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NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT: NEW YORK ONLINE; Dances With Mice

By ERIC V. COPAGE
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Since 1996, WNET (Channel 13) has broadcast "Reel New York," an annual series showcasing the work of what it considers the best independent film and video makers in the metropolitan region. This year the PBS station has created a parallel series for the Internet.

"We've always had Web companion pieces that support on-air programming," said Barry Levine, director of WNET's Web site and on-line programs, part of WNET's New Media Group. The station has also made programs exclusively for the Web, he said, but this is the first time it has created a program in which the television and Web components were of equal importance.

The Web showcase includes work from 14 digital artists from the region who were chosen out of 200 nominated. Carl Goodman, the curator of digital media at the American Museum of the Moving Image in Long Island City, Queens, was a curatorial consultant.

To qualify, the artists had to have done work in the New York region, have made innovative use of the Web, and have done so for personal creative expression, not for a corporate client, Mr. Levine said.

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"The Web has the same energy as independent film and video did in the late 60's and early 70's," said Mr. Levine, who has worked with interactive media since 1986. "The major difference is that the tools of production and means of distribution are infinitely cheaper."

WHAT YOU SEE -- A table-of-contents page shows the names of the 14 artists. In a rectangle on the upper part of the page is a preview of the work of the featured artist of the week, but any artist's work can be seen by putting the cursor on the artist's name.

Annette Weintraub's "Sampling Broadway" is her idiosyncratic multimedia tour of five sites in Manhattan. Words spiral out from the landscape, and there are street noises as a camera rotates 360 degrees. In Neil Zusman's "Mouse Dance," a man dressed in a mouse costume can be made to move in different ways and to change color.

The more intellectual might want to visit "Agree to Disagree Online," in which three artists, John Ippolito, Janet Cohen and Keith Frank, debate one another about maps, language and Natalie Wood. Their arguments lead to digressions about human behavior. With these works and others, there are no explicit instructions. The viewer has to learn how to navigate them.

LINKS -- They point to Web art at additional on-line sites, including the Walker Art Center, the Dia Center for the Arts and Turbulence.

WHAT YOU GET -- An interactive plunge into art's newest frontier. ERIC V. COPAGE

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