

HISTORIES OF INTERNET ART: FICTIONS AND FACTIONS

||| net practice



[net practice](#)

[artists in sight](#)

[net theory](#)

[techne.studio](#)

[curation.sites](#)

[credits](#) | [home](#)

DISTANCE >>

Tina La Porta

The disembodied and dislocated nature of on-line communication

||| HIAFF 3.0 | university of colorado
| department of art and art history |
digital arts area | in conjunction with
alt-x | atlas | blurr

[intro](#)
[artwork](#)

[profile \(Tina La Porta\)](#)

[reviews](#)

< [\(h\)activism](#)

[Reviews] "Distance", by Tina LaPorta, is a work that has been commissioned by New Radio and Performing Arts, Inc. It is a piece that deals with the growing phenomenon of interconnectivity between participants on the Internet. By means of teleconferencing software (specifically CU-SeeMe), computer users can browse for conversation, love and friendships online. This goes well beyond regular chat room conversation as surfers can see each other as well as write in real time. This technology is really still in its infancy and it produces many technological artifacts that are as much a part of the experience as the intended communication itself. Many times images are blurred, garbled, and fragmented. Connections are unreliable as are the real/virtual people that make them. With words, hypertext, and images, "Distance" delves into the minds and emotions of the very real people that make up this virtual world as well as the thoughts conceived therein. It is a moving piece, especially for those that have experienced the world of on-line relationships firsthand.

The piece unfolds as a series of screenshots along with a short bit of narrative text which serves to comment on the action as well as guide the viewer on a linear path. The screenshots are intriguing moments of digital motion capturing the nuances of intimate communication through the filter of low bandwidth technology. The images often take on the appearance of cubist abstract paintings resembling works created by artists such as Picasso or Max Weber.

The narrative begins to introduce a cast of characters engaged in the process of grappling with on-line relationships. There is a certain starkness that pervades throughout this piece, as well as feelings of waiting, uncertainty, and facade. As communication is broken down into distorted groupings of pixels and short bits of text, questions begin to arise as to how much this may resemble off-line communication. If one assumes that the off-line equivalent of this experience is the common singles bar, one can compare the filtration of alcohol, dim lights, loud music while trying to talk, dress-up clothing, pick-up lines, and the scripted norm of acceptable bar conversation creating similar distortions as what occurs electronically in on-line space. One might even wonder whether there really is any meta-intent behind any communication as we often distort our own intentions and identities and confuse even ourselves.

"Distance" is a prime example of art produced for, and about the Net. It is specifically meant to be displayed on the Net, and creates an important space for itself in the new world of electronic media.

By Joe Farbrook