COMPUTER AIDED

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COMPUTER AIDED

Computer Aided is an exhibition examining the impact technology has on current art making practices and contemporary culture. Photography, video, painting, code and algorithm art, and other "new" media are showcased. The exhibition also addresses how new technology allows individuals and smaller institutions to take part in cultural dialogs that are often exclusive to large influential institutions. This theme is reflected by the acquisition of art for the exhibition from s[edition], a website selling digital artworks by artists who are otherwise beyond the Masur's means. To underpin this concept of hierarchy and increased ease of communication with technology, *Computer Aided* also features a variety of artists at different points in their careers who live and work throughout the United States and world.

The artists exhibiting in *Computer Aided* are Keliy Anderson-Staley (TX), Joshua Chambers (LA), Harold Cohen (CA), Mat Collishaw (UK), Craig Damrauer (LA), Hasan Elahi (MD), Shepard Fairey (CA), Damien Hirst (UK), Jenny Holzer (NY), John Rodriguez (LA), Jes Schrom & Graham Simpson (IL), Kate Shannon (OH), Marni Shindelman & Nate Larson (GA & MD), and Bill Viola (CA). Additionally, Activision & Toys for Bob present a gallery dedicated to their blockbuster video game *Skylanders Giants*. These artists' interests include the mingling of historic and contemporary art-making processes, technological infrastructure, automated or repetitive processes, surveillance, code or algorithm art, mass production, interactivity, site specificity, craft, the act of viewing and interpreting images, and more. This diverse group of exhibiting artists, drawn together by their common interest in technology, allows museum visitors to take stock of newer art forms as well as evaluate technology's potential impact on culture in broad terms.

This catalog essay is divided into two parts. The first is a thematic explanation of *Computer Aided* and the second is a series of smaller essays that deal with the individual artists included in the exhibition. Hopefully these essays shed further light on the themes I discuss in the first section. This exhibition is meant to analyze the practical realities faced by artists, institutions, and

society in general when presented with new technology. I will accordingly avoid an in-depth discussion identifying any art by genre as it is nearly impossible to do so and would make it difficult to achieve the goals I have set for this particular exhibition. My goal is to contextualize a small segment of recent art created by artists using advanced technologies as part of their studio practice. I will engage with the idea of hierarchy and therefore a conception of the canon of current art history, but not with the goal of historicizing the artists. Both of these explorations are meant to reflect current cultural developments. I nor any other curator, critic, or historian is likely to have enough perspective to canonize any artists living today. Interestingly enough, it seems connoisseurs who must determine the historical and cultural importance of artists frequently cannot do so without the passage of great lengths of time. This seems to be one of the last cultural processes technology cannot speed up; in fact, it may confuse matters and slow the entry of artists and works of art into any version of a grand art historical narrative.

The idea for *Computer Aided* took root in 2011 shortly after s[edition] launched its website. The company offers digital limited editions of art by blue chip artists at very reasonable prices. I immediately bought myself a Damien Hirst and made glib jokes about it for a few weeks. Shortly thereafter I heard a story on NPR that covers how protestors in Egypt used social media to organize themselves. This interested me because s[edition] has several attributes, public user profiles among them, that are very similar to how any number of social media platforms are structured. After further thought I realized how interesting the parallels between the Arab Spring and s[edition] were. While purchasing digital art online offers me few opportunities to take my life into my hands and put a stop to a totalitarian regime, it does offer me the opportunity to take part in a dialog from which a curator at the Masur Museum of Art would otherwise be entirely excluded.

The Masur Museum is a small institution and does not usually have the financial or cultural capital to exhibit renowned artists like Mat Collishaw, Shephard Fairey, Damien Hirst, Jenny Holzer, and Bill Viola. With the help of s[edition] we are poised to do so. *Computer Aided* contains artists who exist at different tiers within

the art world because it would be financially impossible to mount a show like this in any other way. Accordingly, the Masur is less interested in vetting exhibiting artists according to strict ideas of achievement like other larger institutions are. As a result the roster of artists in *Computer Aided* mirrors the non-hierarchical nature of the internet, but promises a very high degree of quality throughout. In a sense it is an experiment in populist snobbery that honors the existing status quo while also undermining it. With this in mind and taking into account the state-of-the-art impetus for the exhibition, I will also explore how artists use technology to create art.

It would be impossible to provide a definitive cultural history related to the development of the technologies and theories that influence artists in *Computer Aided*. Instead I will provide a timeline including a variety of events marking important historic developments that conceptually inform this exhibition. This is meant to provide a sense of how culture builds on itself in a haphazard fashion from moment to moment.

1844: British painter Joseph Mallord William Turner creates *Rain, Steam, and Speed.* It is one of the first works of art to deal with the idea of how industrial processes change humans' perception and experience of time. Rail travel allows goods and people to move from one point to another at a then mind boggling pace. This prompts an increased scale of worldwide trade and the transmission of ideas.

1862: Abraham Lincoln signs the Pacific Railway Act into law, paving the way for the Transcontinental Railroad.

1860s: The French photographer Nadar uses hot air balloons to make aerial photography. He is credited with popularizing this new genre of photography that expanded how humans viewed their environment.

1860s & 70s: Photographer Carleton Watkins photographs the Yosemite Valley. His images find their way east, enabling Americans to see images of locations they are unable to visit themselves.

1876: Alexander Graham Bell makes first phone call to his assistant Thomas Watson.

1887: Photographer Eadweard Muybridge publishes *Animal Locomotion*, a collection of stop action photography that reveals how animal bodies move in space. This serves as a precursor to early film.

1902: Georges Méliès directs and releases *A Trip to the Moon*. Méliès made silent movies and was known as a special effects innovator in film.

1903: The Wright Brothers are first to fly a powered aircraft in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. This innovation eventually decreases travel times for people and cargo across the world exponentially.

1913: Henry Ford introduces the assembly line to the manufacturing process of Model Ts in his factories. With this he introduces mass production to the industrial age and paves the way for mass marketing of commercial goods on a scale never before seen.

1913: Futurist artist Umberto Boccioni creates the sculpture *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*. The bronze sculpture depicts a human body in motion over the course of a few moments. *Unique Forms of Continuity* is a static depiction of motion and illustrates Boccioni's interest in the speed of modern life.

1917: Artist Marcel Duchamp creates the conceptual work of art *Fountain.* This is his most famous work of art. The original *Fountain* was a mass-produced urinal he purchased and signed with a playful pseudonym. Duchamp favored his artistic intentions and chance over any concept of craftsmanship normally associated with fine art. His willingness to use mass-produced objects and semantic arguments in his studio practice still shapes artistic discourses today.

1919: Walter Gropius founds the Bauhaus in Weimar, Germany, a school that integrates the fine arts, design, and architecture into a single curriculum. The Bauhaus has a broad impact on western culture.

1927: Warner Brothers releases *The Jazz Singer*, the first movie with sound.

1930: The artist Grant Wood completes the painting *Stone City, Iowa*. The painting depicts Stone City, Iowa, the location of an art colony Wood founded, as a romanticized agrarian community. This image, like much of Wood's work, depicts modern rural America with more complex subtly than he is often given credit for. For example, the horizon line in the background is gently bowed and suggests the aerial perspective only provided by airplanes, one of the most advanced technologies at that time.

1945: The Allies drop atom bombs on Japan and hasten the conclusion of World War Two. The technological advances required to build such a powerful device quicken the pace of innumerable post-war technological innovations.

1946: ENIAC (Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer) is the first computer designed in the United States. It is housed in the Moore School of Electrical Engineering at the University of Pennsylvania and, like atom bombs, is emblematic of innovations prompted by World War Two.

1947: Test pilot Chuck Yeager breaks the sound barrier in the X-1 airplane.

1949: Industrial designer Raymond Loewy is featured on the cover of Time Magazine. He designed Coca-Cola vending machines, packages for Lucky Strike cigarettes, and the logo for Nabisco. The current Nabisco logo is still clearly influenced by Loewy. His work has a tremendous impact on the consumer and avant garde culture of the twentieth century.

1956: The Federal-Aid Highway Act, also known as the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act, is a massive public works project meant to provide enough highway infrastructure to easily move troops throughout the United States if the Soviet Union were to invade. The Soviet Union never invaded but the act did provide America with ample infrastructure to develop a network of efficient interstate commerce, something that can be likened to the internet.

1960: Swiss artist Jean Tinguely, exhibits his *Homage to New York* in the Sculpture Garden of the Museum of Modern Art. *Homage to New York* can best be described as a suicidal Rube Goldberg Machine that satirizes many of the industrial and technological advancements of the twentieth century.

1964: Leonard Kleinrock publishes the book *Communication Nets*. The book lays the conceptual and technical foundations for the internet.

1964: Marshall McLuhan publishes *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. *Understanding Media* attempts to analyze the impact of new technologies on culture. McLuhan coins the phrase, "the media is the message," and distills technologies down to their simplest essence before analyzing their role in culture. He believes the proliferation of images in twentieth century society will return humans to a visual cultural state closer to that of pre-literate man than most think possible.

1965: Korean artist Nam June Paik is widely credited with creating video art as a genre when he films Pope John Paul VI's procession in New York City with a Sony Portapak camera and later displays the footage as art.

1969: NASA's Apollo lands on the moon. Neil Armstrong becomes the first person to walk on the moon.

1970: British Mathematician John Conway creates *The*

Game of Life, a cellular automaton. It can be described as a digital ecosystem where pixels on a screen turn white or black depending on the color of the pixels next to them. The animation is governed by very simple rules but from these rules emerge complex patterns that seem to self-organize before vanishing or changing into another pattern. This experiment draws attention from a variety of fields including biology, philosophy, physics, economics, the fine arts, and more.

1974: The video game *Pong* is made available on a home console by Atari.

1973: Martin Cooper, a researcher for Motorola, places the first cell phone call. The call was to his rivals at AT&T notifying them they lost the race to create a working cell phone prototype.

1975: The first digital image is taken in a Kodak lab by Steven Sasson.

1975: Artist Duane Palyka, creates *Self Portrait*, a "painting" using the computer program Crayon. Crayon's author, Jim Blinn, creates the program using the programming language Fortran.

1980: Apple Computer Incorporated makes its initial public offering of stocks for sale. This gives the company enough capital to eventually become a consumer electronics giant.

1983: Richard Stallman at MIT begins the GNU Project, announcing the age of open source or collaboratively created user driven software. Open source software is free and enables any user to modify it without restrictions. Unlike commercially available software, there is no licensing agreement to limit how it can be used or modified. This subverts market forces and allows for extreme creativity by those skilled enough to engage with open source software.

1984: Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* is published in English. De Certeau deals in largely visual terms with how modern humans engage with their environment and perceive their passage through time and space.

1985: A retail version of Microsoft Windows becomes available and Super Mario Bros. is released by Nintendo for its home console. These two events mark the beginning of the age of personal electronics on a large scale.

1988: Artist Peter Halley publishes *Collected Essays, 1981-87.* Many of his writings deal with the impact of technological advances on art and human culture.

1990-1991: Global Positioning Satellites are widely used for strategic applications in the First Gulf War.

1992: America Online Incorporated makes its initial public offering of stocks. It becomes a major player as an internet provider and remains so for the rest of the decade.

1992: Jeffrey Deitch's exhibition *Post Human* opens at the FAE Musée d'Art Contemporain in Lausanne, France. It features artists including Jeff Koons, Robert Gober, George Lappas, Wim Delvoye, and Yasumasa Morimura. *Post Human* deals with many themes related to technology including its use to augment things as diverse as genes and breasts.

1994: Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* is published in English. In short Baudrillard argues the dissemination of images and ideas has become so expansive that it is virtually impossible to attain enough frame of reference to properly interpret or discern the authenticity of an idea or thing.

1998: Google is incorporated and information on the internet quickly becomes more easily found.

1999: Rhizome ArtBase launches. It is an online archive dedicated to cataloging and preserving digital art.

2000: By executive order, President Bill Clinton turns off the Selective Availability of the United States' global positioning satellites. This means civilians could expect to use navigation devices with the same accuracy as those used by government entities.

2001: The website Wikipedia launches. It is an open source online encyclopedia whose users create all content.

2001: The World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. are attacked by terrorists, prompting the War on Terror. During this time high tech unmanned aircraft called drones become the driving force behind strategic air strikes and reconnaissance flights.

2004: The social media website Facebook is launched. The site serves as an online messaging system for socializing. It is designed to allow people within any social circle to share personal information instantly and indefinitely. Related websites such as YouTube, Twitter, and Tumblr followed in 2005, 2006, and 2007.

2008: Barack Obama is elected President of the United States of America. His victory is largely credited to his campaign's ability to reach out to voters, especially young and possibly disaffected voters, using social media. During this time, the artist Shephard Fairey designs the *Hope Poster*, a portrait of Obama with the word "hope" at the bottom. This image became emblematic of Obama's ability to reach the electorate because the image is shared virally on many social media websites.

2010: Widespread pro-democracy protests result in several successful revolutions and reforms throughout the Middle East and Africa. Known as the Arab Spring, these ongoing events are largely organized and fueled by online communities using social media.

2011: The website s[edition] is launched. It is an online community similar to Facebook composed of digital art collectors. The website sells inexpensive digital fine art by artists whose work is so valuable they priced themselves out of most collectors' budgets. S[edition] maintains the art and users must access their collection using the s[edition] website. Currently digital art is valued as something lesser because it can be replicated quickly and is fairly immaterial.

2012: The Smithsonian American Art Museum opens the exhibition *The Art of Video Games*. *The Art of Video Games* examines the history of video games and also pushes the boundary between art and design.

2013: *More Real? Art in the Age of Truthiness*, an exhibition organized by Elizabeth Armstrong at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and with SITE Santa Fe opens. The exhibition and resulting catalog deal primarily with the search for authentic information and experiences in the Digital Age. It features artists including Ai Weiwei, Thomas Demand, Mark Dion, Kianga Ford, Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle, Vik Muniz, and The Yes Men.

2013: The National Security Agency is implicated in a data mining scandal. They are accused of skimming immense amounts of data stored by various telecom companies to identify potential national security threats. Currently it is unclear whether this practice is a violation of the privacy of the people creating the data or to what degree the companies in question worked in concert with the government.

2013: The exhibition *Computer Aided* opens at the Masur Museum of Art.

Keliy Anderson-Staley, *Ellie*, 2010, wet plate collodion tintype with back mounted hook for hanging, 11 x 14 in., courtesy of the artist.

Keliy Anderson-Staley

Anderson-Staley has exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery, Washington D.C.; the California Museum of Photography, Riverside, CA, and the Australia Centre for Photography, Sydney, as well as many other venues. She creates tintypes and archival pigment prints mounted on sheets of aluminum dibond. A tintype is a type of antique photograph created when a photographic positive is

directly adhered to a blackened piece of metal. Only one copy of a tintype can be made and they are extremely fragile, prone to being scratched. The process of creating a tintype is difficult and limits the overall scale at which an artist can work. *Ellie*, the image pictured above, is eleven inches by fourteen inches. A tintype this size is extremely difficult to make. An archival pigment print on the other hand can be made virtually any size an artist wants. This process is driven by contemporary digital photographic technology. It is at the intersection of these two processes that Anderson-Staley's work becomes extremely interesting in the context of *Computer Aided*.

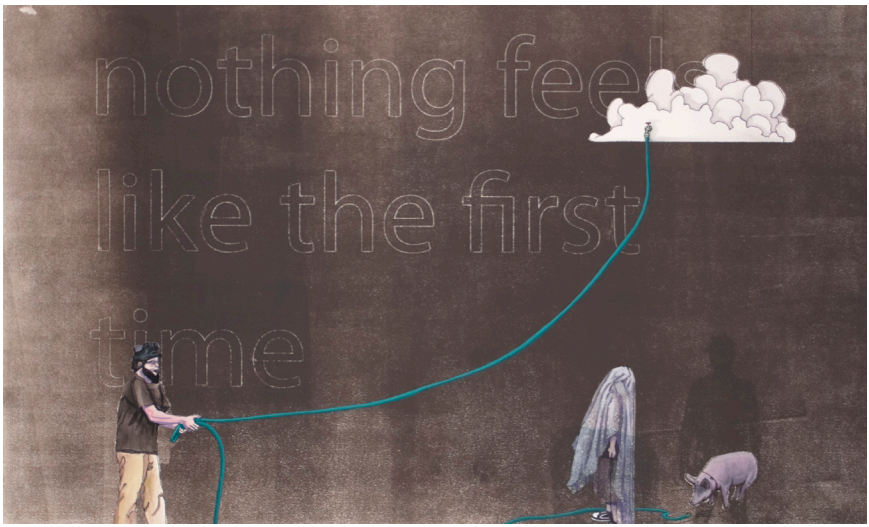
During the nineteenth century when tintypes were fairly common they were a sizable investment and tended to be extremely formal. Additionally, those who sat for tintypes had to hold their pose for a long period of time. This prevented smiles from frequenting tintypes. A tintype's stern formal air and relative preciousness is directly at odds with the ubiquitous nature of photographs in the twenty-first century. Anderson-Staley plays on this idea by creating contemporary tintypes of subjects then reprinting the image on the monumental scale of forty-six inches by thirty-six inches before mounting them on aluminum. She then exhibits her work in dense groupings that bring the result page for a Google image search to mind. This accentuates the importance of examining the historical import of tintypes as documents of the past by evaluating them on a contemporary basis. Anderson-Staley's work will become exponentially richer when her now contemporary images can be used as anthropological artifacts, much like antique tintypes are today.

Joshua Chambers

Joshua Chambers is a painter and printmaker. His work can be found in the permanent collections of the Lessadra Gallery in Bulgaria and Osage Gallery in the Gilrease Museum of the Americas. He creates open-ended narratives using ambiguous symbolic imagery and cryptic text-based messages. He purposely chooses images that often hold different meanings within several cultures. Depending on his audiences' perspectives, this results in his work being interpreted in a very fixed way or one that is fairly fluid. He encourages this multi-culturalism cum interpretation by depicting only the characters and props that are most important to each composition. His backgrounds are depthless color fields that seem to push themselves forwards and

back. He accomplishes this by applying thin and inconsistent layers of paint that serve as a hazy dreamlike backdrop for his images.

For *Computer Aided*, Chambers created an edition of nine monoprints on which he drew images with gouache and ink. He also used the computer drafting program Illustrator to print vinyl stickers featuring the silhouettes of these works' characters as well as the words "nothing feels like the first time," the name of the edition. The silhouettes left voids filled by the brilliant white paper beneath and bring to mind the various meanings lurking behind the words and images on Chamber's pieces. It is interesting to think of printmaking as a near timeless medium associated with Albrecht Dürer, one of the medium's most famous and expert practitioners who worked in the sixteenth century. Printmaking was the first reliable way to make copies of an image, a feat that is now seen more as a right than a potentially laborious art form. Each of Chamber's monoprints are nearly identical, but were individually made, thereby calling attention to how difficult image making has been in a historic sense. Chamber's mingling of historic and contemporary art making techniques, like Anderson-Staley's tintypes, lends his art a great deal of historic perspective. Specifically, a whole series of images titled *nothing feels like the first time* asks if it is important to prioritize the means in which we experience images. Is seeing a thumbnail of an image search on Google a lesser experience than seeing the original in person?



Joshua Chambers, *nothing feels like the first time*, version 3 of 9, 2013, monoprint: collagraph, ink, and gouache on paper, 30 x 18 in., courtesy of the artist.

Harold Cohen, *From Here to There*, 2011, oil on canvas, 120 x 48 in., courtesy of the artist.

Harold Cohen

Cohen is Emeritus Professor and Former Director of the Center for Research in Computing and the Arts at University of California, San Diego. He has exhibited at many institutions including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, The Brooklyn Museum, and Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. His work resides in the permanent collections of the Art Gallery of Toronto, The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Tate Gallery, London, and many more.

For more than thirty years Harold Cohen has worked on his collaborator AARON. AARON is a computer program Cohen designed to create paintings with near autonomy. Over the years Cohen gave AARON a working knowledge of color theory, value, line, improvisation, compositional balance, and the like by tweaking lines of code here and there. In return, Cohen receives paintings he can only claim partial authorship of. Cohen's *From Here to There* epitomizes his practice and the scale of much of his work. It is four feet tall and ten feet long. His work tends to dominate the spaces it inhabits and the Upper North Gallery of the Masur Museum is no exception. *From Here to There* is a beautiful extension of Abstract Expressionism and makes Cohen's paintings particularly relevant in a culture that is becoming increasingly reliant on technology. The clear visual similarity Cohen's work has with Abstract Expressionism is interesting because the movement is often associated with heroic painters baring their souls for

all to see. That said most people would probably seriously doubt a robot has a soul. This painting is a monument to technology or at the very least an accurate metaphor for computer technology's role in contemporary life. Additionally, it may foretell some of the twenty-first century's most pressing theoretical concerns.

Mat Collishaw

Mat Collishaw is associated with the Young British Artists (YBA), a loosely aligned group of artists who came of age in the early nineties. They are known for pioneering studio practices and did not shy away from using shock tactics if they felt it was necessary. Other YBAs include Damien Hirst, Tracey Emin, Liam Gillick, Chris Ofili, and Rachel Whiteread. Collishaw has exhibited at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Warsaw; PS1 Museum of Modern Art, Long Island, New York, and many other venues.

Whispering Weeds, a s[edition] digital limited edition is an homage to Albrecht Dürer's *Great Piece of Turf*, a watercolor from 1503. Collishaw took Dürer's work and recreated it digitally. *Whispering Weeds'* startling clarity and naturalism, including gently swaying grass, echoes Dürer's drive for empirical documentation, revealing the long-term interest artists have had with science. Collishaw recreating one of Dürer's masterpieces for posterity is akin to scientists using technology to document the flora and fauna of isolated wildernesses to increase our understanding of an ecosystem to our benefit. This is an excellent example of the fine arts interacting with other elements of human culture to create a digital index for posterity.

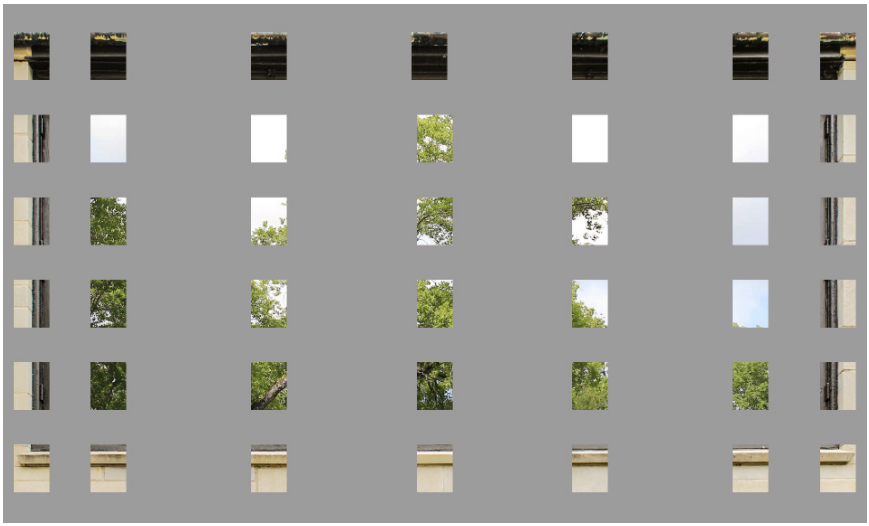
Collishaw's, like all s[edition] art on display during this exhibition, must be streamed online. This is one way for the site to monitor the dissemination of its content and make it less likely to be distributed or purchased outside of its purview. While this may seem like an inconvenience, it is a welcome one. As I stated earlier, without s[edition] I would not be able to organize an exhibition that takes into account a full range of artists and techniques being used today to view and create art. It is no mistake that s[edition] puns on the word sedition, because it brings a segment of the current art historical canon out of its ivory tower to be critically appraised and circumvents traditional critical outlets. Many would see this as a dangerous move by established artists, but it seems to reaffirm their current position, at least within the context of *Computer Aided*. If you would like to see images of the work I am discussing, please visit seditionart.com for a preview.

Craig Damrauer, *Everything We Need to Know, A Semi-Scientific Approach – Section 1 (Detail)*, 2013, digital print on linen, 42 x 288 in., courtesy of the artist.

Craig Damrauer
Damrauer is a recent transplant to Louisiana. His work has been covered by the New York Times and GOOD Magazine. He has released art through 20 x 200, exhibited at LACE in Los Angeles, and will be included in an upcoming exhibition at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art.

Damrauer created a series of digital prints on linen for *Computer Aided* using an online service. The image pictured here is a detail of *Everything We Need to Know, A Semi Scientific Approach (Section 1)*. It is reminiscent of a patchwork quilt but is clearly made with machine precision. I came across Damrauer at the last minute and invited him to exhibit if he had the time and inclination. He did and wanted to try out an idea for work he never had a chance to implement. The whole process from inception to completion took about three weeks. This feat would not have been accomplished even ten years ago and marks quantum leaps in transferring data over the internet, printing and weaving technology, design software, and enough general advancement to drive down the cost and make these services accessible to most patrons. It seems, for the most part, the age of weavers working on a tapestry for months or years has passed.

Damrauer's conceptual bent aligns him with the likes of Duchamp and Joseph Kosuth. His interest in cloth shows his awareness of textiles and tapestries, but to him, the vehicle he uses to deliver his message is far less important than the message itself. Inside each square in *Section 1* is an excerpted quote by an anonymous expert. Damrauer culled them from the internet and compiled them to create an overwhelming mass of expert opinions that are devoid of context and frankly do not seem expertly informed regardless of this fact. The overall dimensions of *Section 1* are forty-two inches by two hundred and eighty-eight inches. *Section 1* is meant to drape and spill onto the ground under where it is pinned to the wall. This presentation brings to mind the overstimulation and worries regarding the authenticity of information a trip to the internet is apt to create. The commentary Damrauer provides regarding the efficacy of expert opinions is playful but scathing. As the de facto expert regarding this exhibition, his work makes me fairly self-conscious. I hope I provide more insight than one of the faceless talking heads featured in *Everything We Need to Know, A Semi Scientific Approach (Section 1)*.



Hasan Elahi, *Concordance*, 2013, digital maquette for 42 channel video, 958 x 574 pixels, courtesy of the artist.

Hasan Elahi

Elahi is the Director of Digital Cultures and Creativity in the Honors College at University of Maryland. He has exhibited his work at many venues including the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Venice Biennale, Centre Georges Pompidou, and SITE Santa Fe. His artistic practice is rooted in an experience with the FBI when he was screened for questioning after an international trip. Using his cell phone's camera and calendar, he could account for his whereabouts so well he eliminated himself as a potential terrorist threat (mostly). This experience made him realize that by devaluing his privacy through self-surveillance, he devalued his status as a threat. As a result Elahi began to focus on art making centered on the importance of distributing and interpreting information and images in the Digital Age. His career is well documented by the likes of the New York Times, CNN, The Colbert Report, TED Global, and Al Jazeera.

Above is an image of a maquette for *Concordance*, a 42-channel video Elahi created for *Computer Aided*. Each of the forty-two screens relates to a windowpane or architectural feature on the exterior of the wall on which *Concordance* is displayed. The screens echo the rhythms of the architecture and are meant to seem familiar to viewers. This gives *Concordance* a sense of place and belonging,

but it is also fairly disorienting because the imagery is fractured. Most of the screens feature reflections of trees on the exterior of the aforementioned windowpanes. It is this fractured external view that is difficult to understand. That is *Concordance's* puzzling takeaway. When viewing *Concordance* you are looking at a recording from the past, but in a sense looking through a wall back towards yourself while viewing the reflections of the landscape behind you.

In a way *Concordance* is a metaphor for dealing with the cultural ramifications of images, words, and other data created and cataloged by human culture. The word concordance can mean a list, like an index, or an agreement. Thinking of human culture as a concordance in a unified sense is terribly confusing and often contradictory. This puts the burden of interpretation on the viewer rather than providing a fairly linear or coherent message. It is an accurate way to present information as a thing, because in its natural state it is not ready for consumption. It must be interpreted, becoming a manufactured thing that is easily consumed. Taking that into account, along with the fractured or perhaps multifaceted way of viewing *Concordance*, it makes clear how important the interpretation of data is, especially at a time when human culture is creating more information than ever before.

Shepard Fairey

Shepard Fairy is a graduate of The Rhode Island School of Design and is a high profile street artist. He is known for his *Obey* sticker campaign he began in 1989. His stickers and wheat pasted posters from this time feature images of the professional wrestler Andre the Giant and text that is at times menacing and others amusing. The words *Obey* or *Giant* most commonly accompany Andre the Giant's image and present the pop culture figure as an ad hoc totalitarian leader in the vein of state images

of Lenin or Chairman Mao. The project can best be described as general dissent meant to prompt thoughtful explorations of one's surroundings and choices. Fairey is often praised as a cultural luminary or decried as a vandal. He had a long and successful career outside of cultural institutions before becoming commercially and critically viable as an artist. In 2003 he opened *Studio Number One*, a design firm, with his wife and maintains many clients including Levi's, Time Magazine, The Grammy Awards, UGG, Coca-Cola, and Disney.

In 2008 Fairey created a poster featuring an image of Barrack Obama. At the bottom of the poster was the word "hope." The poster, although controversial for infringing the copyright of an Associated Press image, became emblematic of the soon-to-be President Obama's ability to reach out to young and disaffected voters. This risk taking seems to be in line with what motivates a business savvy dissident and likely bolstered his reputation in some circles. In 2009 *Shepard Fairey: Supply and Demand* opened at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. It was Fairey's first exhibition in a museum and showcased twenty years of his work. Fairey is one of five s[edition] artists in *Computer Aided* and it comes as no surprise he is represented by the culturally progressive and fairly anti-institutional website. *Día de los Muertos*, Fairey's work in *Computer Aided*, features an image of a skull in the Mexican folk style associated with Day of the Dead celebrations. Close-cropped likenesses of Andre the Giant occupy the skulls' eyes. The non sequitur combination is in keeping with Fairey's probative style.

Damien Hirst

Hirst graduated from Goldsmiths College and was associated with the group Young British Artists in the early nineties. He

is a conceptual artist who explores the relationship between life, death, and culture in his art. He created his seminal work of art, *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*, in 1992. It is a fourteen-foot long tiger shark preserved in a huge tank of formaldehyde. Hirst is also known for creating art using platinum and diamonds as well as fetching record-breaking results at art auctions. Hirst's successful and prolific career was celebrated with a massive retrospective at the Tate Modern, London, in 2012.

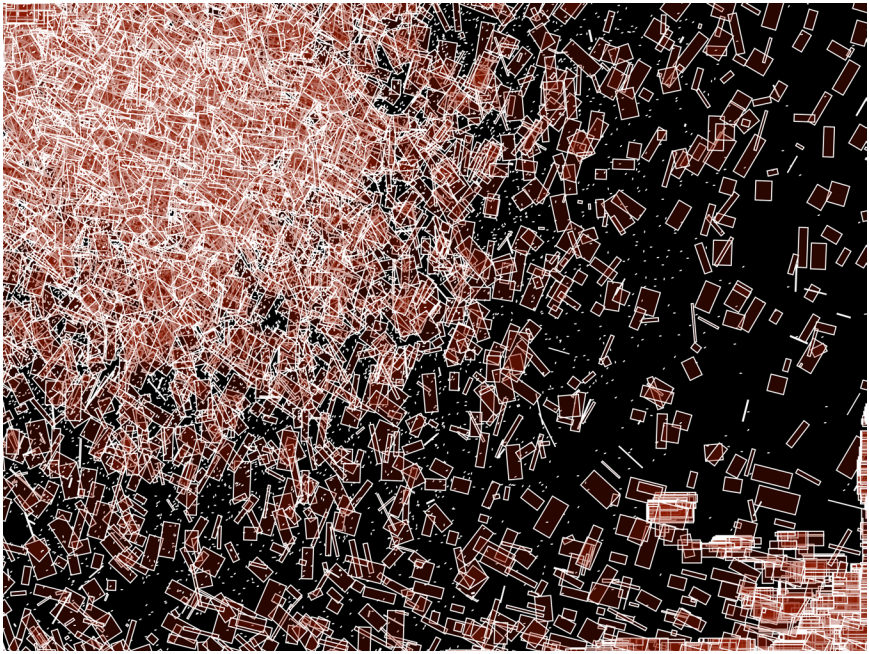
Joyousness, the s[edition] limited edition on view in *Computer Aided* is a digital version of one of Hirst's Entomology Paintings. *Joyousness* resembles a kaleidoscopic mandala made out of pieces of butterflies. A mandala is a Buddhist or Hindu representation of the universe. Also known as the "wheel of life," a mandala is meant to depict all phases and stations of life within the universe. *Joyousness* further reveals Hirst's interest in mortal themes with its relationship to entomology. Entomology is the scientific study of insects and is often associated with the collection, preservation, and display of insects. In a way entomological specimens are macabre trophies of human dominance, but they also serve as a reminder that death is the great equalizer and waits for no creature. Hirst does not use his work as a platform from which to moralize, he merely presents what he sees as facts in the hopes of creating a response from his audiences.

As *Joyousness* exists only on the internet as viewable data, it is undeniably worthy for display in *Computer Aided*, but it is even more worthy in another way. Hirst's status as a fine art luminary makes his work prohibitively expensive to exhibit at the Masur in any other form. His work would not be included without s[edition]'s services. S[edition] art makes the size of the art world smaller, more interconnected, and perhaps, more competitive in the same way video conferencing, email, and cell phones make small businesses relevant and nimble enough to compete with large international firms.

Jenny Holzer

Jenny Holzer is the preeminent text based artist in the world. She has exhibited her work extensively at venues including the Reichstag, the Guggenheim Museums, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and 7 World Trade Center. Holzer uses poetry and truisms to create biting social commentary and dialog with her work. Her text work is often integrated into architectural environments with digital tickers similar to those used on Wall Street, carved into furniture, or projected onto surfaces. This mode of display, coupled with her polarizing commentary, is meant to publicly, and often uncomfortably, question society's inner workings.

As previously mentioned in this brochure, the inclusion of artists like Holzer is necessary to accurately depict current hierarchy and trends in contemporary art. Like most or all of the s[edition] artists, Holzer has undeniably impacted, whether implicitly or explicitly, the practice of artists exhibiting in *Computer Aided*. Her work also makes sense for inclusion in this exhibition in that over time, her practice of communicating in quickly digestible bites, is now mirrored in the way many carry on dialogs a snippet at a time on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Did she anticipate or somehow influence these developments? It is hard to tell. This raises interesting questions about cultural authority. Holzer is a long standing cultural figure who pre-dates social media, but who is to say her thoughts are more or less important than an individual who can jump on the data stream and have a potentially viral impact on cultural dialogs? *Computer Aided* asks this question in many ways. Within the context of the exhibition, is a small museum such as the Masur acting as Holzer or the anonymous individual? How should we as a society vet information and culture?



John Rodriguez, *Concentric Code*, 2013, digital image on canvas, 32 x 24 in., courtesy of the artist.

John Rodriguez

Rodriguez is Assistant Professor of Communication at University of Louisiana at Monroe. He is a graduate of Memphis College of Art and Design and is interested in open source software applications and how digital processes define the nature of art. Two of his works on display are titled *Speculation Introspection* and *Concentric Code*. *Speculation Introspection* is a live video that films visitors when they come into the museum lobby. A filter layers stylized pixels over the original image and takes several moments to render the images of viewers in *Speculation Introspection's* image plane. This layering and time lag, is at odds with most people's current experience of computer technology's ability to provide instant gratification, but is consistent with how complicated and specialized actual functional knowledge of software code is. For all intents and purposes, computer technology's capabilities and benefits seem to be, like the images in *Speculation Introspection*, mystical apparitions.

Concentric Code is a digital print on canvas that is an updated version of John Conway's *The Game of Life*, a cellular automaton. *Concentric Code* is a digital ecosystem featuring colored rectangles

in a field that appear to layer on top of one another and recede into the distance. Rodriguez's digital worlds organically create and manage themselves using an internal logic Rodriguez built into its code; Rodriguez' worlds, if left to run on a computer, always result in entropy and provide a gloomy commentary of culture. He uses one of two methods to display his art. Rodriguez either captures a moment in a digital world he creates on a screen and prints the visual results or displays the written code responsible for creating his images. In his mind both are on equal footing.

These examples of Rodriguez's art are created using P5 open sources software. Open source software is collaboratively created user driven software. This type of software is free and enables any user to modify it without restrictions. Unlike commercially available software, there is no licensing agreement to limit how it can be used or modified. This subverts market forces and allows for extreme creativity by those skilled enough to engage with open source software. While open source software is often viewed in an idealized populist light, it is only available to those who have access to computers and a highly specialized knowledge base. How the public at large engages with open source software and hardware over the next fifty years will likely have a huge impact on culture in general and shape world events. Will it create a tech super caste or have democratizing results throughout the world?

Jes Schrom & Graham Simpson, *Inner Tube*, from the series *Elaborate Banality*, 2012, hand sewn thread on canvas, 12 in. circle, courtesy of the artists.

Jes Schrom & Graham Simpson
Schrom and Simpson live and work in Chicago, Illinois where Schrom is the Associate Director of Youth Programs at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Their work in *Computer Aided* is pulled from a series of hand embroideries entitled *Elaborate Banality*. In this series they irreverently place fantastic half-man, half-animal characters in painfully mundane situations. The playful results reassure audiences that even if the world were filled with magic, it would still be a dreadfully dull place.

From a material and process standpoint, their work does several interesting things within the context of *Computer Aided*. Schrom and Simpson take a handcraft or folk practice largely associated with a bygone era and re-appropriate it as an avant-garde art making strategy. Additionally, the duo uses digital imaging software to produce a template for their hand-sewn art. This allows them to create images with a startling degree of realism that differ from many geometric patterns and images found in historic examples of embroidery. With these points taken into account, they seem to enjoy and honor the tradition of hand stitched embroidery while engaging effectively with their own historical context. This illustrates there is room for cultural continuity in an era that often favors only the new.

Kate Shannon
Kate Shannon is an Assistant Professor at The Ohio State University at Mansfield. She is the 2013 recipient of the Ohio State University Mansfield Campus Award for Excellence in Scholarship. Her work has been exhibited in many venues such as The Contemporary Arts Center Las Vegas, Marshall University's Gallery 842, the Marin Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Elmhurst Art Museum. Shannon uses photography and video to explore the themes of consumption, desire, and loss.

You deserve more is Shannon's contribution to *Computer Aided*. It is a digital animation projected as a diptych. It features two white blimps passing one another in a field of huge fluffy clouds drifting through the sky. On each blimp the word "you" scrolls endlessly on a digital billboard, only interrupted by attention grabbing geometric

patterns. Shannon chose the word “you” because it is one of the most commonly used words in advertising. Advertisers incorporate “you” into their messages in an attempt to personalize an otherwise impersonal interaction. Their goal is to generate sales by creating a sense of need or empathy between products and those who view their ads. The field of clouds is a reference to packaging from televisions Shannon used in a past work. She uses this imagery because it is indicative of how advertisers use idyllic images to make a product more appealing and associate it with wish fulfillment. Using advertising strategies, Shannon creates alluring art with the end goal of drawing attention to the manner in which most images and messages are presented to viewers in day to day life; pleasant, unassuming, unrelenting, and on a screen.

Additionally, Shannon’s imagery is related to the long-standing aesthetic and art historical discourse of the sublime. Philosophers like Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant, along with artists including David Caspar Friedrich, Joseph Mallord William Turner, and more recently if not so famously, Joshua Reiman have engaged with this theme. These three artists all use the sky and clouds as a formal device. The sky dominates many of their works, drawing attention to the majesty and power of nature if not God himself. While disarmingly beautiful and dramatic, their work illustrates the complicated idea of the sublime. Simply put sublime imagery is so beautiful and indicative of a vast natural order, it is meant to terrify. It reveals mankind’s insignificance in the natural world. Tied into our insignificance is our ability to realize the source of this terror and examine it rationally. In a sense this sets us at the top of the natural order, especially taking

Kate Shannon, *You deserve more.*, 2013, video still from two channel synchronized digital animation, dimensions variable, courtesy of the artist.

our seeming technological dominance of the physical world into account, but this is an uneasy truth as the starting point of this dialog is our insignificance. As this is inconclusive, the best course of action when weighing themes of the sublime in one's mind is to proceed with caution and respect. In Shannon's work advertising, a stand in for humans is now incorporated into the landscape of the sublime, becoming larger in some ways than the culture that created it. This is equally as terrifying as the clouds in *You deserve more*.

Marni Shindelman & Nate Larson, *Tell me I'm not making a mistake. Tell me you're worth the wait #fb*, from the series *Geolocation: Tributes to the Data* Stream, 2011, digital chromogenic print, 24 x 20 in., courtesy of the artists.

Marni Shindelman & Nate Larson

Marni Shindelman is currently a lecturer in Photography at the University of Georgia and Nate Larson is faculty in the Photography Department at Maryland Institute College of Art. These artists' collaborative project *Geolocation: Tributes to the Data Stream* has been featured in the likes of Wired Magazine, the New York Times, Frieze Magazine, and the Washington Post. Started in 2007, *Geolocation* continues to be exhibited broadly and examples of their photographs reside in the permanent collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and the Portland Museum of Art.

This ongoing project is driven by the social media service Twitter. Twitter allows its subscribers to send messages to anyone who follows another user, but limits each communication to 140 characters. This creates a fairly casual forum for communication based on directness and brevity, resulting in a shorthand language using symbols and acronyms that only the initiated understand. Twitter is a powerful means of communication and some subscribers have followings numbering in the millions. When Shindelman and Larson travel together they view publicly available information that tracks where tweets, or messages from Twitter, come from and then photograph areas where particularly interesting messages originated.

Shindelman and Larson's photographs capture a moment separate from its initial context and reveal the fleeting nature of communication and experience. Their work deals with a variety of human activities resulting in photographs with mournful, elated, disappointed, playful, nervous, introspective, and sometimes idiotic sensibilities. Their work is powerful in that many can relate to using Twitter, but it provides audiences with an opportunity to assume narrative control over a moment about which next to nothing is known.

Their photographs are compelling in themselves, but are also indicative of societal changes. One of the most interesting aspects of Twitter and other social media is how they allow users to project their identity and assume control over it on a scale that is unprecedented in history. This shift has changed how many people conceive of their privacy and increased the ease with which individual's actions can be recorded and monitored; in essence those on social media lead a more public life than they would otherwise, whether they realize it or not. For the first time in history humans can easily gather together and pool resources, working together on an unprecedented scale. For example, duolingo.com is a website that teaches its users a foreign language for free. Over the course of learning a language, users begin translating internet content from all over the world. Users learn a language and benefit others by translating potentially important internet content. This type of project is called crowdsourcing. Working together humanity could accomplish feats that dwarf those from past ages.

Activision, *Tree Rex*™ *Concept Sketches*, 2010, digital images of sketches, 8 x 12 in., courtesy of the artist.

Skylanders: Giants

The gallery dedicated to *Skylanders: Giants* examines the creative process behind this popular video game. In the mythical world of Skylands, Skylanders are legendary heroes who battle a villain named Kaos, all with the help of their Portal Master (the player). *Skylanders: Giants* was created by video game developer Toys for Bob as the sequel to *Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure*. Making a fun and dynamic video game at this scale involves about 100 people working hard for at

least a year. The team behind the game includes designers, artists, animators, programmers, producers, audio engineers, writers, and musicians. Game development is a complex software and hardware engineering process that borrows from many disciplines including architecture, filmmaking, traditional painting, sculpture, psychology, and interaction design. In this gallery you see the various stages of creation for one of the game's characters, Tree Rex, and one of the environments in the game, Troll Home Security. This complicated process begins with an idea and a sketch and evolves into three dimensional, digital designs.

This element of *Computer Aided* includes a working XBOX 360, a video loop of the Troll Home Security environment being played through, a promotional poster for the game signed by most of the Toys for Bob team, a prototype of the Tree Rex figurine used for gaming, still images detailing each stage of game development, and labels describing each process. I am giving an inventory of the objects in the room rather than a visual analysis for very specific reasons. Video games have a problematic position in current conceptions of art historical discourse. They are often treated as design rather than art because they fulfill a function: entertainment. I take issue with this. While *Computer Aided* was in planning stages, I remember reading a review of the Smithsonian American Art Museum's exhibition, *The Art of Video Games* and thinking about how it pandered to the masses and forsook any art historical integrity. Later, after being presented with the possibility of exhibiting content from Toys for Bob, I quickly realized how much my ideals were already in line with such a decision.

Fine art has a long history of providing entertainment to people in the form of visual pleasure. At this point, video games are also a historic force ingrained in the consciousness of much of the developed world. It would be impossible to deny they are a visual means of providing pleasure. It also seems as

though an argument made against video games on the basis of their status as a design object is fairly hollow. First, it can be said art fulfills a function in documenting an era's cultural context or even merely providing visual pleasure. It would seem as long as someone is willing to make an argument regarding the art status of an object, it must be considered. Perhaps consensus can then be made over time concerning its quality. Secondly, Duchamp's contributions to the current conceptual underpinnings of most contemporary art, coupled with the Bauhaus' holistic approach to fine art and design, precludes the elimination of video games from art historical and theoretical discussions. In the recent past I was not apt to call something like *Skylanders: Giants* art, but it seems as though there is room for spirited and insightful argument. Perhaps this is where art lies.

Bill Viola

Viola is a leading contemporary video artist who lives and works in Long Beach, California. He has exhibited his work throughout the world at venues including the Museum of Modern Art, the Venice Biennale, the J. Paul Getty Museum, and the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf. His contribution to *Computer Aided*, *A Phrase From Chris*, is provided by s[edition]. The merits of his work, status in the art community, and the computer and video driven nature of much of his work made Viola a natural fit in this exhibition.

A Phrase From Chris is part of Viola's series *Transfigurations*. The series explores the concept of spiritual transformation in a specific way. "Transfiguration" is a process by which a

person or object's form is altered to match its essence. Viola's goal with this series is to explore the deep seeded meanings cultures ascribe to materials and actions. *A Phrase from Chris* is a black and white silent video depicting a shirtless man facing away from the camera. He is set in front of a black field. The man's image, projected at human scale, slowly raises his arms over his head and water leaps up onto his back and into the air off camera. The video is only a few seconds long and loops immediately. The image starts and stops so quickly, it is difficult to recognize the images on the screen are playing backwards. Additionally, the timing of the video does not seem to be in real time, but it is hard to know if it is playing at a faster or slower rate because the man's motions seem as fluid as the water.

Viola's *A Phrase From Chris* reveals a clear connection to the theme of transfiguration. It draws attention to the manner in which the faceless man interacts with the water. He seems to merge with it. His connection to it is emphasized because it flows in the same upward movement of his arms. His anonymous figure makes it easy for a viewer to assume his role and substitute their own experiences and the cultural associations they have with water, usually ones of purity or sustained life. Experiencing *A Phrase From Chris* creates empathy in a viewer. They are meant to identify with the experience of water and its symbolic associations, thereby creating the potential for a spiritual awakening. To some, soul searching using technology is inauthentic, but perhaps it is a sign of our era.

Please direct any inquiries regarding this exhibition to info@masurmuseum.org.

Benjamin M. Hickey
Curator of Collections & Exhibitions
Masur Museum of Art

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Cover: Marni Shindelman & Nate Larson, *Mark 3: 1-6. What's Jesus want to whisper in your ear tonight*, from the series *Geolocation: Tributes to the Data Stream*, 2011, digital chromogenic print, 24 x 20 in., courtesy of the artists