Keynote

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Out of Synch

What Artists Do Despite the Worn Out Conceptual Frameworks We Use to Think About Art

The umbrella terms of electronic or new or digital “media art” or technological art no longer cover the range of art – gardening, textiles, bio art, social media – that is being made today in their name. We are using an exhausted framework provisionally until we find a way of understanding what we do that encourages rather than constrains us.

This presentation has two parts and a concluding question:

First, the presentations in the New Art Theory panels will be briefly reviewed and contextualized as various proposals to reframe or to expand our understanding of “what we do.”

Second, examples of specific pieces of art are presented that challenge our notions of what belongs to “media art”: the faucet (as a social medium contextualized by Grant Kester); the smell of dandelion (Clara Ursitti and ARTLINK) and the distribution of art and the senses; and, the chemical computer (Bill Seaman and a very different approach by Herwig Weiser), challenging the conceptual binaries such as analog/digital, hardware/software. Rather than an epigonal time (based on the past), we live in a period of epic struggle to maintain openness in areas of cultural innovation. The utopian impulses that originally informed and motivated media art have been taken seriously and evolved into a greater perceptual and symbolic range in recent art.

The presentation concludes by asking whether it makes sense to reframe the notion of “medium” and “art” so as to capture the complexity of current situation and find the common thread in our shared utopian heritage.