JULY 21, 2006

If you like this project you may also like....and a little bit of Art Theory

If you like My Beating Blog, you may also like the below projects. But before you start looking at the other projects below, let me try to paint a picture for you about art movements. I think it's interesting to see, or even try to predict, movements in electronic art and emerging media. There is no doubt in my mind electronic art is getting physical and embodied in more ways then one. There are two reasons I think electronic art is getting embodied. The first is a technological-determinist argument the second a cultural argument.

Biotechnology and modern technology is migrating into and around the body like never before. We can see examples in the form of hi-tech pharmaceuticals, embedded microchips, robotic prosthetics, biological sensors and monitors, and nanotechnology. Artists who use emerging technology are using “today’s” emerging technologies. The technological-determinists argument is that technology is the driving force in this art movement. Well if you add to the above list increasingly commonplace location and GPS technology, you get all types of new maps, map-making, and subjective space projects. Multiply all of this by the internet and you get networked versions of it all. It's exciting stuff, plenty of space for artists to play with unknowns, with new forms of expression, and chaos.

The second reason is a cultural argument. One of the dominant themes in the internet and computing technology since its widespread commercial use has been the notion of “disembodiment.” Like “dismemberment” it means to take the corporal body out of the picture. You can actually track disembodiment and computing much farther, but I'm not writing a lecture here, I want to make some pithy points. Virtual Reality and the internet are all about disembodiment, about "destroying space and time," "shrinking the world," making location obsolete, making the body obsolete. Raymond Kurzweil is probably the biggest cheerleader for this, he wants to download his brain into a hard-drive and live forever.... I don't understand how Consciousness can be digitized, so that's a deal breaker for me. Kurzwell's and his supporters seem to me like dreamy Conquistadors hopelessly chasing a fabled "fountain of youth" in the swamps of Florida. But I digress. Even if your not a media scholar or in the field you've seen these themes in movies and popular culture. There are great things about the disembodying aspects of the internet and computing. And likewise there are things about it which just suck. The
point is, disembodiment has been a dominate trend and goal underlining research in computing and technology. Now we are seeing a backlash. Or at least the pendulum is swinging in the other direction. Many who work with computing, myself whole-heartily included, want to move back into valuing the body and respecting the insights embodiment presents. There is a trend in art to humanize technology, to value the corporal over the virtual.

So what does this mean in art and technology? It means we'll have genres emerge, or grow, and groups of disconnected artist moving in similar directions. In concrete terms we'll increasingly see projects that interfaces with the body, or uses the body as an interface. We'll see even more projects that interface with our bodys' processes and systems, such as the nervous system, glandular system, heart-rate, breathing, and etc. They will in turn be used to control robotic movements, control animation or movement on screen-based works, and they will be used to build elaborate, insightful, and expressive databases. Mix all these things with one another. Then mix them with every Internet technology that exists, and you'll probably be able to see an area that artists and technologists will be increasingly working with.

My Beating Blog and the below works are but puzzle pieces. The big picture I think is a general movement to embodiment in electronic art. I think we are getting mature as a culture regarding our technology. We are less concerned with zip and bang and are looking for the more meaningful experiences from our technological ecology. The result is a portion of the population rejecting certain aims in computing technology (disembodiment) and trying to move the culture back into a focus on the physical, corporal, and cellular level.

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BodyDaemon:
A fully-functional bio-responsive web server, of which the configuration is determined in real time by a participant's physical states as measured by custom bio-feedback sensors. And it's open source. See it at ZeroOne/ISEA2006, Festival of Art and Technology, August 7th-13th.

[ Helpfully more people will use this platform. I haven't seen it in person or anything, but I think this could be the seed for a whole genre or art and technology. Basically I can say enough about this project. ]
Bio Mapping is a research project which explores new ways that we as individuals can make use of the information we can gather about our own bodies. Instead of security technologies that are designed to control our behaviour, this project envisages new tools that allows people to selectively share and interpret their own bio data.

The Bio Mapping tool allows the wearer to record their Galvanic Skin Response (GSR), which is a simple indicator of emotional arousal in conjunction with their geographical location. This can be used to plot a map that highlights point of high and low arousal. By sharing this data we can construct maps that visualise where we as a community feel stressed and excited.

[ Great project, making subjective maps based on how the body reacts to the environment, every city should have one.]

Pimp My Heart
Pimp my Heart is a performance/vehicle intervention that uses a HBBB (HeartBeat Bass Booster) system to amplify the heartbeat of a car driver in real time through an interface with a beefed up car audio aftermarket system.

[ Bling Bling, a fun project ]

**Wild Divine**

A commercially available biofeedback game.

http://www.wilddivine.com/Affiliate2/

[ I've never played this game. Have come close to buying it many times. The website documentation makes their graphics look kinda campy. But still they've taken a lot of initiative an that can only be commended. Basically they have a simple and market ready versions of their own BodyDaemon and put a marcormedia or flash type game on top of it. WE NEED MORE OF LIKE THIS STUFF. That's why I love the BodyDaemon, b/c it could open up this area to more people. ]