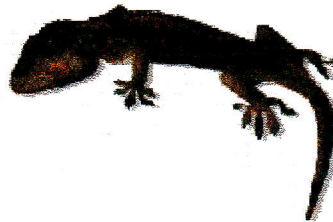




ART AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN MONTREAL ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING OF TECHNOBORO

Parallel to the ongoing development of new technologies, artists increasingly incorporate them into their practice. As one encounters more and more artworks created with new technologies, one often asks oneself the questions: where and how were these works produced? Many operations can be implemented on a home computer, but the fact that others cannot opens a gap between university labs and the industry. For this reason, the necessity for new structures supporting this stratum of innovative artistic production and its distribution emerges. Cultural organizations are gradually integrating the art of new technologies into their activities.

In response to this situation set by the evolution of new media and the growing number of artists using new technologies, one of the major artist-run centres in Canada, Oboro, opened a media lab in December 1997 called Technoboro. Subsidized by Canada's Arts Council and Conseil des arts de la communauté urbain de Montréal, the Ministry of Canadian Heritage, The Canadian Human Resources Canada and Service de la culture de la Ville de Montréal, **Technoboro** is born from the initiative of its coordinators Daniel Dion, Gisèle Trudel and Cheryl Sim. The scope of the production includes projects involving audio, video, the Internet and the WWW, as well as telecommunication and interactive telephone technology. In the welcoming atmosphere of **Technoboro** artists can create Web projects, edit videos and make CD-Roms, among others. The coordinators point out that the idea for the lab did not come suddenly; it took shape as a result of the demand for such facilities by the large quantity of artists' projects which required the use of new technologies.



At this stage, **Technoboro** has limited funds but the plans and the efforts for its expansion are in the forefront. Six to eight projects per year are accepted. One of the unique aspects of the lab is that it is open to the public at affordable rates. In addition to the artists' residencies, **Technoboro** offers satellite activities which focus on new media such as, talks, conferences, workshops, as well as discussion groups, held both in physical and virtual space. Artists whose production is based on new technologies are invited to present their work and reveal the mysteries of their creative process. **Technoboro** will soon be part of **Oboro's** Web site which will periodically announce the activities at the centre and above all, the projects produced at the lab. Furthermore, on occasion, the **Technoboro** section of the site will present them in Web

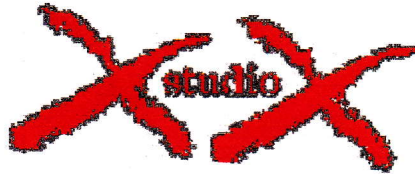
versions.



What is out there besides the newly opened **Technoboro**? While specializing in video production **Vidéograph** and **Prim**, are equipped for multimedia production. At the present time, the latter offers a free course in CD-Rom production. Destined to provide a structure for the production and

distribution of new media art **Société des Arts Technologiques** functions in close collaboration with the Montreal branch of **ISEA (Inter Society for Electronic Arts)**, which broaden its spectrum of action from national to international. **SAT** possesses a large collection of limited edition artistic CD-Roms. Moreover, this organization is equipped with a media lab which hosts artists' residencies. Every year there is a competition in which three projects are selected, and this Spring five projects will be accepted. The program is geared toward projects of hybridization between media such as the recently presented project *Liquidation*, which combines the radio and the Internet. According to the director, Monique Savoie, there is a competition between commerce and the arts on the Internet. Used primarily for exchange of information, mail and advertising, the Internet proves to be, on the other hand, a medium which lends itself to artistic purposes of communication and expression.

Another organization which concentrates on the use of new technologies for artistic purposes is **Studio XX**, a women's collective devoted to supporting and encouraging women in their endeavours in the field of digital



technology. Women artists, academics, professionals and students gather to share their experience of new technologies and emphasize the presence of women in this realm. Although, the studio is equipped with the necessary facilities, the lab is not open for production of artists' projects all the time: it becomes active during activities, such as computer courses, seminars and workshops which help women enter into the world of art and new technologies. Put together by the coordinator Catherine McGovern, the most celebrated event at Studio XX is **Maid in Cyberspace**, Montreal's first international festival of Web art created by women. The projects presented are still on line at the Web site of StudioXX. Web projects can be found at **Technoboro**, at the **Web site of Société des Arts Technologiques** and at the **Media Centre** of Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, as well as at the **Web site** of Centre international d'art contemporain de Montréal.

There are signs of change in **La Cité des arts et des nouvelles technologies de Montréal**, founded in 1985 by Ginette Major and Hervé Fischer. Focusing on art and new technologies, **Images du Futur**, an international exhibition held every Summer since 1986, is now replaced by **Cyberworld**. Presenting artists from all over the world who work with new technologies, the event remains the same in its concept, while the change of its title is indicative of an industry undergoing rapid transformations. As the new title suggests, today we are living in a world which only last year was a view of the future. In 1995, **La Cité des arts et des nouvelles technologies de Montréal** opened **Le Café ElectroniqueTM**, which was the first one of its kind, equipped with 40 computers, where visitors can explore the Internet and a large collection of CD-Roms. The activities at **La Cité des arts et des nouvelles technologies de Montréal** are oriented toward the general public and above all toward children to whom workshops and special guided tours

are offered which familiarize them with the potential of new technologies. Cyberworld provides training to elementary, high school students and teachers.

On the verge of the opening of the mega cinema and new media complex the scene of art and new technologies in Montreal is expanding. The 3e Manifestation Internationale Vidéo et Art Electronique, Champ Libre, which was held last Autumn at FOUFOUNES Electriques opened for the first time a multimedia section, Salon média, which contained a CD-Rom program, as well as an Internet Program presenting Web site with artistic content. Although, the coordinator of the event François Cormier says that the Salon was more of an experiment, his impression was that it was very well received and that fitted naturally into the general program. He is now certain that the Salon will be presented at the next Manifestation. Furthermore, the Montreal International Festival of New Cinema and Video is now renamed Montreal International Festival of Cinema and New Media. The 1997 edition of this event designed a distinct space for new media on Saint Laurent (close to Cinéma Parallel) called Media Lounge. There was no trace of lack of interest; the place was always full of curious visitors, mostly a young audience. The Web projects presented at the 1997 edition of the festival are available on line.

As it seems, cultural organizations are making room for new media for they are not only adapting to this new reality but embracing it, participating in it and building it. Montreal's scene of art and new technologies offers a variety of opportunities for both artists and the public to approach new means of expression and communication. It manifests itself as a solid foundation for further development. In this context, the opening of Technoboro is not an isolated event and developments in this direction are part of a large stream distinguishing itself with a diversity of initiatives which complement each other. Instead of being the domaine of a technology-crazed minority, new technologies, no longer a god nor a demon, have become accessible to everybody and given new tools to artists which can enrich the language of art. While technology itself cannot perform wonders, more and more artists are beginning to master its use. When they exploit it as a tool, which becomes transparent, artists can broaden the possibilities of their expression and invest new technologies with human values.

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