

Inter(root), Banyan**Diane Gromala** (ca)

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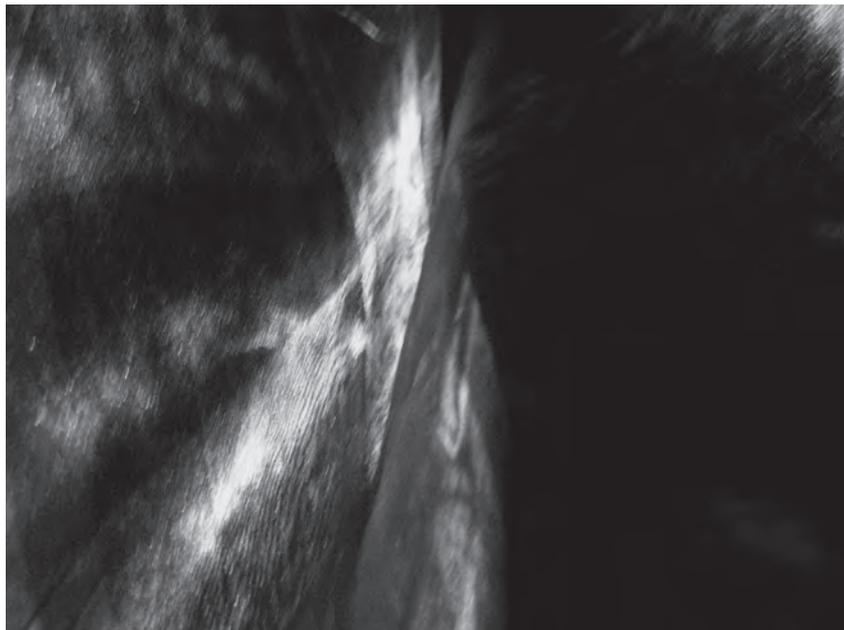
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While the branches seek sky and light, the hidden entangled roots consume.

What are the consequences of surfing the web for the next news headline, a nice pair of new shoes, or pornography? Can we spoil the real environment by exploring virtual ones like that in World of Warcraft? This exhibition will both directly address these sorts of questions about the environmental and ecological consequences of internet consumption, and also explore this relationship through an immersive, yet nontraditional mix of virtual and physical reality of the tangled tree of pleasure-seeking and environmental destruction that we have made for ourselves in the internet. This immersive exhibit will use a virtual representation of a Banyan tree to explore these issues.

The Banyan tree was chosen as metaphor because its unique structure and growth pattern simultaneously embody both the typical modernist idea of the tree and the more contemporary idea of the rhizome. That is, in a Banyan tree, it is hard to know which is the parent trunk, whether root is branch or vice versa, etc. Working as both tree and rhizome, the ancient Banyan is a metaphor for antediluvian and contemporary connectedness. Through exploration and habitation of a penetrable Banyan tree, interactors will experience the ecological and environmental costs of internet consumption; translucent roots reveal diverse energy sources that imply levels and types of consumption. In effect, the interactors are a consumed energy (source of pleasure) – traversing the tangled connected branches and roots – passing through xylem, phloem and pith. Octopus appendages to this boundless tree.



The exhibition will consist of a non-traditional virtual environment, where content is both projected on a screen that has both been woven in the form of a Banyan tree and is the physical form of that tree. When the interactors enter this virtual-physical exhibit, they become some quantum of worldwide energy consumption, as derived from our research-based equations; they are also witness to that consumption. As that unit of consumed energy, the interactor can traverse the tree to be consumed by it and witness its propagation. In short, our daily habit of web surfing and information engorgement will be visualized from the point of view of this Banyan tree's path of energy flow.