

XXXBoite

xxxboite

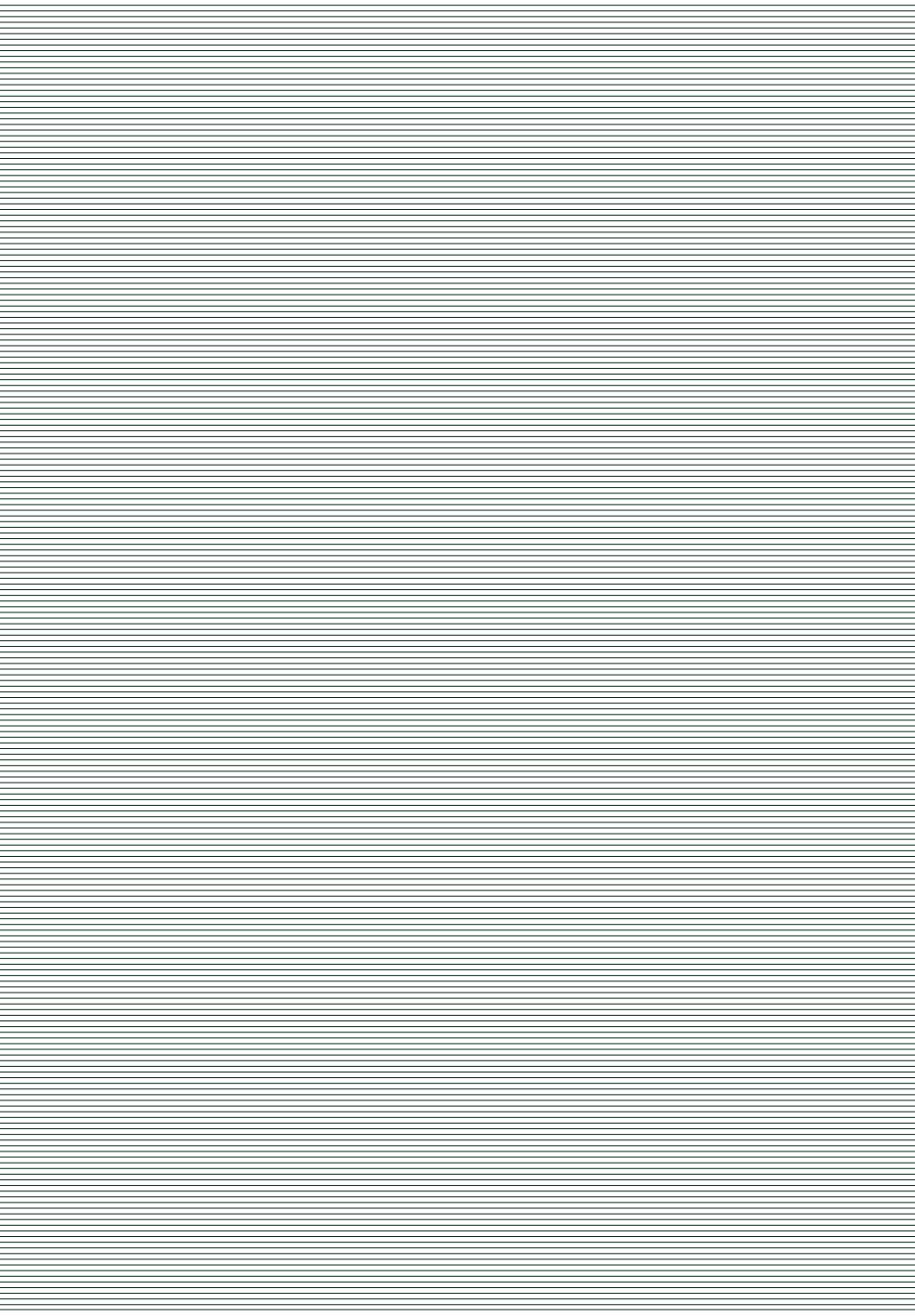
J.R. Carpenter 01-08

Anna Friz 11-18

Michelle Kasprzak 21-28

Marie-Christiane Mathieu 31-38

Kim Sawchuk 41-52



I CONSIDER THIS ARTIFACT A BETA TEST as it is the first iteration of a method of archive dipping and discourse to be brought to users outside of its development team. Like beta versions of software, it has known issues and bugs. These are issues inherent with information retrieval and story telling of any kind, for when experience is brought out of its original context for consideration in the now, there are always broken links. All too often this isolation of the event from its (in)formational context, brings about a kind of death, or stoppage of the effect of that moment and co-opts it into the meaning intended by the person or persons that assemble its new context. While I think it is a particularly western desire to create linear narrative and seek effect linked to cause, I have struggled with how one can present ideas and images of the past as a kind of naming strategy and maintenance of currency. For this artifact is not intended as definitive or final, it is only one more part of **studioxx** as a still active circumstance, one that is both physical, locatable, and alive as much as virtual, numeric, and of the ether.

In fact this project is a component of a larger one - the assemblage of a **studioxx** archive and the subsequent digitization of its holdings into a searchable online database with a GUI resembling a jacquard weaving. That will allow the user to assemble their own pattern or texture from the data that rests there. This "boite" is only one part of that thickness, a tissue whose constructive strands may never be revealed fully at the same time.

The artists and events on the DVD are selected with care but with the usual constraints of money and time - they are in no way representative of the whole of experience at the studio. They are small slices, displaced for your consideration, intended to inform and entertain, selections to return to, or return you to, the evolving whole of **studioxx**.

Such artifacts can be accused of being overly emotive and stigmatized as nostalgic. I think the narrative strategy of reminiscence is a generous one and a form of situated knowledge. I take the meaning suggested by Svetlana Boym in The Future of Nostalgia that it is the reference to an "impossible place"- one that can never be fully pictured in the now. Within the face of such impossibility, (impossible to tell the definitive story, impossible to fully know a place, impossible to assume another person's truth), we offer each other here a point cloud of ideas and thoughts from which many different forms can be drawn, depending on which lines of connection you assume.

The daring and generous part of it is to write or speak at all. I am okay with that, and grateful to all of you.

For as readers, viewers, and listeners -you too are direct participants in what Kim Sawchuk refers to as "xx energy". As such, we will remain in perpetual beta, flawed but ready for use, and very much alive.

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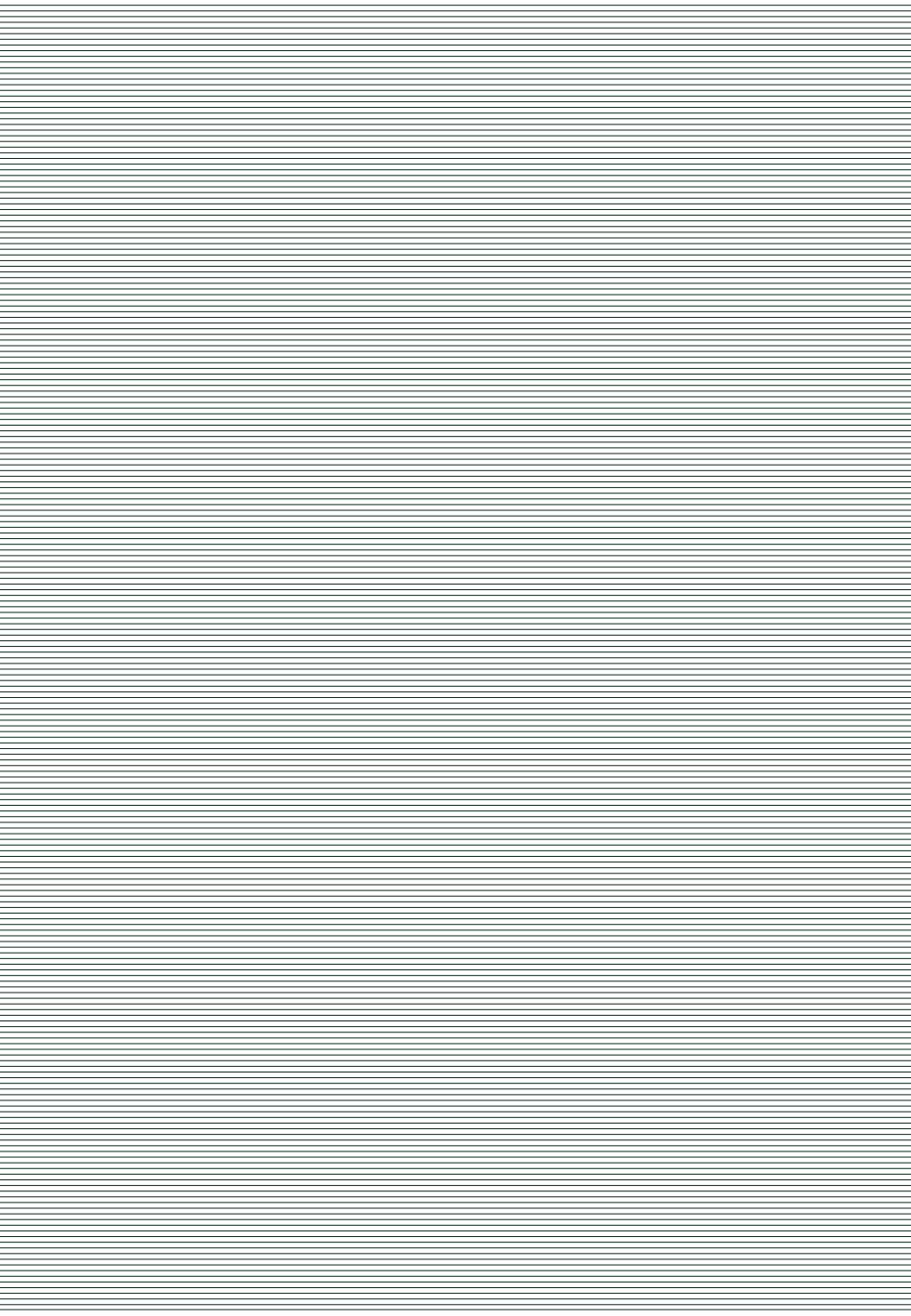
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Au commencement, nous étions peu nombreux... du moins à notre connaissance. Nous pensions qu'il pouvait y en avoir d'autres, mais nous ne savions pas trop où chercher. Nous nous trouvions dans une pièce, une petite pièce. Si elle avait un plafond de verre, nous ne pouvions le voir. L'idée étant de partager la pièce et ce qui s'y trouvait, soit du papier en abondance et aussi un ordinateur. D'après ce que nous comprenions, l'ordinateur remplacerait le papier. Nous n'avions pas encore réussi à le faire fonctionner. Nous étions davantage préoccupés par les questions suivantes : où se trouve ce lieu appelé le cyberspace? Qui le paie? Nous avons posé ces questions autour de nous et personne n'a voulu nous dire quoi que ce soit. Allez-vous-en, répondaient-ils. Vous n'êtes pas ferrés en mathématiques, disaient-ils. Cela a engendré d'autres questions... Que nous cachent-ils - mots de passe, codes, matériel? Qu'est-ce qui nous manque - information, réseaux, puissance? Qu'est-ce qu'ils cherchent à nous dissimuler - que s'ils peuvent le faire, nous le pouvons aussi? S'ils peuvent le faire, alors dans quelle mesure cela pouvait-il vraiment être difficile?

Un jour, nous avons décidé de demander à l'ordinateur. Ordinateur, contiens-tu des réponses aux nombreuses questions que tu fais naître? Nous nous sommes regroupés autour de la machine. Nous n'avions que celle-là. C'était une boîte beige grisâtre avec un œil de verre noir comme un coléoptère. Nous savions que nous ne devions pas nous laisser arrêter par l'aspect extérieur de l'objet. Nous n'ignorions pas qu'au plus profond d'elle-même, notre boîte beige grisâtre était beaucoup plus grande qu'elle n'en avait l'air. Elle était raccordée à d'autres boîtes de la même couleur dans d'autres pièces. Dans ces millions de boîtes devaient se cacher des milliards de réponses.

Nous avons mis l'ordinateur sous tension. Nous avons entendu un clic, un vrombissement puis un bourdonnement soutenu. Très bientôt, nous nous sommes retrouvés assis

dans une lueur vert bleuté. Un curseur nous a fait un clin d'œil. Nous lui avons rendu la pareille. Maintenant, que devions-nous faire? Les attentes étaient élevées. On nous avait promis le progrès, la délivrance, une autre chance. Et il y avait ce curseur, qui nous ouvrait le passage jusqu'à la ligne de commande, une ardoise propre. Avant que nous nous en rendions compte, nous donnions des ordres à la machine : run, kill execute. Pour certains d'entre nous, ce genre de langage était difficile à accepter. Quelques-uns d'entre nous auraient préféré s'en tenir à : sleep, jobs, stop, exit. D'autres voulaient en savoir davantage : list, who, finger, history. Des câbles s'enroulaient à nos pieds pour serpenter ensuite vers la sortie. Nous nous sommes faufilés en douce à l'extérieur avec eux. C'est ainsi que nous avons abandonné notre ancienne peau!

Nous venions d'échouer en territoire inconnu, dans une zone hors la loi où nous pouvions être n'importe quoi, n'importe qui, n'importe où. Nous pouvions être logiques. Nous pouvions être abstraits. Nous pouvions être « ça » ou « lui/elle » ou encore nous pouvions ouvrir une session en tant qu'invité et naviguer de façon anonyme dans Internet au moyen de divers outils : Archie, Gopher, Telnet, FTP. Nous avons erré ainsi pendant une éternité, ce qui, à l'ère d'Internet, ne signifie que quelques jours. Nous avions toujours nos corps. Nos poignets étaient endoloris. Et partout où nous passions, nous étions : @gender... ce langage gênait constamment notre progression.

Un jour, nous vaquions à nos activités, soit écrire des procédures sur la ligne de commande, lorsqu'une petite tache brillante est apparue à l'horizon. C'était un pixel. C'était une masse de pixels. Les pixels ont uni leurs forces. Bientôt, ils ont formé un onglet, puis un fichier JPEG entier. Une image! C'est alors que nous nous sommes rendu compte que personne ne savait plus qui émettait les commandes. Nous cliquions à répétition sur les icônes. Ce que nous voyions était ce que nous obtenions, une

chose amenant à une autre, plus vite et plus vite, encore et encore...

Maintenant, tout ce que nous avions à faire était de demander, et les réponses nous arrivaient de partout. Tant de réponses. Qu'étaient les questions déjà? Il s'agissait simplement de prédictions. Elles nous ont permis d'aller de l'avant. De l'avant, vers où? Nous n'aurions jamais pu savoir tout cela : combien nous étions, ce que nous savions et ce que nous ne savions pas, la manière dont nous allions tout nous rappeler. Nos incertitudes allaient-elles être stockées en ligne, de même que nos désirs? Peut-être valait-il mieux les imprimer, juste au cas où. Dans quelle mesure une conclusion était-elle nécessaire? Certes, c'était néanmoins tout un début.

IN THE BEGINNING THERE WERE ONLY A FEW OF US. That we knew of. We thought there might be others, but we weren't sure where to look. We were in a room. It was a small room. If it had a glass ceiling, we couldn't see it. The point was to share the room, and what was in it. What was in it was a lot of paper and also, a computer. It was our understanding that the computer would replace the paper. We hadn't got that working yet. We had other, more pressing questions: Where is this place called cyberspace? And who pays for it? We asked around, but no one would tell us anything. Go away, they said. You're no good at math, they said. Which only made us ask more questions: What are they hiding from us - passwords, codes, equipment? What are we missing - information, networks, power? What don't they want us to know - that if they can do it we can do it? If they can do it than how hard could it possibly be?

One day we decided we would ask the computer. Computer, do you contain any answers to the many questions you engender? We huddled around it. We only had the one. It was a grey-beige box with a beetle-black glass eye. We knew we had to get past the surface of the thing. We knew that deep down inside our grey-beige box was much larger than it appeared. It was connected to other grey-beige boxes in other rooms. Stashed away inside these millions of boxes there must be billions of answers.

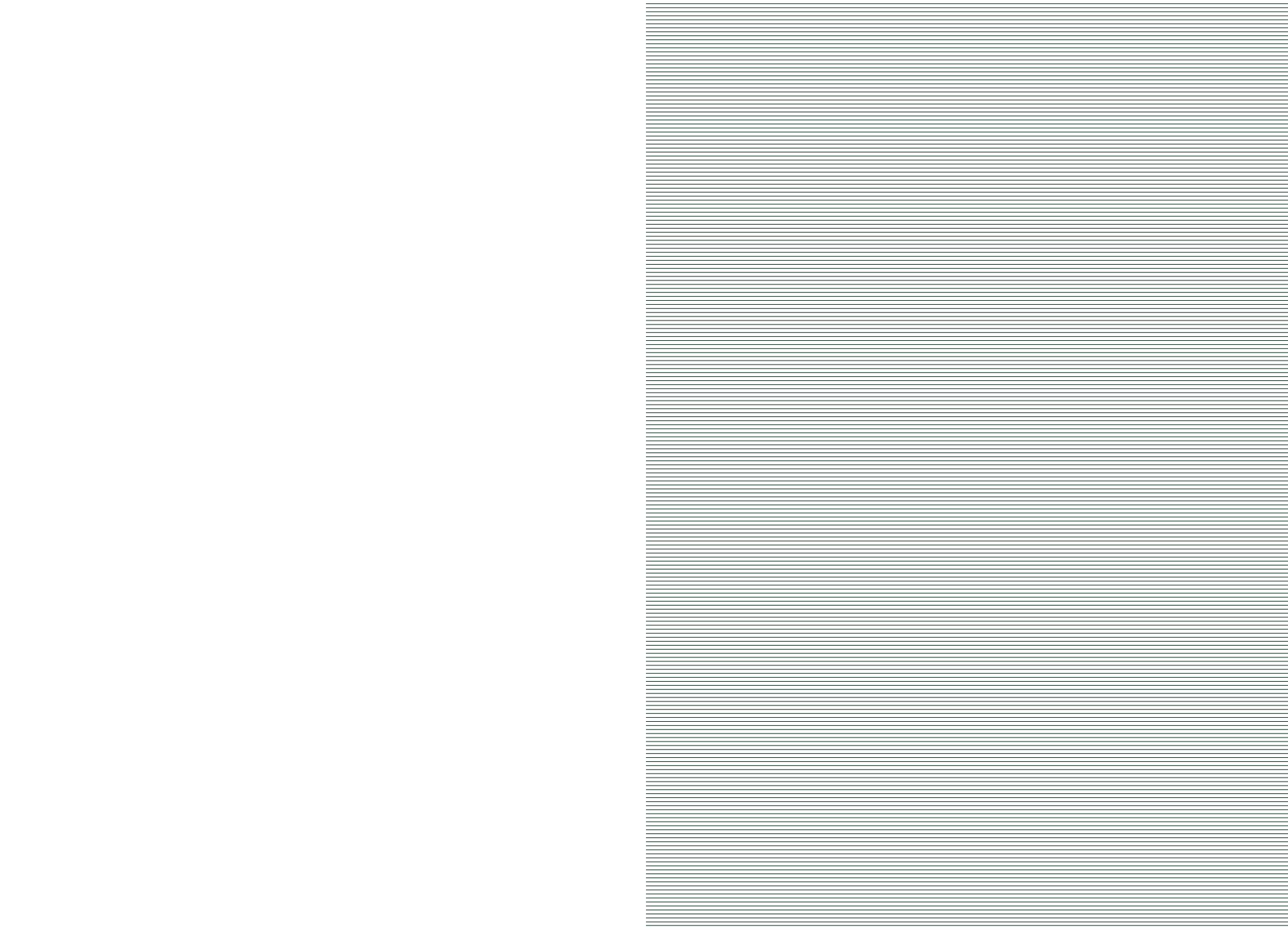
We switched the computer on. There was a click, a whir, and then a steady hum. Soon enough we sat basking in a blue-green glow. A curser blinked at us. We blinked back. Now what do we do? Expectations were running high. We'd been promised progress, deliverance, another chance. And there was this cursor clearing a path to the command line for us, a clean slate. Before we knew it we were giving it orders: run, kill, execute. This kind of language was hard for some of us to take. Some of us just wanted to: sleep, jobs, stop, exit. Others wanted to know more: list, who, finger, history. Cables coiled at our feet. They snaked out

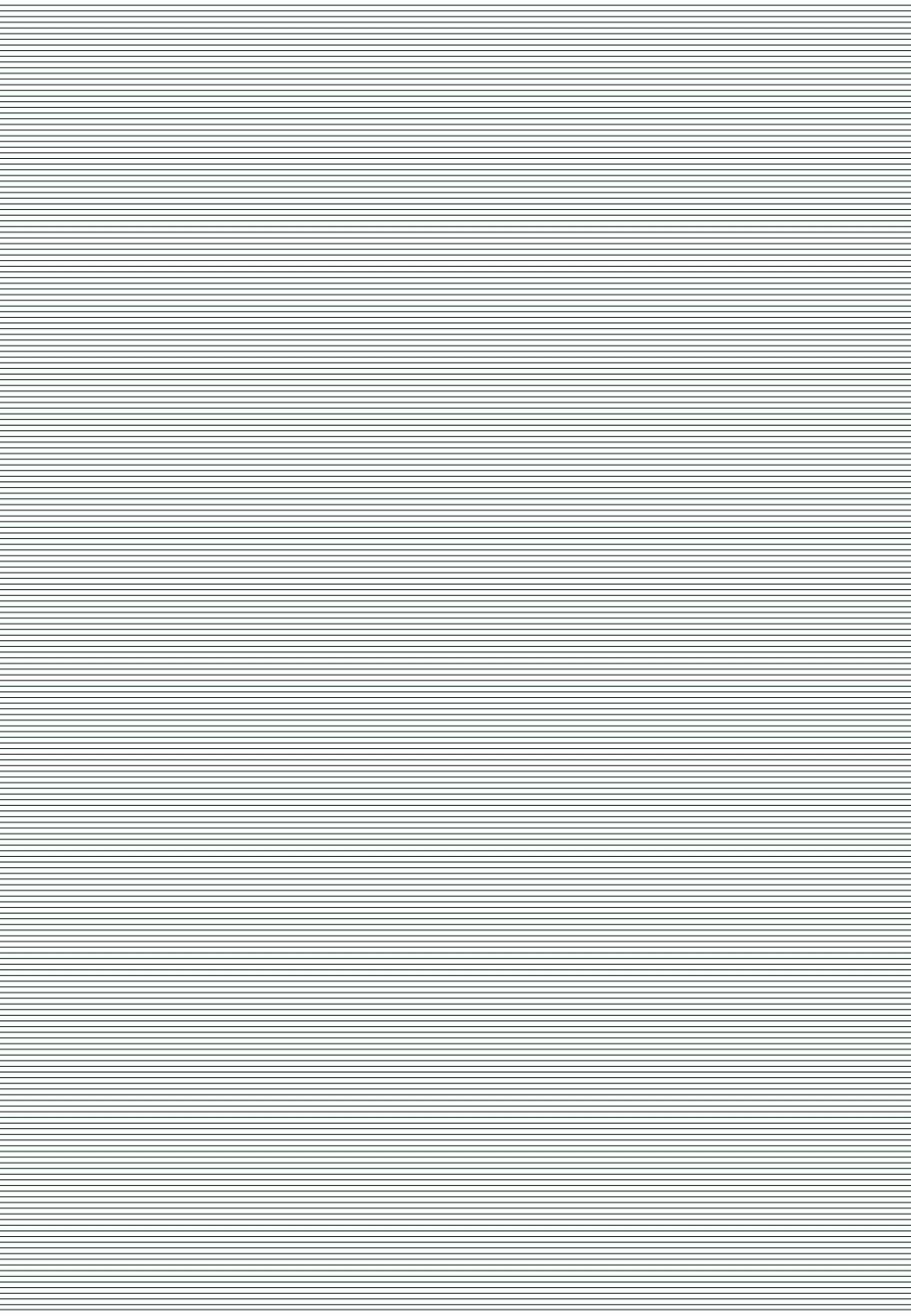
the door. We slipped out with them. So this is how we shed our skin!

We had stumbled into uncharted territory, an outlaw zone where we could be anything, anyone, anywhere. We could be logical. We could be abstract. We could be "it" or "he/she" or we could log in as Guest and cruise anonymous through Archie, Gopher, Telnet and FTP. We wandered around like this for a dog's age. Which, in Internet years, was just a few days. We still had bodies. Our wrists were sore. And everywhere we went we were: @gender, language thwarting us at every turn.

One day we were minding our own business writing shell scripts on the command line when a bright spec appeared on the horizon. It was a pixel. It was a mass of pixels. The pixels joined forces. Soon they formed a thumbnail, and then a whole jpeg. An image! The next thing we knew no one knew who was issuing commands anymore. We were all clicking away on icons. What we saw was what we got. One thing linking to another, faster and faster, around and around we went.

Now all we have to do is ask, and answers come racing at us. So many answers. What were the questions again? They were merely predictions. They enabled us to move forward. Toward what? We never would have guessed. How many of us there are. How much we do and do not know. How are we going to remember all this? Will our uncertainties be stored online, along with our desires? Maybe we'd better print them out just in case. How necessary is closure? Well, it's a start anyway.





AU COURS DE LA PÉRIODE ESTIVALE, comme la plupart des centres d'artistes autogérés, le Studio XX ferme ses portes pendant six semaines... mais le silence qui s'installe alors dans le Studio est perturbé, à l'occasion et de manière improvisée, par des allées et venues qui amènent inévitablement leur lot de sueur - il ne faut pas oublier l'humidité qui règne à la fin juin et en juillet. Des câbles se dénouent sur le sol, des consoles de mixage et des ordinateurs portatifs apparaissent, des pieds de micro et des instruments de musique s'entassent ça et là, près de tout ce matos utilisé pour faire du tapage, qui s'empile, que l'on allume et que l'on règle.

Mon association continue avec le Studio XX m'a donné la possibilité d'accéder à ses installations en dehors de la saison régulière. Étaient complices de ma démarche Oana Spinu, alors directrice technique, et un groupe de fanatiques du son dont la composition variait constamment. Le tout s'inscrivait dans le cadre de diverses collaborations internationales en réseau, lesquelles nécessitaient la présence d'outils de diffusion en continu en ligne et exigeaient souvent que nous nous présentions au Studio à des heures étranges dans l'après-midi, histoire d'être là en même temps que les participantes aux événements tenus en soirée du côté de l'Europe. Nous vivions tout le plaisir et le stress de jouer mais sans public pour nous voir chercher un connecteur perdu sous la table, suer à profusion dans nos camisoles (pendant que nous enregistriions, aucune porte n'était ouverte et il n'y avait pas de ventilateur) ou grignoter des sandwiches pendant que nous faisions du scratch sur un vinyle. La plupart d'entre nous étions habituées à la culture de l'improvisation en studio propre à la radio communautaire, mais ce qui rendait ces moments uniques était l'impression que les auditeurs se trouvaient à des heures et des heures, à des milliers de kilomètres de nous, quelque part, dans une boîte de nuit, dans une galerie ou dans un bunker artistique, alors que nous jouions dans un laboratoire d'informatique vide et étrangement silencieux, par une journée chaude et

ensoleillée, coiffées de nos casques d'écoute et intensément concentrées sur la création sonore.

En août 2001, on a demandé au Studio XX d'être commissaire d'un Web jam dans le cadre des événements entourant le 20e anniversaire de Vidéographe (un autre centre d'arts médiatiques de Montréal). J'ai contacté d'autres femmes œuvrant en arts médiatiques pour les inviter à participer au jam : Rasa Smite à Riga, en Lettonie; Reni Hofmeuller à Graz, en Autriche; et Sonomat Beta à Vienne, en Autriche. Moi-même et I8U allions représenter le volet montréalais de cette session. Dans le cadre du Web jam, auquel on a attribué le descriptif « Thick Sound For Hot People », chacune des quatre cellules a combiné à sa propre émission sonore des sons qu'elle recevait des autres cellules; ainsi, il n'y avait pas de version unique mais plutôt quatre différentes moutures témoignant de la collaboration globale. Un tel processus nécessite au moins deux ordinateurs et beaucoup de bande passante. Malheureusement, en raison de problèmes techniques avec le FSI sur le site du festival de Vidéographe, I8U et moi-même n'avons pas été en mesure de diffuser. La musicienne Annabelle Chvostek, alors stagiaire à Vidéographe, était par hasard de service cette journée-là et elle est venue s'exécuter pour les gens présents sur place, de concert avec I8U, pendant que je retournais en catastrophe au Studio XX avec Oana Spinu pour jouer avec les participants internationaux. Oana a préparé la diffusion en continu alors que j'installais mon thérémone et d'autres appareils électroniques; la portion montréalaise du Web jam s'est donc déroulée au beau milieu des écrans et des fauteuils de bureau, dans le laboratoire vide. Les deux événements parallèles ont été considérés comme couronnés de succès, et ma rencontre avec Annabelle ce jour-là a éventuellement mené à notre collaboration et à notre tournée pour l'œuvre audio/visuelle The Automated Prayer Machine, avec le soutien du Studio XX/Les HTMLles en 2004.

Parmi les autres moments inoubliables survenus dans le

laboratoire en saison morte, je dois mentionner la séance d'enregistrement avec le groupe montréalais Central Dispatch, qui a eu lieu le jour même où le Brésil remportait la Coupe du monde de soccer en 2002 (on entend des klaxons à profusion dans notre enregistrement), et la diffusion en continu d'une performance à destination de Dresde, en Allemagne, pour une intervention radio intitulée radiostadt 1. À cette performance participaient des membres de MXXR, groupe informel de femmes productrices du son au Studio XX. Oana s'est encore une fois chargée de la diffusion en continu tandis que DJ Cyan, Jackie Gallant, Bernadette Houde, Isabelle Lussier et moi-même avons joué pour un petit poste radio MF de 1 watt installé de façon temporaire dans une place publique au centre de Dresde.

Ces moments demeurent parmi les plus mémorables des années que j'ai passées au Studio XX : des moments connectés, improvisés, parfois terriblement chauds, et libres. De tels événements constituent le visage moins public, moins connu de l'art en réseau translocal, mais l'aspect local demeure le point d'intérêt principal pour moi. Le Studio XX est plus qu'un simple lieu de diffusion ou centre de ressources; c'est un endroit où les femmes peuvent être entendues et vues, même à distance, même en saison morte. C'est un lieu qui fait ressortir la présence riche et originale des femmes dans l'art en réseau et médiatique.

IN THE SUMMER, LIKE MOST ARTIST-RUN CENTRES, Studio XX closes its doors for six weeks... but the silence in the studio is disturbed by occasional, improvised, and inevitably sweaty goings-on in the humidity of late June or July. Cables unravel across the floor, mixing consoles and laptops appear, mic stands and musical instruments stand at the ready, piles of random noise-making gear turn out, turn on and tune in.

My steady association with Studio XX afforded me some off-season access, enabled by then technical director Oana Spinu, and a rotating cast of sound geeks. Such events were spurred on by international network collaborations, requiring online streaming capabilities and often odd afternoon hours on our end to correspond with evening events in Europe. It had all the fun and stress of performing, without an audience to see us grubbing about under the table for a lost connector, sweating profusely in our undershirts (no door open or fans on when recording), or munching on sandwiches while scratching a record. Most of us were used to the improvised studio culture of community radio, but what set these events apart was the sense that the listeners were hours and thousands of miles away, in a nightclub or gallery or art bunker somewhere, while we were performing inside an empty computer lab on a hot sunny day, focussed intently on sound creation, headphones on, the room oddly silent.

In August of 2001, Studio XX was invited to curate a netjam as part of Videographe's 20th anniversary events (another Montreal media arts centre). I contacted other women media artists to collaborate: Rasa Smite in Riga, Latvia, Reni Hofmeuller in Graz, Austria, and sonomat beta in Vienna, Austria, with I8U and myself jamming on the Montreal end. Billed as "thick sound for hot people", this netjam would involve all four nodes combining sound received from the other partners back into their own outgoing mix, such that there would not be a singular version but rather four different mixes representing the overall collaboration. This process requires at least two computers and a lot of

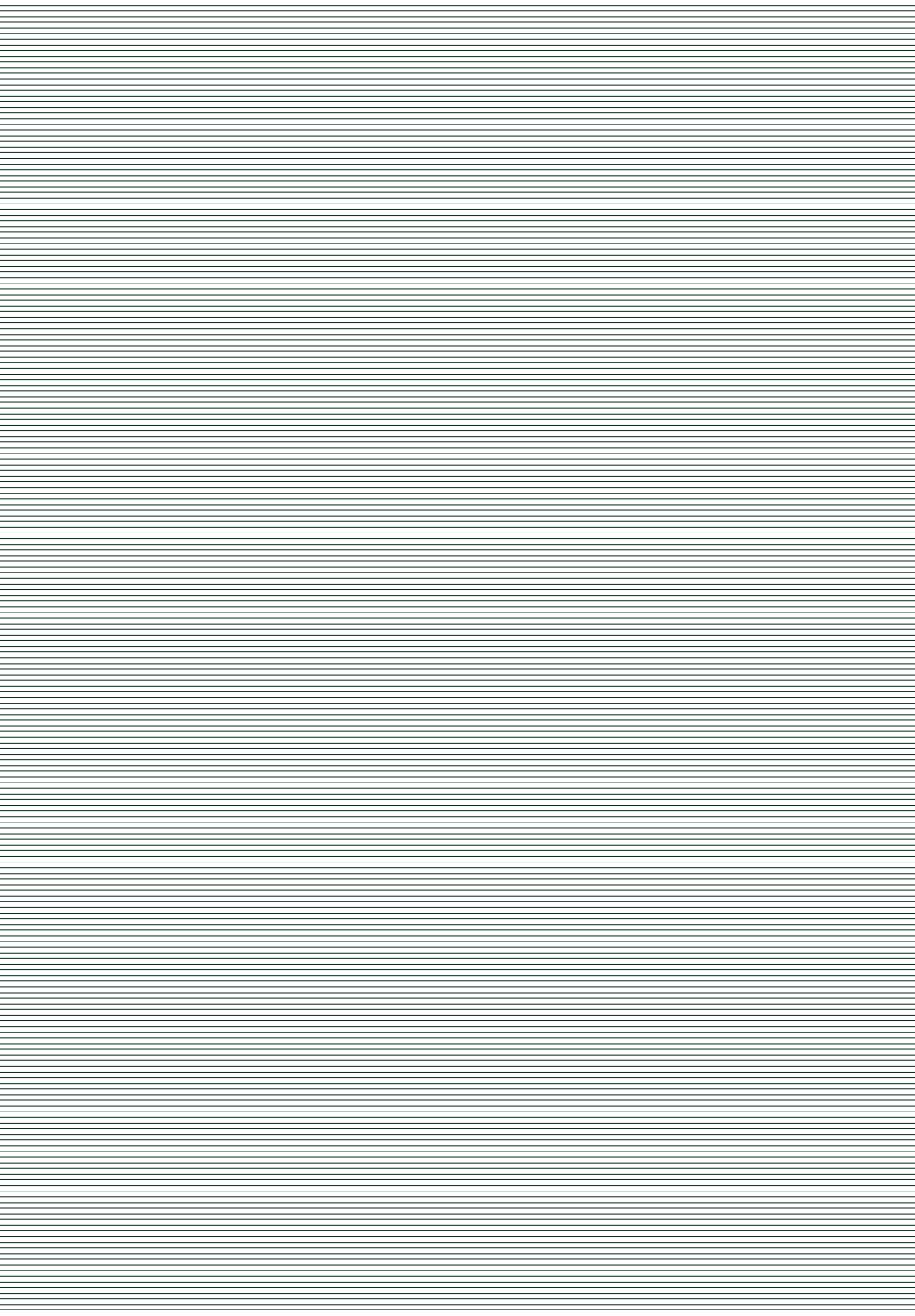
bandwidth. Unfortunately, due to some technical problems with the ISP at the Videographe festival site, I8U and I were not able to send out a stream. Musician Annabelle Chvostek, who had been interning at Videographe and happened to be on hand that day, stepped in to perform for the live audience together with I8U, while I ran back to Studio XX with Oana Spinu to play with the remote international crew. Oana set up the stream while I set up my Theremin and other electronics, and the Montreal end of the netjam took place amidst the office chairs and the monitors in the empty computer lab. Both events were deemed successful, and meeting Annabelle that day eventually led to our collaboration and tour of the audio/visual work *The Automated Prayer Machine* through Studio XX/Les HTMLles in 2004.

Other unforgettable days in the empty lab include recording with the Montreal group Central Dispatch on the day that Brazil won the World Cup in soccer in 2002 (much car honking made its way into our recording), and streaming a performance to Dresden, Germany for a radio intervention entitled *radiostadt 1*. The latter performance was undertaken by members of MXXR, an informal gathering of women sound producers at Studio XX. Oana again provided the streaming while DJ Cyan, Jackie Gallant, Bernadette Houde, Isabelle Lussier and myself played for a small 1-watt FM radio station temporarily installed in the central square in Dresden.

These moments remain among the most memorable of my years at Studio XX: connected, improvised, somehow always terribly hot, and free. Such events are the less-public face of translocal network art, but the locale remains in focus for me. Studio XX has been more than a venue or a resource centre; it is a place for women to be heard and seen, even remotely, even during the off-season, promoting the knowledgeable and creative presence of women in network and media art.

Biography

Anna Friz

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SI VOUS CHERCHEZ DE L'INFORMATION sur les racines du Studio XX dans le Web, la machine à remonter le temps (Wayback Machine) du site archive.org pourra vous amener à une date aussi reculée que le 15 février 1998. Cliquez sur ce lien et vous verrez apparaître une page noire ornée des ombres fantomatiques de trois images non saisies par l'archive, et les énoncés « Second Annual Candlelight Vigil Across the Internet » (Seconde vigie annuelle à la chandelle dans Internet) et « English/Français » vous accueilleront. En approfondissant davantage cet ancien site, vous verrez qu'il décrit le Studio XX comme un groupe jeune et dynamique composé de femmes s'efforçant d'effectuer des interventions positives et originales dans le secteur des technologies multimédias numériques. Ce site indique clairement que le groupe est déterminé à aider les femmes s'adonnant à la création à accéder à de telles technologies, et souligne en outre un engagement à aider les praticiennes à surmonter toute peur qu'elles pourraient avoir à l'égard de ces technologies, en ignorant toutefois tout le battage qui y est si souvent associé. Il est ici possible de mettre bout à bout les éléments d'une narration sur la manière précise dont tout a commencé pour ces femmes, motivées par un désir commun de créer un espace unique pour la création au moyen de la technologie et qui se sont réunies pour le faire. Elles ont rassemblé du matériel informatique, car pour elles, l'accès à ce matériel revêtait une importance vitale.

Dix ans plus tard, en ouvrant la page qui existe actuellement à studioxx.org, on aperçoit un fond blanc avec un calendrier rempli d'activités, par exemple les salons Femmes Br@nchées, l'émission de radio XX Files, et le festival Les HTMLles. Plusieurs de ces activités étaient également présentes dans le site de 1998, leur longévité témoignant de la solidité de la pensée collaborative qui, dès les débuts, a marqué le concept du Studio. L'empreinte de la vision d'origine est également présente dans l'énoncé de mission du Studio. Toutefois, cette vision a bien sûr fait l'objet de

mutations et évolué au fil du temps. Les visiteurs du site sont informés que le Studio, aujourd’hui, est un « centre d’artiste féministe engagé dans l’exploration, la création et la critique en art technologique. Explorer, démystifier, donner accès, outiller, questionner, créer, telles sont les visées du Studio XX. »

Délimiter les dix dernières années d’activité du XX avec ces deux serre-livres ne suffit pas, très loin de là, à rendre compte du visage public que revêt le XX. Les subtils changements survenus, depuis les débuts du Studio, dans son orientation, son langage et les thèmes privilégiés dans ses activités de commissariat sont difficiles à interpréter à partir de deux points seulement. Toutefois, l’aspect mis en relief est la question de l’accès, qui se situe au cœur même de la démarche du Studio. L’accès fait encore naturellement partie du propos, mais la critique et le contexte ont pris de plus en plus d’importance dix ans plus tard. Le Studio considère encore comme une de ses priorités principales le concept qu’elle prônait initialement, soit l’accès au matériel et aux logiciels mêmes, mais il tient également compte des changements qui ont un impact sur la société. À une ère où la technologie s’immisce partout, alors que la puissance de calcul du téléphone cellulaire moyen équivaut ou est supérieure à celle d’un ordinateur de bureau haut de gamme de 1996, les questions d’accès, de compréhension et de contexte ne sont plus les mêmes.

Les défis auxquels le Studio XX sera confronté demeureront rattachés à l’accès, mais le besoin d’accès à une technologie physique sera graduellement remplacé par le besoin d’accès à un réseau humain et la nécessité de développer un contexte pertinent créé dans un esprit communautaire. Nous assisterons sous peu à de nouveaux changements stupéfiants dans le secteur de l’informatique, entraînés par des générations qui sont nées sous le signe du numérique (digital natives) plutôt que des générations ayant migré vers ce dernier (digital immigrants). Alors que la

technologie se fait de plus en plus omniprésente et qu’elle se fraie un chemin dans toutes les sphères de la vie moderne, l’accès le plus essentiel que le Studio puisse fournir est un réseau de soutien formé de pairs et de mentors, ainsi que la mise en contexte critique de ces développements d’un point de vue féministe. Le grand défi futur, un défi que le XX est tout à fait habilité à relever, tient à la façon de révéler et de critiquer la multitude d’impacts que ces percées technologiques de plus en plus difficiles à discerner auront sur notre vie et notre pratique artistique.

SEARCHING FOR STUDIO XX'S ROOTS ON THE WEB, archive.org's Wayback Machine will take you as far back as February 15, 1998. Click on that link, and a spare black page with ghostly shadows of three images uncaptured by the archive, and the words "Second annual candlelight vigil across the internet", and "English/Français" greet you. Digging a little deeper, this early site describes Studio XX as a "young and dynamic group of women striving to make positive and creative interventions in the field of digital media technologies". A dedication to promoting access to technology for female creators is clear, coupled with a commitment to assist practitioners to "overcome any "**fear**" around these technologies", but without "embracing all the "**hype**" in which they are so often embedded." A narrative of precisely how things got started can be pieced together: women driven by a desire to create a unique space for creation with technology got together and just did it. Computer equipment was pooled, driven by a view that access to this equipment was a "crucial concern".

Ten years later, opening the page that currently exists at studioxx.org reveals a clean white background and a calendar full of activities, such as the Femmes Branchées gatherings, the XX Files radio show, and the HTMLles festival. Several of these activities were also present on the 1998 site, their longevity acting as a testament to the soundness of the early collaborative thinking around the concept of the Studio. The imprint of the original vision is also present in the mission statement, though of course this has also shifted and evolved. Visitors to the site are informed that the Studio today "is a feminist digital art centre for technological exploration, creation and critique. [and]... aims to demystify and deconstruct digital technologies by critically examining their social and cultural aspects."

Framing the past ten years of activity through these two bookends is a very limited way of sampling the public face of XX. The subtle shifts in purpose, language, and curatorial

themes that took place in the intervening years are difficult to interpolate from only two endpoints. What is thrown into relief, however, is the central question of access. Access is naturally still part of the conversation, but critique and context take prominence ten years later. The Studio nobly upholds the original notion of access to hardware and software itself, but also reflects changes in society. In our pervasively technological age, when the computing power on the average cellular phone is equivalent-to or better-than a top-of-the-line desktop computer in 1996, the questions of access, understanding, and context shift.

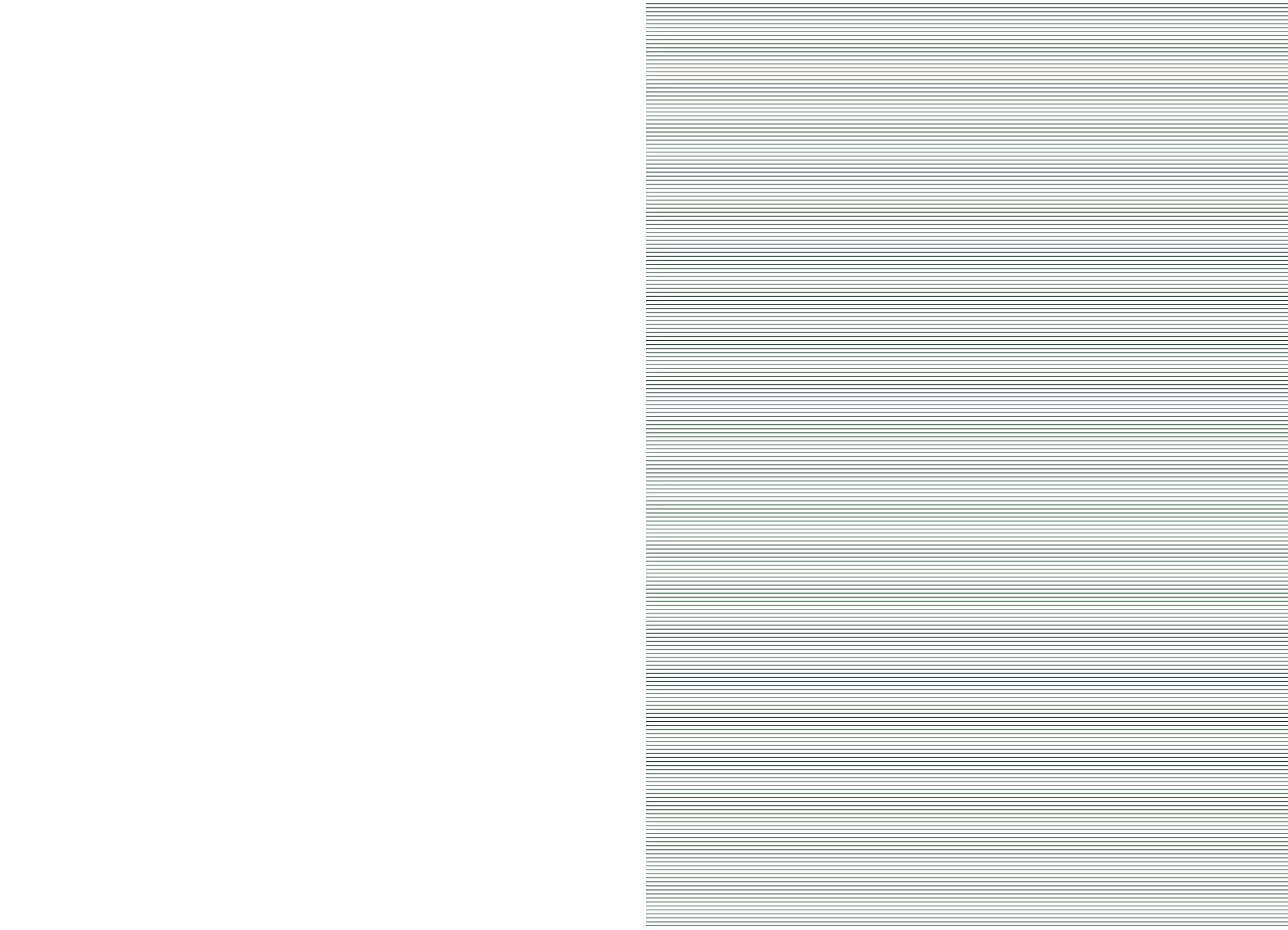
The future challenges that XX must address will continue to be about access, but it will evolve from a need to access physical technology to the need to access a human network and to develop a relevant context created in a community spirit. We stand on the threshold of further breathtaking changes in computing, driven by generations that are "digital natives" rather than "digital immigrants"¹. As technology becomes more ubiquitous and pervasive, the most essential access that the Studio will provide is to a network of supportive peers and mentors, and critical contextualization of these developments from a feminist viewpoint. The great challenge ahead, one that XX is uniquely qualified to address, is how to reveal and critique the multitude of impacts these increasingly invisible technological advances will make in our lives and our artworks.

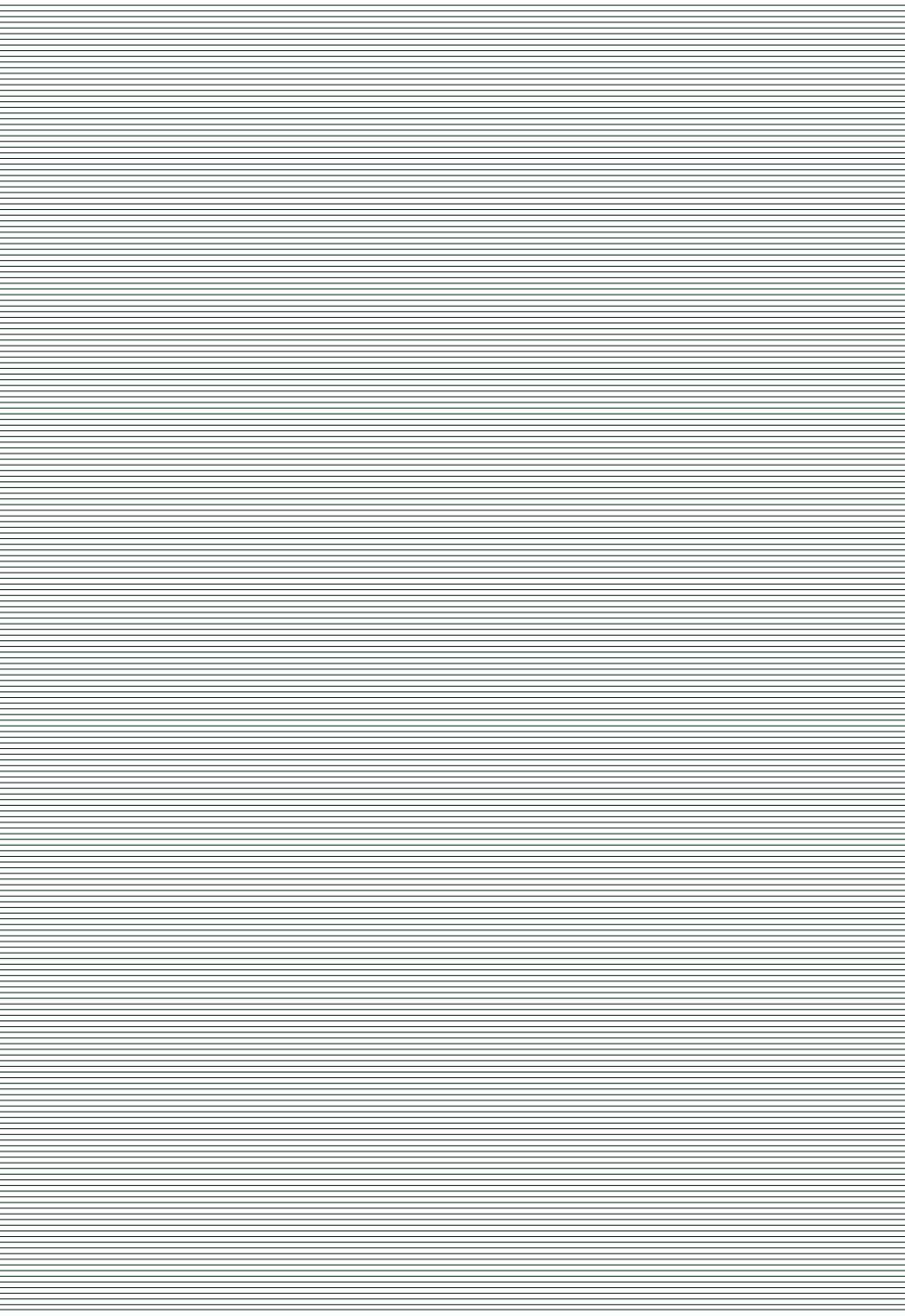
Notes

1. Prensky, Marc "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants", From On the Horizon (NCB University Press, Vol. 9 No. 5, October 2001)

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JE L'AVOUE, JE SOUFFRE DE MACRANTHROPOSE SÉVÈRE, conséquence d'un étalement phénoménal, mais nécessaire, de mon corps dans tous les recoins planétaires. Toutes ces mutations que je subis suivent le courant de l'innovation, du renouvellement, de la rejuvenation. L'aître (être+aire) que je suis, prend l'allure de Cucoanes, ce personnage de la nouvelle « le Macranthrope » de Mircea Eliade, qui devient l'image de l'univers en embrassant dans son gigantisme la voix du monde et l'apparence du cosmos et dont le destin inévitable est de se mêler aux éléments pour finalement se dissoudre dans ces zones démesurées de la nature.

Né de la nécessité de me retrouver dans tous les travers du milieu, ce syndrome m'attache à mon image, me demande de l'élargir, de la peaufiner, de l'afficher, de la publiciser, de la mettre à jour quotidiennement pour continuer d'exister, pour toujours être à ma place ou du moins, pour la prendre, car comme l'écrivait Nicolas Bourriaud, « ce qui ne peut se commercialiser a pour destin de disparaître ». Conséquemment, je suis la spectatrice et la consommatrice de ma propre existence. Je participe entièrement à l'économie de l'égo et je me sens bien.

Mon corps morcelé et distribué est classifié par contenu, par événements, par titre; par années, par sujet, par poids, par age, par profession; par statut familial, couche sociale, revenu salarial, comme mère, comme voisine, comme propriétaire de maison, de chien, de chat, de bateau, de résidence secondaire, comme cliente, comme patiente, comme citoyenne, comme descendante, femme, homme, enfant. J'existe à travers les archives, en long et en large, vous me voyez tranche par tranche, partie par partie.

Je tape mon nom et j'apparaîs ici et là en majuscule, en minuscule; un mot, une phrase, un rien. Je me jauge. Je me fais une idée de ma personne. Je n'existe que par vous qui recomposez avec les bribes que vous y trouvez l'idée de qui je suis. Ainsi, j'existe par ce moteur de recherche, cette base de données, par cette archive numérique. Je suis

partout et malgré tout, je suis nulle part... Drôle de paradoxe qui faisait écrire à Arlette Farge dans son ouvrage *Le goût de l'archive*, "L'archive impose très vite une étonnante contradiction; en même temps qu'elle envahit et immerge, elle renvoie, par sa démesure, à la solitude".

I confess, I suffer from severe macranthroposis, resulting from a phenomenal, but necessary display of my body in all the planetary recesses. All those mutations I am subjected to follow the trend of innovation, of renewal, of rejuvenation. My body, my *{sur}face* is beginning to resemble Cucoanes, a character from Mircea Eliade's short story entitled *A Big Man*, who becomes the image of the universe by embracing, in his gigantism, the voice of the world, the appearance of the cosmos, and whose ineluctable destiny is to synthesize with the elements to ultimately dissolve into nature's disproportionate spaces.

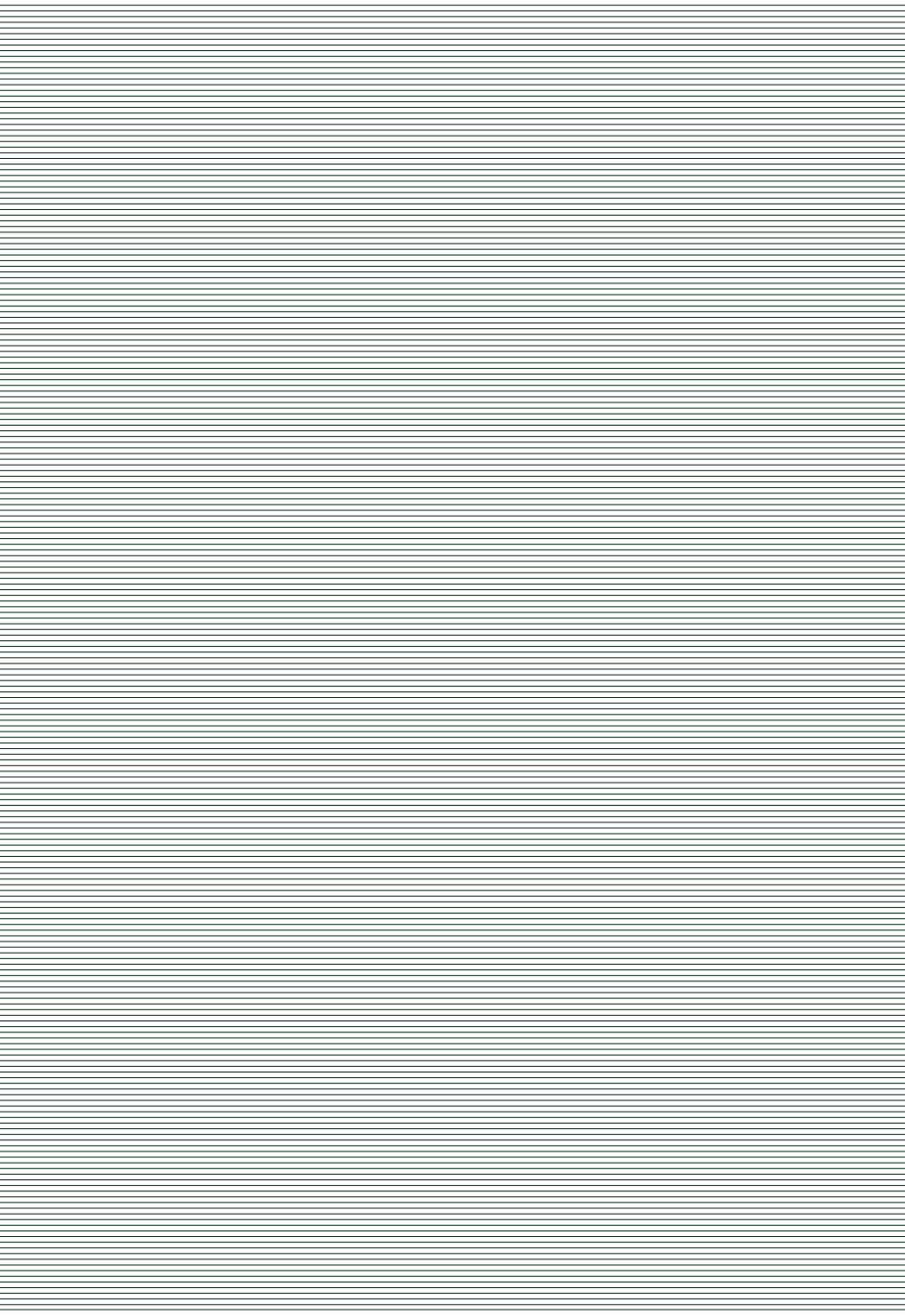
Born out of the necessity to find myself between each and every crack in the environment, this syndrome binds me to my image, begs me to enlarge it, to refine it, to display it, to publicize it, to put it under the spotlight each and every day in order to continue to exist, to always be in my place, or at the very least, to reclaim it, else, according to writer and critic Nicolas Bourriaud, all that which cannot be sold, is bound to vanish. I am, therefore, the spectator and the consumer of my own existence. I am wholly involved in the economy of the ego and I feel good.

My body, divided and distributed, is classified by content, by event, by title; by year, by subject, by weight, by age, by profession; by familial status, by social rank, by tax bracket; as a mother, as a neighbour, as a home owner, a dog owner, a cat owner, as a boat owner and second home owner; as a customer, as a patient, as a citizen, as a descendent, as a woman, as a man, as a child. It is in the archives that I exist, in great detail; there you can see me slice by slice, part by part.

I type my name and I appear, here and there, in capital letters, in lower case; a word, a sentence, a mere nothing. I size myself up. I create my own self-perception. I exist only through you, you who reconstructs, with the scraps you recover, an idea of who I am. Then, I exist through this search engine, this database, this digital archive. I am

everywhere and yet, in spite of it all, I am nowhere... a peculiar paradox which inspired Arlette Farge to write, in 1989, that very quickly, the archive imposes a startling contradiction; just as it invades and immerses, it also denotes, in its excess, solitude.





EXPRESSIONS OF THE DESIRE FOR A ROOM of one's own have been around for some time in feminist theory, most famously, in the reflections of Virginia Woolf. The idea for actually instigating such a space for a feral exploration of the creative potential of digital technologies was hatched on that most typical of Montreal locations, a balcony. On a balmy Montreal afternoon in 1995 Kathy Kennedy, Trish Kearns and I were discussing with fevered intensity, home-made martinis and a great deal of laughter how computers were changing our lives. Even if computers weren't yet ubiquitous the word *cyber* was everywhere, made famous in Donna Haraway's influential essay "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century."

We spoke of our mutual desire to crack the mystique of techno-contraptions outside of the confines and strictures of typical places of learning. Notes were taken, soon lost, in indecipherable long-hand on yellow foolscap. The lack of technical help for our computer-related questions, our own lack of skills and the money needed for equipment was lamented. We were a broke but cheeky gang of feminists who wanted to share technology, skills, and to instigate occasions to get together on a regular basis, for any reason we could find. Surmising that we weren't alone in our longings, we knew that one could be an activist, an artist, an academic and have fun whilst being political. We had already regularly come together for parties and political demonstrations that used the power of artistry and performance in the early 1990s. The result of this brain-fever was an idea that eventually became an organization, **studio xx**, Kathy Kennedy's brilliant twist on Oscar Wilde's famous adage "everything in moderation, except excess."

The early studio was an energetically frazzled forum for talk and discussion of the whats, whys and wherefores of digital technologies. While a space to explore the impacts and potential of digital production and telecommunications for feminist cultural production, one of the key premises

that the studio was founded upon was that f2f conversation was not easily or necessarily replaced in the networked society. The studio, more of a will than an actual place in its early incarnations, became a mutable yet powerful event-space for exchange, national and inter-national from its moment of inception running para-activities to the well-funded official ones happening about town, such as ISEA. We hosted performance by members of VNS MATRX from Australia. Natalie Jeremijenko set up an on-line installation over the telephone line from our houses. The Geordie space on Berri was often the site for these events. A precursor to the studio's first home the first office was shared with the Teesri Duniyaii Theatre Group.

Likewise the salon that became les femmes branches (women plugged in) was an important early platform that signified right away that the energies generated within the studio would not only be devoted to exchanging tips on how to be good geek girls. Feminism, I believe, thrives on open and respectful and passionate debate- not consensus and a pre-ordained uniformity of opinion. This could, and did, happen over a cocktail and snacks on a Friday afternoon, in that other famous Montreal tradition of the cinq-à-sept, but also in homage to the salon culture, often one of female intellectual activity, made famous by Gertrude Stein. Not all women or those involved may agree, or have agreed, with calling the studio or these activities feminist but it is a term that I have always thought could signify a commitment, one that was an active identification and acknowledgement of a rich history and tradition of ideas, activities, and action that exceeds strict biological belongings to the M/F binary. The studio, in the tradition of the feminist salon, became a place to enable the bridging between genders, languages, disciplines, practices and in so doing to highlight the in-between of the falsely monadic.

Technologies, even those that are ephemeral and virtual, are rooted in specific locations. Computers and terminals sit

somewhere. Labs have an address on some street, even though those connected through it may be co-located and enabled to engage in all manner of synchronous and asynchronous communications. Rather than just assuming that access was a necessity or that we all needed to get on line or on board. we wanted to better understand the needs, desires, hopes and expectations of specific users. Access is tied to social and economic class and in the 1990s the divide between the haves and have-nots with access to the hardware and infrastructure was deep. We wanted to do our bit not only to bridge the so-called 'digital divide' but to determine how the bridge would be built and to figure out where we wanted this bridge to go.

One of our first actions as a studio, was to drag the equipment collectively cobbled together from our homes, to an NDG community centre to participate in a series of locally sponsored workshops within that neighbourhood. We set the equipment up in the corridor, found a way to dial in and demonstrated the web to those who came in for workshops. That NDG invitation, and esprit, was the first Down to Earth in Cyberspace, now an **xx** slogan.

I am reminiscing about these early projects not because I care about tradition, but because they are stories to pass on. They might not even be completely true. Memory falters. Operating systems come and go. Programmes become obsolete. Ports change. Chips get faster; computers may get smaller, yet we find ourselves carrying a veritable plethora of microcomputers from cell phones to mp3 players. Code gets messy. The studio has changed. It should. Things that were then a load of indecipherable jargon, the web, internet, html, surfing, have become a part of the cultural lexicon. Cyber is no longer attached to the front of everything. The studio has grown, and moved several times. What has traveled along with it, isn't just the computers, but I think a kind of energy that electrifies and a compulsion to creatively experiment, debate and discuss the continuing relevance of crossing the wires of feminism with digital technologies.

This impulse has remained consistent from the studio's nascent beginnings. This is precisely what feminism is: a kind of force to makes things happen, an energy rather than a specific or coherent ideology to which we must subscribe. Instead, feminism invites us to engage in making change or in hanging on to what we value. In this sense, **xx** isn't just an idea, a place, or an organization, but a pulse and an impulse (electrical or otherwise) inviting its members to plug in, stay charged, boot up in order to re-energize that long and unruly tradition of feminism that is truly an energy in **xx**.

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