

Implicit Art (Artist Presentation)

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In his *Parables for the Virtual*, Brian Massumi calls for “movement, sensation, and qualities of experience” to be put back into our understandings of embodiment and culture (2002, 4). He says that our dominant modes of comprehension are almost exclusively visual and linguistic. Massumi wants to instead “engage with continuity,” to encourage a processual, active, sensory and relational approach to the world (Ibid, 27).

As an artist, I’m similarly concerned with how categories such as ‘body,’ ‘language,’ ‘vision’ or ‘space’ are often presupposed in contemporary culture, and hope to foster greater dialogue around these complex systems and their relationships to affect and meaning-making. Most specifically I ask, ‘How might the body’s continuity, and its potential disruption, be attendant, provoked and contextualized in contemporary art?’

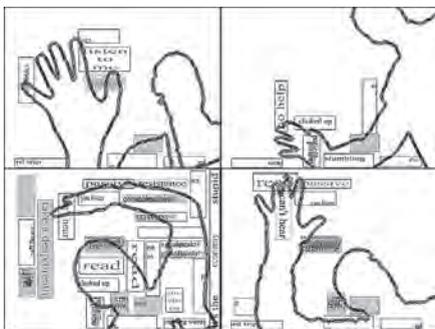


Fig. 1: *stuttering* (4 screen grabs), 2003/2009, size variable

For example, in my interactive installation, *stuttering*, viewers-turned-participants use their entire bodies to touch and trigger invisible activation points laid out in a Mondrian-styled grid. Each rectangle in the work’s projected



Fig. 2: ‘Compressionism’ – scanning water lilies in Indiana, Jesse Egan, 2009

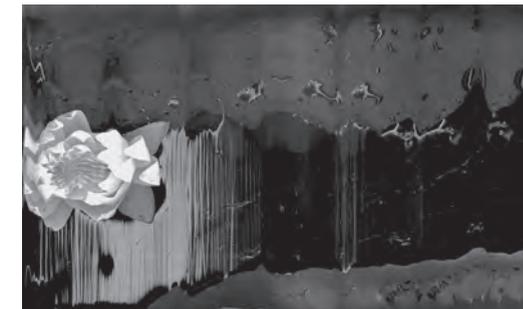


Fig. 3: *Giverny of the Midwest* (detail), in progress, 2 x 12 meters

image is filled with animated text and spoken word. The saturation of these ‘virtual buttons’ creates an inverse relationship: move quickly, and the piece will itself stutter in a barrage of audiovisual verbiage; move carefully, even cautiously – *stutter with your body* – and both meaning and bodies emerge.

In my *Compressionism* series of prints, I strap a desktop scanner, laptop and custom battery pack to my body, and perform images into existence. I might scan in straight, long lines across tables, tie the scanner around my neck and swing over flowers, do pogo-like gestures over bricks, or just follow the wind over water lilies in a pond. The dynamism of my relationship to the landscape is transformed into beautiful and quirky renderings, which are re-stretched and colored on my laptop, then produced as archival art objects using photographic or traditional processes.

Here I ‘per-form’ the landscape to challenge notions of a ‘pre-formed’ world, or sense, or meaning. By engaging with the unfinished and in-process within my work, I seek to challenge the nature of what is ‘given.’



Fig. 4: performance 2 (passage) – a *Sentimental Construction*, 2007

And my *Sentimental Constructions* are site-specific architectural structures made of rope, built to scale and held up by live performers. These move between hard and soft, virtual and actual, public and private. Each twists

the idea of 'public place' by its double activation: first, through the volunteers who physically stretch the form outward and around them; and second, through the communal play of the onlookers-turned-participants, who give the piece an/other performative turn. Active and activated people render 'meaning' and 'use' as transductions, continuous formations in and around one another. *Sentimental Constructions* are CC-licensed, encouraging international contributors (in Croatia and South Africa so far) to re-make and re-define their own public places.

In sum, my art engages movement, sensation and qualities of experience to refigure fixed signifiers as affective and dynamic encounters.

References

- Massumi, Brian (2002) *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Durham, Duke University Press.