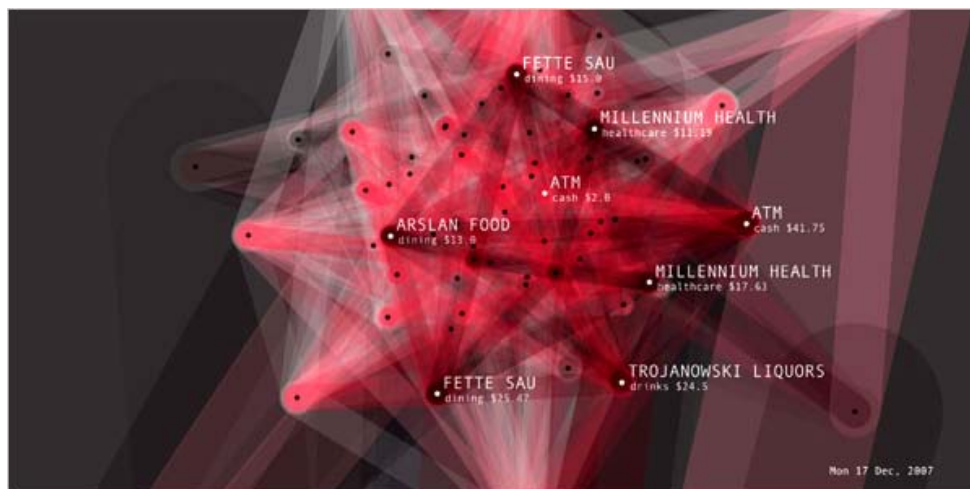




'New Media': Brain Trees, DNA, Receipts ... and Bells



FOLLOW THE MONEY "Transaction Graph 3-17 December, 2007," from Burak Arıkan's new media work "MyPocket."

By SUSAN HODARA
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ON a recent afternoon, a dozen Purchase College students gathered around a table covered with pliers and electrical tape in the basement of the [Neuberger Museum of Art](#). They were there to assist [Douglas Irving Repetto](#), one of the artists in the upcoming exhibition, "New Media: Why," to construct his installation, "Nearly Human (1/1,000,000,000 of a Human Brain)." Their assignment was to screw small motors onto hundreds of tree branches ranging from a few inches to over 10 feet long.

When "New Media: Why" opens on Friday, visitors will be able to navigate through "Nearly Human," the approximately 400-square-foot responsive construction that Mr. Repetto, 38, described as a "big, crazy, uncontrollable bramble vibrating in unpredictable ways."

"Nearly Human" is Mr. Repetto's representation of the neural networks of the brain. In addition to motorized tree branches, said Mr. Repetto, who is also the director of research at the [Computer Music Center at Columbia University](#), "there will be 200 to 300 switches hanging from the branches, triggering the motors."

"And about the same number of bells," he continued. "Lots of bells! There will also be a few taxidermied birds, and lots of goopy multicolored hot glue that looks like bird spit. I'm extra excited about that part."

Three other installations, all using technology-based tools, complete the exhibition. [Margot R. Lovejoy](#), a multidisciplinary artist who has been involved with new media

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since the 1970s, and who is a Purchase emerita professor of art, described her participatory environment, “Confess,” as a “circular space of whispering confessions and hanging audio sculptures.” Gallerygoers can anonymously record their darkest secrets online or by telephone in a high-tech confessional, and explore a database of others’ confessions sorted by age, gender and themes like temptation, betrayal and violence.

When [Paul H. Vanouse](#) manipulates DNA samples using reactive enzyme gel in his piece, “[Latent Figure Protocol](#),” the result is not the familiar barcode-like columns, but recognizable forms like the copyright symbol or a skull and crossbones. “Latent Figure Protocol” is Mr. Vanouse’s commentary on genetic research and the premise that everyone has a unique, unchanging DNA image.

An associate professor of visual studies at the University of Buffalo, Mr. Vanouse, 41, will conduct the experiment live at the opening, with video projections of the process running throughout the duration of the exhibition. He will present a lecture about his work on Wednesday.

[Burak Arikan](#), 32, an artist who teaches in the [Interactive Telecommunications Program at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University](#), created “MyPocket,” which he called a “physical/digital performance.” “MyPocket” presents two large projections of real-time graphs that display the artist’s financial transactions and make predictions about his personal spending habits. A collection of receipts from his purchases will be displayed.

The show also features “Web Site of the Week,” a changing sampling of Web sites that provide historical context for the exhibition’s theme.

“New Media: Why” is the fifth and final exhibition in a series that began in 2004 with “New Media: Who” and continued annually with “New Media: What,” “New Media: Where” and “New Media: When” (there was no show in 2008 because the museum was undergoing renovations). The intention of the series, said Jacqueline Shilkoff, the Neuberger’s associate curator, was “to explore alternative uses of media beyond traditional applications,” and to demonstrate how technology-based artwork can engage its audience in social and political issues.

Addressing the “why” in the current show, she said, “These are pieces that bring their structure — their programming and database components — to the fore.”

After the first two exhibitions, Ms. Shilkoff realized that the written labels accompanying the pieces were not engaging visitors enough. For “New Media: Where,” she trained 10 Purchase students through the school’s work-study program. “They became living labels,” Ms. Shilkoff said, “gallery attendants who served as ambassadors for the work.”

She is training students to serve the same function in “New Media: Why.”

“They help people interact with the work,” she said. “People invest more time with the pieces, and leave with a better understanding.”

“New Media: Why,” Neuberger Museum, Purchase College, 735 Anderson Hill Road, Purchase, March 13 to June 28. Opening reception, with drinks, hors d’oeuvres and music, is on March 13 from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m and costs \$20; (914) 251-612 for reservations. Paul Vanouse, a participating artist, discusses his work on March 11 at



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6:30 p.m. *Jacqueline Shilkoff leads a gallery talk and tour of the exhibition on April 15 at noon. For more information: (914) 251-6100 or neuberger.org.*

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