



as if you still see it in front of you
Curatorial Essay by Lisa Visser

"All of being is in touch with all of being, but the law of touching is separation"

Jean-Luc Nancy (2000: 5)

WE ARE MEANING

as if you still see it in front of you is an exhibition of media art. It is an exhibition that eludes and challenges an understanding of media art. Artists in this exhibition connect technology with speculation, suggestion and notion.

The term "media art" is broad and elusive, lacking commitment to specificity, but suggesting an alliance with technology, communication, or time-based media. Media is consistently confused by its own terminology and usage. Media is the plural of medium, which is the agency by which something is accomplished, conveyed, transferred, transmitted. Medium is also that which resides between two extremes. A person who is a medium has supernatural powers: psychic. Rosalind Krauss writes "a medium contains the concept of an object-state, separate from the artist's own being, through which his intentions must pass" (1976: 52). A medium sends and receives information. A medium is an invisible hub of phenomenal activity, made physical through physiological connection.

By the very nature of its ambiguity, media art is lodged in the spaces between video and installation, between the abstract and the real, between speculative absence and digital presence, between effort and failure. Within this framework of uncertainty, what results is an exhibition that explores performance, presence and a sense of being-with. This exploration constructs a possible awareness of ones connectivity, exceeding the limitations of wires and signals, bringing the audience towards a sensorial, emotional, and psychological relation. What remains are subtle emotions: a sense of worth and contribution, a sense of self-doubt.

Jean-Luc Nancy writes in *Being Singular Plural* "there is no meaning if meaning is not shared...meaning is itself the sharing of Being" (2000: 2). This is the suggestion of community built around the very act of being - and being-with - one another. We share elements of our physiological and phenomenal make-up in every moment of being-with. Being-with, heightened and accented through media, is the construction of "we". Phenomenal is sensorial, embodied, fleeting.

Looking through the shield of a screen, a technological framework, or the suggestion of generated emotion and digitalized relations, the artists in *as if you still see it in front of you* (who are a collection of a specific community and contributors to our community, that is "we") investigate what it means to be connected. Nancy writes "being cannot *be* anything but being-with-one-another, circulating in the *with* and as the *with* of this singularly plural coexistence" (3). Every connection we have creates meaning: every singular person is plural. Exploring connections includes considering how connections can be missed or can fail, become aggravated, or emphasized.



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These connections, and being-with that results, are subtle in a normalized, technological environment of our everyday. In these environments, we are active in a virtual cliché of constructed or passive identities. In *as if you still see it in front of you*, the artists investigate data that can be collected, analyzed, rejected, and performed. In this, the screen is examined as an initial barrier between “we”, presence and you, the viewer. As Nancy suggests, “meaning begins where presence is not pure presence but where presence comes apart in order to be itself *as such*” (2). The dissolution of presence through media, through the screen, and the resultant being is merely speculative. The presence comes apart – it has never been whole – but in meeting, action, being, connection, we begin. And this beginning of being, we consider the application of “we” and media.

The presence is not just the artist, or the viewer, or the connections that have been built (or lost) in the production of the artwork. This presence is the being-with one another, the construction of meaning, the shift of personal ontology. It is the medium in which we meet: “everything then, passes *between us*” (5). We become the medium; we construct meaning – we are meaning – and the resultant connections signify everything.

as if you still see it in front of you is an exhibition of seven artists who use technology in exploratory ways as the medium for connection. The exhibition investigates community, presence and speculation as core theoretical components, while offering doubt, a sense of playfulness, and some degree of interactivity. The artists create meaning, and in being with one another and the viewer, the presence of “we” amplifies being-with.

Logan MacDonald hypnotizes: in his video projection a disembodied voice suggests that you love art, that you do a performance, and that you give yourself over to *State of Mind*. It is a release of one being to connect to being something else: a trust and a liberation of restrictions and personal limitations. Carolyn Armstrong’s two-channel video *Never Having You* is a mournful, drawn-out moment of disconnection. It is two beings almost touching and failing. In contrast, the new media artwork of Takin Aghdashloo, *Tweet Arena*, creates literal connections manifested in physical action (that is, two TV’s on wheels racing one another). Aghdashloo’s work challenges prevalent forms of social media to take measure of politics against popular culture.

Both Rita Camacho Lomeli and Francisco-Fernando Granados use various forms of social media to create connections over barriers of distance and time. Camacho Lomeli’s *Somewhere in Between*, through the medium of videoconference, opens up the possibility of sharing through song, in an investigation of screens, wires, performativity and vulnerability. In Granados’ work *I wanted to Be Sure to Reach You – after Frank O’Hara*, the artist writes the poem *To The Harbourmaster* to an invisible audience, queering the limitations of chat rooms and resulting in a lyricized version of the everyday, the technological normativity of our relations. Faye Mullen appears and disappears in *To Never Forever*. In a compellingly somber ritual, the artist moves through time and a mirroring of the self - the presence of the artist suggests a desire for continuance, longevity, legacy, while in the act of disappearance. Andrew McGill plays with the virtual presence of core concepts of our technologically connected existence: *REAL LIFE* takes



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Sex, Death, Murder and Life to creates both a separation, as a spectator, and a reinsertion of the viewer in this cycle of human lives, voyeurism and inevitability.

Each of these artists presents a certain yet ambiguous investigation of media and the medium. *as if you still see it in front of you* is an exhibition of connection (through literal technology and across invisible hubs of social activity), challenging conventions of media art. The result is an amplification of the “we” and the medium.

Rosalind Krauss. “Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism” in *October*, Vol. 1 Spring 1976. 50-64
Jean-Luc Nancy. *Being Singular Plural*. California: Stanford University Press, 2000.