

## Artist-in-residence programs

FLUX Digital Art Center

Developed by **Bob Sweeny/Penn State University**



### Where's the 'me' in new media?

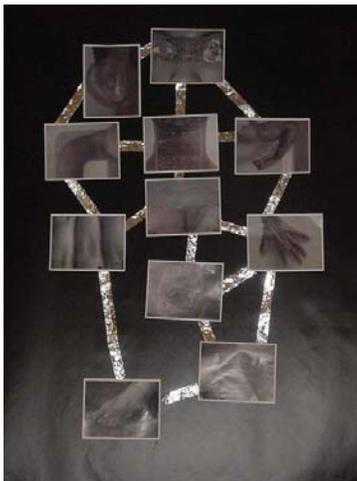
The integration of digital media in the classroom requires innovative new pedagogical approaches. Educators hoping to incorporate the computer in the art classroom must take into account the shifting nature of new media. The following modular curriculum – adaptable to the needs of particular schools and individual situations -- connects students, teachers, artists and theorists through the development of flexible educational networks. Educators can adapt the curriculum to their own needs, building a new media network -- that works.



This program is organized around major themes that are unique to digital media. Each theme is identified by examples from popular cultural, allowing for the introduction of new media concepts and techniques. Each unit is comprised of specific readings, discussion questions, and project outlines, including suggestions for specific materials and techniques, along with possible extensions beyond the classroom.



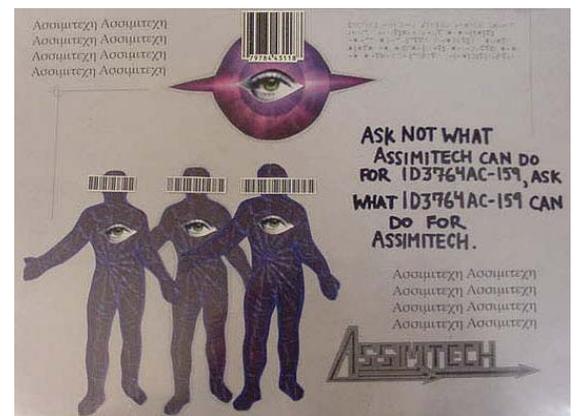
**Me and the machine** – The relationship between individuals and computers provides an interesting introduction to new media, through the metaphor of the cyborg. The cyborg is a product of science fiction and fact, a result of the anxieties that have arisen as technologies begin to overlap with our bodies. By addressing this combination of human and machine, art educators might find opportunities to discuss the impact that technologies have had on each of us. Beginning with a discussion of cyborg examples from pop culture -- the Terminator, characters from the primetime cartoon Futurama, etc. (fig. 2) -- students can begin to discuss the ways in which they use technologies, and how they affect their bodies.



- Projects developed from this introduction are numerous. Students could work alongside Biology/Human Anatomy students in creating an interdisciplinary project, possibly conceiving of and creating (drawing, mixed media sculpture, etc.) a cyborg lifeform. Studio art students using computers could use image-processing software to manipulate images of themselves, making cyborg images of themselves (fig. 3), which could then be uploaded to the Internet, continuing the extension of digital technologies.
- Crucial to this theme is the idea that the cyborg offers us the chance to critique ourselves -- what makes us human, and how technologies affect our lives. This theme is connected to the work of performance artists such as Stelarc and Guillermo Gomez-Pena (fig. 4), who use the metaphor of the cyborg to address technophobia and cultural assimilation, respectively. This topic also leads to a discussion of surveillance technologies, building from the work of the Surveillance Camera Players and Steve Mann. These examples show the varied possibilities for responding to digital technologies -- from low to high tech -- through the metaphor of the cyborg.



- **Me, myself, and I** -- The computer operates by copying information with ease, creating copies that are indistinguishable from the original. This process – cloning -- has recently become a controversial topic following the announcement that a group known as the Raelians had successfully cloned a human being in 2002. In fact, the computer brings into question the idea of originality, challenging art historical notions of creativity and uniqueness.
- Students begin by discussing the popular examples of cloning -- from Dolly the cloned sheep to Agent Smith from *Matrix Reloaded*. Just as the cyborg could be seen as a critique of what it is to be human, the clone critiques the idea of the object as unique. Connecting this concept to artists who have challenged this notion -- Marcel Duchamp's readymades, Andy Warhol's limitless silkscreens (fig. 5)-- students could begin to use the concept of the clone as an aesthetic approach.
- The projects that grow from this discussion are varied. Students could create casts from molds in sculpture classes that address these issues. Students in computer classes could use Photoshop to reproduce images innumerable times, possibly leading to installation-based works.
- While the metaphor of the clone addresses the uniqueness of the art object, it could also lead to a discussion of the effects of technology on humankind (fig. 6). The human clone raises many religious and philosophical issues -- issues that might be connected to courses in World Religions, Psychology, or Health Science.



- **Me against the world** – While the Internet offers the chance for interaction on a vast scale, it can also make the individual seem quite minuscule. Looking at the metaphor of the network, students may begin to understand the connections that are made available by networked digital technologies. These various networks can be seen as representing institutional structures, which students might choose to learn from, participate with, or critique. The computer virus as metaphor might be used to discuss these types of interactions as they occur on the Internet, as individuals or small groups interact with larger organizations.
- The discussion of the virus as metaphor begins with related pop culture sources: *Osmosis Jones*, the "I Love You" virus, etc. The discussion should lead to an analysis of larger social systems -- possibly including the classroom itself -- talking about how change is produced (fig. 7). The conversation could take on political topics -- the recent pro- and anti-war protests related to the war in Iraq, and how these affect the larger society, for instance.
- Projects based on this discussion could be influenced by discussions of contemporary 'political art,' such as the AIDS quilt project or the work of Jimmie Durham. In a computer-oriented course, this discussion could lead to a unit on webpage design, looking at how groups such as RTMark affect change through their web-based projects. Once again, students could work with other classes to collaborate on 'viral' works of art, based in studies in Biology or Life Science.

Student Images: fig. 1- Danny Pluto, *think*, (2001), fig. 3 - Christine Chin-Sang (2000), fig. 6 - Nate Gabor, *assimitech*, (2001)

<b>general theme</b>	<b>teacher-based</b> >> using on-line resources to integrate new media art projects in various non-art classrooms	<b>hybrid</b> >> combination of on-line resources, teacher-led projects, and artist-in-residence	<b>artist-in-residence</b> >> collaboration between classroom art teacher and artist-in-residence
<b>me and the machine</b> –studies the relationship between individuals and machines, where both categories can be analyzed, critiqued, and better understood	<b>biology</b> >> students create hybrid lifeforms that reflect studies in biological forms on-line resources – cult of the new eve, human genome project <b>anatomy</b> >> students construct wearable anatomical variations based on human forms and perform on-line resources – stelarc, guillermo gomez-pena	<b>new media lab</b> >> students participate in an on-line ‘cyborg jam’, constructing virtual ‘avatars’ from photos or drawings. students interact with others through a related newsgroup. <b>art history/studio</b> >> students discuss examples of cyborg representation from art history/world cultures, constructing contemporary responses to these examples.	<b>steve mann</b> students construct wearable technologies that personalize surveillance technologies, uploading their ‘data’ to a website.
<b>me, myself, and i</b> – the replication of information via code, underlies all computer operations. understanding cloning helps to understand the computer	<b>biology</b> >> use common technologies (camera, photocopier) to copy information (student drawings, self-portraits) and install in a space, discussing the ethics of cloning <b>world cultures</b> >> students look at belief systems that condone human cloning and those that build upon it	<b>new media lab/photography</b> >> students use photoshop or darkroom techniques to copy self-portraits, installing them in personal spaces references --sandy skoglund <b>sculpture</b> >> students learn casting techniques, making face/body part molds to later be installed and critiqued in terms of reproducing life.	<b>paul d. miller</b> – explore clone metaphor through sound and video experimentation students create ‘detoured’ videos using imovie or premier <b>music</b> >> sounds cloned through tape recorders and remixed to emphasize critical reflection.
<b>me against the world</b> – a discussion of institutional critique as viewed through the metaphor of the computer virus, addressing the critical potential for computers in the classroom	<b>literature</b> >> students experiment with cut and paste techniques based on the writings of william s. burroughs on-line resources – hypertext examples <b>biology</b> >> students study complex systems in nature, basing work on entropy and disorder Robert smithson, matthew ritche	<b>new media lab</b> >> students construct images/websites that critique larger institutional structures. on-line resources >> yes men, rtmark <b>new media lab</b> >> students create hypertextual documents (storyspace, webquest) that build from previous documents	<b>surveillance camera players/bill brown</b> students confront and question surveillance technologies in their neighborhood/school <b>u.s. government</b> >> students studying the constitution look at the current debate surrounding surveillance technologies and civil liberties.

\*\* each unit has been developed according to guidelines set in the New York State Educational Standards in the Arts (<http://www.nysed.gov> 2001), along with the National Standards for Art Education ([www.naea.org](http://www.naea.org), 2001)