for me. In the end, my long cold wait ended in a long uninspired performance.

I would like to conclude with an up-beat story of the vibrant "border culture" that happens all around us in San Diego and Tijuana. On Friday night, the night after the Taxi Babel performance, my colleague and I crossed into Tijuana to see a show by the Monterrey band Kinky. The crowd was mostly teenage and twenty-something locals with the very occasional foreigner. The dominant demographic was composed of squealing girls with pimples and braces, much like the most pop-ular concerts I've been to around the world. Kinky put on an amazing high-powered show (primarily in Spanish), and everyone had a terrific time.

A short Tijuana girl asked me in Spanish to take a picture of the band for her (since I was taller than most in the audience), and though I couldn't understand her words, I understood her. Word and language succumbed to a more meaningful interaction. And, a truly mystic experience took place in the Jai Alai hall of Rockeros.

Patrick W. Deegan is a regular contributor to Scale.

Earwitness account of the Super Cell Sound System

review by: <http://www.neilstuber.org>

"DJ D-Cell makes my butt shake. He kicks the phatest beats and makes all sorts of b-boy culture pirates break down. His setup is constructed of the newest in plastic technology. Sucker Mc's and DJ's bow down to his skills."

-Bentley Farnsworth

"Last weekend I drove my ass up to the "Venice Wall" with the intent of being awestruck by the Super Cell Sound System. Unfortunately, the west coast reunion show was rained out, so I spent the afternoon on Lincoln Blvd looking for something to validate my travels. I ended up getting coffee."

-Corrie Colbert

"Sorry about the rain ... I'll have a talk with godd."

-Patrick Miller of SCSS

"I don't buy that."

-Brad Borevitz

Acoustic Ecology : The study of the acoustic environment or SOUNDSCAPE on the physical responses or behavioral characteristics of creatures within it.

remix culture is not new. versioning is not new. missy elliot's fat ass is not new. hip hop is not new. white gallery's with trinkets for white walls are not new. livingroom paintings are not new. sub woofers in trunks pumping neptunes beats while rolling on dubs down avenues while ho's holler back is not new. guerilla events are not new. art glasses are not new. peeps fronting is not new. art sneakers are not new. the robot is not new. sampling and culture burglary is not new. turntables as instruments are not new...

Patrick Miller knows all of these things. He has the list in his front pocket. He reads it on a regular basis and laughs at the jokes he hears while waiting for another glass of wine. All gallery shows openings exist for "the party". If they didn't we would ebay our trinkets or show our work in living rooms. For the mecca is not the "white wall," but the "private collection". I think most of us can agree that gallery shows bring people together to think and drink and input celly cell numbers in celly cells and network and make those dollars.

SCSS doesn't need white walls. Nor does it need wheat paste. It doesn't even need to be plugged into a power outlet. Oh, so why don't they use laptops or one of those nifty I-pods? Shut the fuck up you stoopid techie bitch. SCSS has fought off the sponsors. D-Cell told Apple to suck it cuz he's got batteries the size of bowling balls!

Patrick isn't making trinkets right now. Patrick is currently trying to get in peoples pants and make their butts shake like a fat bowl of Jello. He hollers at Missy and Kelis and Olivier Messiaen gives him props from the grave. He high fives with the likes of Kraftwerk and rolls dolos from state to state like Ike Love and Black Elvis. He constructs landscapes of soundscapes and doesn't give a fuck whether you like his lemonade or not. "Actually, I want people to enjoy the lemonade" -D-Cell. He offers a link between the double kissing snobby bitches in Soho on Sunday and the piss mopping Mexican custodians on Venice Beach.

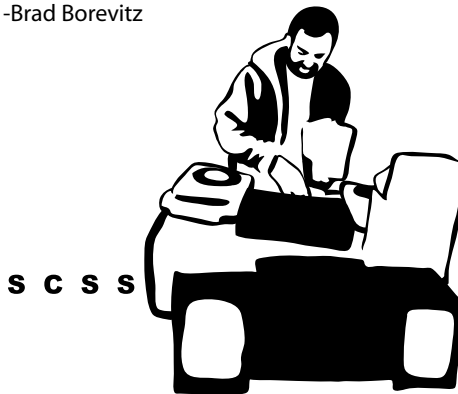
"CLASS:C is a gallery AND a sculpture ... why shouldn't the DJs be performance artists? And why shouldn't their sound systems be a sculpture?" -Miller

You got old artists making the same clever art jokes. You got bitches sucking dick for their MFA. You got crafters crafting trinkets that you can buy to put on a shelf in your bathroom. You got fools running around in the dark trying to be rebels with the same old commentary. And then you got new artists saying "hey whatever you want to do is fine just be honest about it." Everything we do is a performance which makes us all performers. Anything is art if you say its art. Its a matter of claiming. And as far as I'm concerned SCSS has artists lining up on both sides of the table.

Super Cell is breaking down the walls sonically and offering to place a bit of art in your fuckin ear-hole. Cuz thats what this wizard does. Doesn't matter whether you are a gallery artist or a street artist or a con artist, or whether your playing some sort of game I'm not aware of SCSS is gonna shake that ass!

"I don't buy any of this."

-Brad Borevitz



Look for future SCSS events at: <http://abstractmachine.com>

For more info about CLASS:C visit:

<http://www.abstractmachine.com/aboutclassc.html>

★★★★★ "art to fuck to, not fuck with." HH

