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"What Is the Meaning of Life? Whatever You Want It To Be." -James Frey (2011)
Curated by ebmata

Featuring

Like the following six artworks I have chosen, I like to get my voice heard. The first three: "rent-a-negro.com," "My Perfect Child," and "Dyke Action Machine" are proactive artworks in an effort to make a change in this world. They are about politically sensitive issues Americans face today such as: racism, productive rights, and gay/lesbian rights. As a strong believer of freedom of choice, women's rights to choose, and pro gay rights, I think these are great artworks because people need to
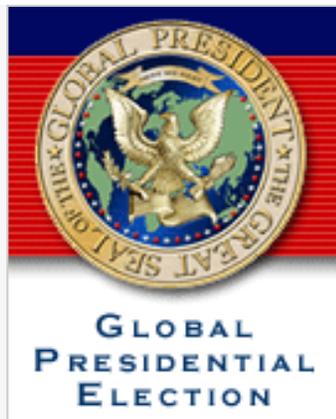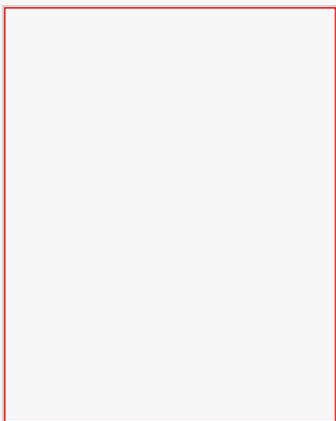
"Outskirt"

by
Lacie Garnes

My Perfect Child

by
DEBRA SWACK

*GLOBAL
PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTION*

by
Kenneth Hung

*Safe As Mother's Milk:
The Hanford Project*

by
Kim Stringfellow

Dyke Action Machine!

by
Carrie Moyer

rent-a-negro.com

by
damali ayo

acknowledge they're surrounded by these issues and stop ignoring the big pink elephant in the room. I am pro choice and as an active citizen in my community, I went and SUPPORTED Planned Parenthood by donating my money and time to them when they were at risk to lose federal government funding. "Outskirt" is a demonstration on a woman's vulnerability in relation to video surveillance -a situation all American women go through due to so much discrimination. "'My Perfect Child' explores the history of engineering the perfect child through genetics, cloning and selective abortion and its origins in literature, psychology, anthropology, and child-rearing manuals." "Dyke Action Machine (DAM!)" is used as a way to promote and sell gay/lesbian rights to the public eye; they want to make it known they are there and will not leave. "rent-a-negro. com" focuses on optimism and positivity in relation to racism against African Americans in the United States (however, I am unsure if this website is real or a joke). "Global Presidential Election" is about what really goes behind the curtain when electoral votes get counted and how much they're worth in US money. Lastly, "Safe as Mother's Milk: The Hanford Project," explore the the problems communities had when radioactive chemicals were put in air for experiments by the government. All of these artworks stood out to me because they share a common factor: they deal with political and ethical issues that Americans face over the course of their lives and that something proactive needs to be done.

Tags: abortion political issues racism

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AT THE NEW MUSEUM

A Quasi Pseudo Reality Gone Digitally (Film20c) (2011)

Curated by [Danielle Pancheri](#)

Featuring

[JiffyLux](#)　　　　　**[Barcode Web Counter](#)[Edison Mobile Remake](#)**

by
[Laura Floyd](#)

by
[Scott Blake](#)

by
[catherine ramus](#)

[here nor there](#)

[My Perfect Child](#)

by
[annie](#)

by
[DEBRA SWACK](#)

Editorial description Comments (0)

The five piece collection of digital artwork included in my exhibit all express one similar attribute, a fake and quasi pseudo reality. The quasi pseudo reality in each art piece is either portrayed by the object, the editing, or by the scene in which contributes to the overall idea and concept of a false reality expressed through digital representation. The message I would like to convey in my exhibit is how digital art, when admired, allows a person to go beyond there own realistic reality and take the digital portrait to the next level making it a quasi pseudo reality. The photo JiffyLux ables us to imagine the life of the typical American consumer society of the 1950's and contrast it to today's modernized society. The shift from repressing woman through mass media was dominant in the 1950's due to the "Big Brother" craze. However, now this piece of art reflects a distorted, fake, and false reality of how a modernized woman is viewed in today's society. The "Barcode Web Counter" depicts a woman gazing at a bar code mirroring her personal code. The concept of this particular digital portrait exerts a underlying message because in some way we all feel identical amongst the other members of our society and strive to differentiate ourselves in a world we feel generalizes every single object, including us humans. The barcode symbolizes the generalization of defining each human as being defined as a object therefore transforming the image into a fake reality. The "Edison Mobile Remake" captures a picture of a camera phone capturing an actual Edison Film. This piece of art produces a false reality because the actual scene is captured through the technological use of the camera phone depicted by a still picture instead of the common one-on-one true reality. The portrait "Here Nor There" captures a virtually fake moment in time that also includes text saying here nor there. The text adds to the illusion of a reality in limbo in which a person, object, or thing is never exactly in one place in time which is clearly impossible for a person to attain. The portrait "My Perfect Child" explores today's modernized worlds fascination to design "the perfect child through genetics, cloning and selective abortion and its origins in literature, psychology, anthropology, and child-rearing manuals." Because of the ability to digitally manipulate this image through the use of photo shop, the digital portrait creates a falsified image of what a perfect child should be. Depicted in each piece of art is a sense of reality, however falsified. The quasi pseudo reality is falsified through many different mediums scene in my exhibition's portraits such as through the image of a woman succumbing to the 1950's norms which is generally not accepted by most woman today to a woman identifying herself with her own unique barcode. All in all, the portraits transcend reality through the important technological form of digitalization.

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ArtBase

Perfect Humanity (2011)

Curated by [Jennifer Makaiwi](#)

Featuring

[My Perfect Child](#)

[LoveMaker v7](#)

[myAvatar = myChuckClose](#)

by
[DEBRA SWACK](#)

by
[josh skeen](#)

by
[C. J. Yeh](#)

[Eisenstein's Monster](#) **[Constructed Identities](#)**

by
[Chris Joseph](#)

by
[Charles Nelson](#)

Editorial description Comments (0)
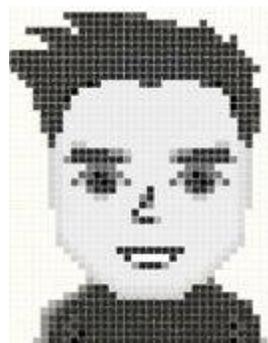
Through the use of technology, humanity is currently finding more and more ways to change their image to become more appealing to the public, or to have the public be more appealing to them. We, as human beings, are rarely ever happy with our appearance and so when given the opportunity we would gladly change ourselves. We like to find ways to "escape" ourselves and become someone else, someone better. People have many tricks to escaping such as through our online persona or the character we role-play in a game. "Constructed Identities" is meant to represent the process of crafting our identities online through the names we choose to go by to the images we "paint" for the online populace. Names are important, especially on the internet, since that is the quickest way for someone to identify you online. Your name says a lot about what kind of person you are, both online and offline, and gives people an picture or your mind. For example, you may be more inclined to speak to a person named "Gentle<3er" than to "GI@NTD@DY" on a dating site. Though the internet has many faces, and now a days even video games have hopped onto the Wi-Fi bandwagon. While before there primarily existed only single player or local multiplayer on consoles, players are now expected to craft online gaming persona's to interact with and compete with other gamers. What may sound like a grand way of uniting people with similar interests becomes more of a war over who was the best looking avatar of the most achievements. "myAvatar = myChuckClose" is based on the Miis from the Wii console and show us how people can easily construct an image for themselves that can appear as pleasing or repulsive as the user wishes, and not necessarily be an accurate representation of themselves or anyone they know. People don't usually want to see themselves when they can make someone who looks better, who feels better, who is better. "LoveMaker v7" is a somewhat disturbing project as it gives people a chance to craft their own image of the perfect significant other. It shows how people are sometimes not satisfied with changing themselves but also possessing the need to change, or craft, others. "Eisenstein's Monster" allows anyone to craft their own "monster" from the mismatched pieces of other beings. A silly little project meant to entertain our inner scientist or a grime look on the future or human's desire to control life? This is also where "My Perfect Child" comes in, as it is a project that details on the problems that could arise should people decide that we must craft our children into perfect little beings. What starts as people trying to change themselves sometimes leads into our desire to change those around us, or just those that we feel we can control, such as our children. Where we might fail in life it is sometimes hoped that our successor will manage to succeed. But to accomplish that goal, our successor must be like us, only better, improved, perfect. Online we often feel the need to hide things from people and present only the best parts of us, whether it is true or not, for the sake of being someone who is not us but better. And what's worse is if we decide to craft that perfect person, not in the form of an online identity, but by forcefully changing the identity of another human being.

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ArtBase

- # Biological and Technological Transformations of Living Forms in Art

Curated by Lauren Brada

Opened on Nov 05, 2007

Introduction to Curatorial Exhibit: Humans have always been fascinated with the biological aspects of the world. People are constantly trying to figure out how living things function, why they do what they do, and more importantly what purpose they serve as a living thing on this Earth. Many contemporary artists have asked themselves these same questions and have used their own forms of creativity to express how they feel about all kinds of biological forms. Artists also use their own creative prowess's to try and alter the natural aspects of the world and see if they can somehow present these forms in a new type of way. The artists I have chosen for my curate exhibit all have one thing in common, despite how different each of their projects are. They all deal with some aspect of certain biological forms and or senses that all living things possess. Whether its Debra Swack's piece that deals with the biological makeup that produces animal patterns, or Mattia Casalegno's work that tries to actually produce life through his images that seem to express some sort of sense related to the body where, "you don't create the art piece, you are the art piece." Many of the bodies of work I have chosen force the viewer to interact with the piece, giving their art a whole new aspect of life. Many of the artists have combined scientific logic with their own personal artistic twist in order morph technology with living things. Quite a bit of research has been done in many scientific fields within these pieces in order to not only create art, but manipulate the very forms of life we are all familiar with. In the first body of work I have chosen by Debra Swack entitled Animal Patterning Project, Swack explores the world of animal patterns and how fascinated we humans are with the different shapes and colors that certain animals produce. Swack goes quite deep into the biological aspects of how certain animal patterns are produced, and then she herself tries to reproduce that pattern in her own artwork. She is interested in how to genetically alter an animals' skin/fur pattern in order to make them easily commercialized for designers alike. Swack goes on to describe how she would go about doing this in an extensive genetic altering process that she shows through her artwork. Swack, who combines art and technology, also has another body of work in this exhibit entitled, "My Perfect Child." In this work, she goes even further into realms of genetic alteration and explores the on-going fascination with cloning. Through digital imagery and photo installation, Swack shows how genetic altering can affect someone's life through a completely neutral view on the subject she has explored. The third body of work was done by man named Daniel Desiderio Paez Castillo. His work is entitled, "idades// multi-local, multi-user, realtime interactive installation." His work combines the interaction of the human form with a technologically based system that is designed to copy certain a human figure in what ever position they are on a

• Biological and Technological Transformations of Living Forms in Art

room, and then project that image digitally onto a wall or screen. These images are placed with an image of virtual "ball" that has been programmed into the system so that the piece not only becomes interactive, but is also a game that the viewer can manipulate. With each projection of the person's figure and movements they can see where they are relative to the "ball" and can move themselves around accordingly. The "ball" allows for others who are circulating throughout the piece to communicate with one another in order to link them all in an otherwise neutral space. This piece allows the viewer to also become the creator which forms a creative bond with the artist themselves. In Mattia Casalengo's work, "X-Scape," he too explores the worlds of the virtual and biological and attempts to combine them through his own artistry. This body of work tries to create sound and the ability to listen through images alone. His work is a, "hybridization of space with bodies and sensations." Casalengo conveys emotion, feelings, senses, and forms in how work so that the viewer becomes so engaged in the pieces that they actually become the work themselves. This happens because one is forced to interact with the images in order to truly experience what he has created. Fourthly, in this exhibit that combines life with technology, I have placed Chris Sugrue's work; entitled "Delicate Boundaries," into the mix as one of the most profound ways a person has been able to combine art with the scientific world. Sugrue's art consists of an interactive installation where the human form and human touch enable one to break the barriers the lie between humans and machine. Very life-like digital images emerge from the confines of their digital world and move to the skin of a hand or arm when it comes in contact with the computer screen. A person's body becomes a "host: or a canvas for these digital images to thrive on. This body of work truly encompasses what it means to completely break down the barriers between virtual reality and actual living forms. I feel that this work is very influential and is a major break through, not only in the art world, but in the science world as well. Lastly, but certainly not least, is the work done by Chris Joseph entitled "Eisenstein's Monster." This form of art allows one to create biological life forms by the wonderful use of digital technology. The user gets to create their own "creature" by digitally moving certain pieces of biological forms; one essentially gets to play God. This piece is intended to be a little more light-hearted and fun for its audience, however it still reflects people's fear of science playing God. This is quite similar to Swack's bodies of work where she explores the ideas of cloning and genetic alteration that our society seems to be fearful of, yet be so fascinated with. Each body of work in this exhibit explores and intertwines the use of science and technology with biological forms of the body and other living beings. They all explore how certain things function in the world and how they can all be altered or manipulated in order to be formed into something completely new and innovative. That is why I believe this work is so important because it not only expresses the creative thoughts and ideas from different artists, but they also seem to take a

- **Biological and Technological Transformations of Living Forms in Art**

step forward in terms of technological and scientific advances. I feel that this is something important and useful in our society, and perhaps all artists should try and do the same, not just create art for the sake of making art, but making it so that it has some sort of significant impact on the world around us.
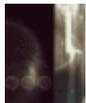
Animal Patterning Project
By DEBRA SWACK

My Perfect Child
By DEBRA SWACK

idades // multi-local, multi-user, realtime interactive installation
By Daniel Desiderio Paez Castillo

X-Scape
By Mattia Casalegno

Delicate Boundaries
By Chris

Eisenstein's Monster
By Chris Joseph

Interactive Art 1

Thursday, September 20, 2007

Web Art Trends

Over the past several weeks that I've been exploring the contents of Rhizome.org, I've noticed some trends that seem to be fairly common areas of interest in the present Web Art scene. Since I am talking about art for the internet, I wanted to select one trend, actually a "tag", that I have seen on many of the artworks on rhizome.org and that "tag" is "Artificial life". The artworks that have been tagged with Artificial life seem to deal with modifying genetics or transforming biological life into a digital world. The digital setting almost seems to let the artist take on the roll of God, without actually causing any real damage or harm to biological beings. A few artworks that follow this trend are:

Debra Swack's "My Perfect Child"

http://rhizome.org/object.php?47075

and her "Animal Patterning Project"

http://rhizome.org/object.php?47081

Chris Joseph's "Eisenstein's Monster"

http://rhizome.org/object.php?47030

Another trend that I've noticed in digital art or web art, is Interactive art. Artwork that the viewer can become part of or change an aspect

About Me

Corey Richardson

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The Mind Ninja

Debra Swack

Debra Swack is a media artist who has displayed projects all throughout the United States. Swack's work encompasses a wide range of material ranging from photos, drawings, sculpture and sound installation to videos. I discovered Swack on Rhizome and was instantly interested in her emotions project Debra Swack was born and raised in Monroe, Louisiana and currently resides in New York City. She received her Bachelors of Arts from SUNY at Binghamton and also is a Phi Theta Kappa in computer science. She has also expanded her education by taking courses at NYU and Pratt Art Institute. In addition to her work as an artist, Swack is a consultant at SUNY Buffalo Research Foundation.

"The Trees of Central Park-October 2003"

D. Swack   digital archival prints   24" x 30" each   2003


"Emotions"

What I find particularly interesting about Swack's artwork is that she shows appreciation for natural beauty and simplicity such as what is seen in "The Trees of Central Park," which is a time lapse photographic project that explores nature and the cycle of life. While this is a relatively universal theme that has been previously explored, she shows an appreciation for topics which everyone can relate to. She expands upon her artistic talents and intellectual ability by delving into fields of psychology, biology, body image, fashion, abortion, and even cloning. Another of her projects that I really admire is her work

beautiful thing about this concept is that no matter the age, gender, social status or other external variables, we can still communicate through emotions. Aesthetically, I like how the four panels she created each have a color which helps to exemplify each emotion she is displaying. I think that the portrait style of her work and the fact that she omits text from the panels adds a nice effect; allowing the viewer to experience this universal phenomenon on their own. If anything, I think it might be interesting if she added more panels

perhaps of more complex emotions, which would also allow her to diversify the ages and ethnicities of her subjects. I think that the addition panels would drive home the idea of universal connection emotions provide.

Also, Swack's work titled "My Perfect Child" again provides some interesting material to consider. Swack explores the concept of creating the perfect offspring; a pursuit society seems to have become obsessed with. This fixation to produce and rear the best child is evident in the popularity of child rearing manuals, to selective abortion practices and new scientific possibilities

"My Perfect Child"
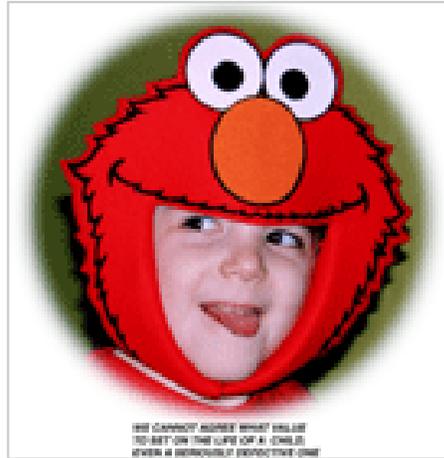
such as genetic engineering. The default answer expecting parents give when asked about the gender of their unborn child, "oh we don't care, as long as the baby is healthy," could turn into a genetic competition to form a society of perfect people. From Swack's "My Perfect Child" I gather that she is trying to reiterate the idea that perfection is in the imperfect. Genetic engineering and selective abortion is not needed, children are already perfect. Their insecurities, battles, oddities and quirks add to each flawless creation. Ask any mother and she knows just like Swack that the perfect child already exists, without the help of genetic engineering. Aesthetically, this picture is not particularly complicated, but I think that it gets at this message of childhood simplicity and natural perfection.

Overall, I am impressed with Debra Swack's work and the intellectual complexities that she incorporated into her art. Swack's ability to explore important and meaningful topics combined with her familiarity of a vast array of artistic mediums makes her an intriguing artist.
Debra Swack on Rhizome

Posted by Shannon at 3:44 PM

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About Me

NCAVT280

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Wednesday, September 5, 2007

Weekly Art Review #1

Subject: My Perfect Child by Debra Swack (www.rhizome.org)

My Perfect Child depicts 10 pictures of small children no older than ten years old, set in various scenes of their lives, each with a paraphrased caption from "Designing Babies" by Roger Gosden underneath.

The piece is a true representative of the argument against cloning and stem cell research, overpowering the opposing side with raw emotion elicted by the children's innocent and carefree faces. The pictures almost feel threatened by the cold, emotionless text lurking beneath them.

Posted by NCAVT280 at 10:13 PM

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http://www.adrianv.com/web-projects/hiding/deploy/hiding.html

Van Allen is a multimedia artist, writer, and designer. This online media interactive work plays on ideas of science and taxonomy. It seems to me to be an ironic statement of the sometimes blind comfort we take in science and process. The viewer will experience these ideas through an interactive, clickable image of the jars. Each one has its own secret or defense written underneath, inviting the reader to apply the work to and reflect back on their own lives and "hiding places". The viewer may sympathize with the specimens, suspended in fluid in clear jars, unable to hide from our raking gaze. This raises the question, why do we have the desire to hide? What creates this desire in us?

My Perfect Child

Debra Swack, 2007

These works explore the history and possibility of engineering the perfect child through genetics, cloning, or selective abortion. It is an installation of photo and text on dinnerware, reiterating the domestic themes within. This piece questions not only what would be considered the perfect child, but why do we seek out perfection?

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