



**David Horvitz in Conversation with Katie Hood Morgan Over Gmail
July 26 - August 3, 2011**

from Katie Hood Morgan morgankatie@gmail.com
toDavid
dateTue,
subjectintervista

Hi, David. I'm so excited about your upcoming exhibition at Adobe Books Backroom Gallery. I just want to discuss some of your projects from the last year. To jump right in: I'm interested in the ways that movement and your (the artist's) body in transit seem central to your work along with an extension of your physical, performative practice into the sphere of the internet. Can you tell me more about how your recent projects relate to this idea?

For Public Access you posted your photographs of West Coast beaches on the corresponding Wikipedia pages. Regular Wikipedia users who regularly edit entries to the website were alarmed by these new images and scrambled to figure out their meaning and the identity of their author. Can you talk a bit about your experience engaging with this web-based community? Were you surprised at the passionate reactions of some of these users?

from David Horvitz
toKatie
dateThu, Jul 28, 2011 at 10:38 PM
subjectRe: intervista

In Public Access, I drove up the California coast, and made photographs on about 50 different beaches. In each photograph I was standing somewhere in the view. By posting them to Wikipedia, to the articles about the specific beaches (and sometimes, creating the article as well), I wanted to generate visual data for the specific geographic locations. In a sense, the photographs become a kind of meta-data that "surrounds" the online presence of these specific geographic locations. By placing my body in the images, as a kind of artist's joke, I was attaching myself to this circulating data. When someone looked up a certain beach, I would be there. And potentially, the image would be sourced, and I would go with it, traveling with it wherever it goes. Though "I" is a little misleading. "I" wasn't really present in the photographs - my body was always turned around, and sometimes small in the frame. I was attempting to be that anonymous person that you see standing in photographs. The person who just happens to be there, caught forever in the photograph.

I didn't really engage with the community of Wiki editors. I mostly stood on the outside and watched the conversations emerge. The most exciting surprise was when someone edited my body out of the photograph, and then reuploaded the photo because they thought it was valid visual material for the article. That was the interesting thing, that these people wanted to do what was best for Wikipedia. It wasn't just opposing what I did, it was determining what was actually right for Wikipedia. The debates and conversations were interesting and hilarious as well. They were actually debating if my images, because they had what seemed to be the same person standing in all the landscapes (I don't remember anyone assuming it was me), were breaking any rules. As my friend Laurel Ptak had joking told me, I got one of the best crits of my life from this community of editors.

One person, who found himself on my side, said that they had downloaded some of the photographs, and blew them up in Photoshop to see if the person was identifiable. Since I was turned around, or standing in a shadow, they couldn't see my face, and thus came to the conclusion that it was OK because I wasn't recognizable, just an anonymous figure.

What is interesting about your question about the body in space, in relation to the Creative Time Twitter project, and with communication technologies in general, is that the body becomes a site of broadcasting. When you Tweet, it comes from where you are, where you are standing.

You are sending it out into the world from there, going from your cell phone to a cell tower... Or from a wireless signal... But it is geographically specific. It is going there from where you are. Though, it may end up in this kind of omnipresent internet space, it was sent out from somewhere. And if you are moving through space, this site of broadcast is moving as well. For the Creative Time project I did two things. The first was that I materialized Tweets that used a certain hashtag, writing out the messages on a piece of paper. I then carried all of them on a train from San Francisco to Washington, D.C., and Tweeted along the way. The first transcontinental telegraph was sent from San Francisco to D.C. In a sense, this moment, was the first time a message traveled from sea to sea without the aid of a messenger. The telegraph was the technology that would lead to the telephone, the radio, the internet, etc... So this was a pretty grand moment. By traveling with people's materialized Tweets, I took the technology back a century, and gave people a messenger that their digital messages never had.

Another thing that happened, that also happened in the Public Access project, was that I went at the speed of my body in space, while still embracing digital technologies. I was attempting to slow down, while also still using an instantaneous communication device. When I traveled across the continent on the train, which took two days longer than expected because of delays, I intentionally put myself in a situation in which I would run into obstacles that would delay me and make me wait. In a sense, I was trying to experience a temporality where you aren't always on time. I remember the original title of the exhibition at the Wattis that you put me in that the school refused to use. "Fuck the Clock." But also even the title that was used, "We Have as Much Time as it Takes." In these projects there is a kind of "taking time" that is happening. A slowness that still uses the speed of the internet.

fromKatie Hood Morgan morgankatie@gmail.com
toDavid Horvitz <hikarusaru@gmail.com>
dateMon, Aug 1, 2011 at 3:31 PM
subjectRe: intervista

When you say that through the Twitter project you "gave people a messenger that their digital messages never had," it strikes me that a lot of your projects take up this mission-- to add a humanized quality to the daily technologies that we take for granted. Your discussion of "temporality" and welcoming a slower pace also seems to resist the fast pace of our technology-aided lifestyles -- all this despite the fact that much of your work depends on the Internet and other technologies. This interview would have been impossible over snail mail!

from David Horvitz hikarusaru@gmail.com
toKatie Hood Morgan <morgankatie@gmail.com>
dateMon, Aug 1, 2011 at 10:38 PM
subjectRe: intervista

I don't think technology itself is what speeds up our lives. I think there is an underlying logic to always be working, or to always be producing, or doing something. And because the technology is instantaneous, and that you can keep it on all the time, there is a drive to continuously be active because the results and effects of what you do are immediate. Communication is instantaneous, a response can come right away. So there is a need to then respond again, and then respond again. My question would be, what are ways to embrace the instantaneous aspect of digital technologies, while not having the drive to continuously be active and available? How do you slow down, and maybe even, how do you disappear? I do see a "humanized" quality here, but for me travel is what threads many of my projects together.

from Katie Hood Morgan morgankatie@gmail.com
toDavid
dateTue, Aug 2, 2011 at 4:19 PM
subjectRe: intervista

Ok, last question. David, for your exhibition at Adobe, you will be re-staging a project that you originally created for Golden Parachutes in Berlin in 2009. Together you and I will print these images and hang them in the gallery.

Over the course of the exhibition, they will be distributed around the neighborhood near Adobe, effectively expanding the exhibition to include the larger community. This brings up two questions for me: First, can you talk about the role of collaboration (with artists and curators) in your practice? And second, what compels you to engage in these re-iterations of projects over the course of several years, in various cities around the world?

from David Horvitz hikarusaru@gmail.com
toKatie
dateWed, Aug 3, 2011 at 4:38 PM
subjectRe: intervista

The piece in Berlin you are referring to were a series of photographs of a sunset in Palos Verdes, CA. The first one had the sun highest in the sky, and the last, the sun was below the horizon. I printed and framed two copies of each image. One set hung in the gallery. The other, I asked the curator to distribute along Sonnenallee ("sun" street) in sequential order. The curator, Jesi Khadivi, walked down Sonnenallee and asked different businesses if they would like to have one of the framed photographs, and if they would hang them. In the end, if you walked down the street, you'd be able to see the sun set in different stores, sequentially, just like in the gallery. There may be one in a Turkish Kebab shop, or in a bakery, or in a tea shop. The images in the gallery, which are exhibited temporarily for the duration of the exhibition, would serve as a kind of anchor for the "twin" print that was somewhere else in the community. And like all shows, when it ends, it goes down while the other set remains out in the world somewhere. You may come across it years later and have a *deja vu* experience. If someone were to buy the gallery set, they would be buying the fact that they have a set, and that one set exists somewhere else. So part of the piece is the imagination, wondering where the other one might be (since we did not publicly state exactly where they ended up). And knowing that there was no way to control this other set, just how there is no way to control images you release into the public.

I've done a few other variations of this as well - one in Groningen, Holland, and another in London. But they are always slightly different. Since a lot of my work is not produced in the studio, I find myself making iterations and derivatives of previously existing works. It would be quite impossible to make a completely new unique work each time. I sometimes feel the demand that I must always make a new unique project. But I can't do that. Instead, I take an idea, and let it shape itself in a new situation. Unlike in Berlin, the piece in Adobe will exhibit both sets of prints - photographs of the Pacific Ocean along California's coast. During the exhibition, you, the curator, will slowly remove one set of prints, and find a place for them in the surrounding community. By the end of the exhibition, if you do your work, there should only be one set of prints remaining. All these photographs were actually shot while doing the Public Access road-trip. So there is an interesting blend of works here. Things spill over. Things find themselves in different projects, etc... Like the sourcing of images, I too can source my own images, and use them for new projects. Though maybe there is no such thing as something new and singular here - everything might just be intertwined, like a mushroom's mycelia, popping up in different places.

I do do collaborative work, but I'm not sure if I'd think of this project as a collaboration. When it was done in Berlin, it was done for the simple reason of me not being there. I had to send instructions to the curator, and have her carry them out. There is a history of this in Conceptual Art. The instruction art-work may have even come out of this situation. Like I mentioned before, of sometimes feeling in-demand of making something new, I sometimes like to think of this as turning the tables of the artist/curator relationship in terms of labor. Fia Backstrom did this at the Whitney. She was asked to be in an exhibition, and she had the curators produce her work for her. Though, I wouldn't say that in this piece, this is my sole intention, to make you do the work. But it is something to think about today, where there is always a demand for content to be made - for a gallery, a magazine, a blog - to continue the non-stop onslaught of different things to look at. Different things to pay attention to and be distracted by. The Public Access images in a sense, were images of doing nothing. Of staring out at the sea, and watching the waves crash. Of being alone in a space where your attention is not constantly bombarded. It was a quietness and stillness, that then re-circulates in the mechanisms it tries to escape.

David Horvitz
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