

⌘ *metaMedia@Stanford* ⌘

- Tools and environments for creative and collaborative authorship.
- A short circuit between the academy, the art studio and information science.
- When semiotics meets information science.
- When new digital media meet rich content.

METAMEDIA ISSUES

Not so much media as conventionally understood – text, video, TV, photography, film.

But instead –

Creativity, expression, communication, authorship, and representation; questions of discourse, information, and archive, that subsume individual media, as conventionally understood.

AIMS

- To identify key components of creativity in cultural production.
- To build tools that enable creativity in cultural production.

CREATIVE PROCESSES

- Collaboration,
- Transformation/translation (metamorphosis, mixing/switching media, bilingualism|polyglotism, metaphor)
- Amplification (research, elaborate first|reduce later)
- Articulation (hybrids, maps, collage|montage, forcing|katachresis, aleatoric association, frictions, comparative study, triangulation|not binary poles, metaphor)
- Improvisation (hunches, drawing on experience, speculation|before scripting).

CREATIVE ATTITUDES & TENDENCIES

Favoring the

- oblique,
- superficial (specifically in relation to database design),
- surreal,
- hybrid,
- interstitial.

THE TOOLS

That enable these processes and follow these tendencies:

- deep map compositors;
- collage generators and assembly machines;
- correlation engines;
- collaborative authoring environments/systems;
- dynamic animators.

PREMISES — (CONCERNING METAMEDIA)

- At the heart of [digital] media is the dynamic document – the document understood as event and process.
- Media are now better understood as modes of engagement, rather than forms of discourse (TV, publishing, movies, the music industry).

KEY WORDS AND CONCEPTS

- The dynamic document.
- Document as event.
- Critical creativity/poetics.
- Fields and networks, not objects.
- Media as modes of engagement.

A LAB

Collaborative and experimental work.

PURPOSE

Enrichment, enchantment and manifestation – disclosure. The adventure of ideas.

Rather than the epistemological closure that the orthodox academy takes as given.

AN OVERVIEW

Digital technology offers dramatic new ways for developing and expressing ideas. Solipsism is replaced by collaboration, proximity by ubiquity, and passivity by interaction. Ideas need not be constrained to a particular medium, but can flourish in dynamic and multiple media. Ideas can flow, be free from ownership and embark on their own adventure.

The Arts and Humanities have much to gain by breaking out of a domain centered on the text and the monastic cell – it is to this end that metaMedia@Stanford was formed. metaMedia provides tools for the development and expression of ideas, for creative and collaborative authorship. These tools are designed to free content and provoke thought, to engage the scholar on a thrilling journey of unknown destination.

ONE OF THE TOOLS – TRAUMWERK

WHAT IF?

What if a group of people could work together to gather, present and explore information and experiences in a web-based (hyper-linked and interactive) environment without any computing knowledge, in a genuinely collaborative way (without anyone being in control), with the order in the information they share emergent, growing interactively and organically (rather than being pre-organized), with everyone able to explore and react to everything others are doing as they are doing it, with the system providing quick and intuitive text, image and graphics based input and navigation, with the system itself suggesting ways that the growing body of shared information might be conceived and organized? And if this was all a richly-textured and rewarding experience?

WHO FOR?

Who would want this? It might be a community exploring their oral history. A business, in a context of rapid staff turnover, might need to build team culture around a self-organizing body of knowledge and experience. It might be a multidisciplinary team (such as an archaeological field project) interactively sharing insights about their subject of research. It could be an online news agency wishing to facilitate collaborative journalism. An anthropologist working *with* (rather than upon) a community in exploring their sense of place and belonging, or their cultural memory. A family or community who

wish to produce a creative scrapbook of their lives and memories, and one that surprises them. A class producing a collaborative learning journal.

The Traumwerk project is to design, build and evaluate such a web based collaborative authoring environment. It has been running since October 2002.

APPLICATIONS

- Collaborative learning.
- Collaborative publication.
- Community and team building.
- Collaborative and dynamic information processing and representation.
- Organization, presentation and interpretation of cultural heritage.
- Research into the dynamics of cultural creation.

TRAUMWERK – THE SOFTWARE

The name of the software is *Traumwerk* (dreamwork - the organic, unpredictable networking of impressions, experiences, information, textures).

Traumwerk is mounted on a server and comprises server software, databases, search, linking and filtering engines, authoring and navigation interfaces. It is one of the most flexible and powerful of the new wave of collaborative software applications such as Wikis and Weblogs.

Traumwerk works with teams of people. Web pages, called loci, which can contain any digital media, are composed in and submitted to the particular Traumwerk project. There are simple ways of formatting text and images. Drag and drop composition is possible. Upon submission (saving), the software suggests links with already existing loci according to pre-existing links and links that are suggested by the new locus. Other links can be defined by the team member. All team members may edit and annotate any locus, but all past versions are saved and remain accessible. Traumwerk allows multiple forms of navigation, according to keywords and phrases (filtered in various ways), key phrases, images, and virtual 3D graphics.

Traumwerk is simultaneously an authoring system, a discussion medium, a dynamic database, an archive, a research environment, a tool for collaboration that works across a computer network. It is *simultaneously* a research, heuristic, and pedagogic tool. Traumwerk is intrinsically non-hierarchical. Its collaborative basis allows for *emergent connectivity* to be given priority.

The project began in September 2002 and is in its initial stages. We have begun with robust open source Wiki components in PHP and MySQL. We have adapted these to produce a more richly textured screen experience, but as of January 2003 Traumwerk still has limited functions. Nevertheless it was tested out successfully with a class of sophomores in Fall Quarter 2002 (see below). This trial is being wound up and evaluated and is informing the next stages of development.

See <http://traumwerk.stanford.edu/>.

TARGETS

We are now designing new components.

- More *flexible composition/authoring* options, including:
 - drag and drop
 - a drawing function
 - more flexible image placement
 - layering
 - Quicktime components.
- A richer *navigation system* using:
 - text menus
 - images (thumbnails)
 - a dynamic 3D graphics system (consider Plumb Design's *Thinkmap* as a paradigm).
- A *correlation engine* - dynamic and intelligent filtering and linking. This will have two components:
 - a system that searches submissions for possible links with other pages ('loci' - see below) through words, phrases, tagged images and some kind of lexical or semantic analysis.
 - a system that will turn Traumwerk loose, using loci as the basis for intelligent google-type queries and imports both within and beyond the system, finding and organizing more connections.

PRIMARY RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY

Because of its collaborative basis, the pilot cases and evaluation of Traumwerk will allow primary research and exploration, in an unusual experimental environment, of some classic issues in the social sciences and humanities. For example. How is a sense of place, or the sense of an historical moment constituted? What are the dynamics of group cultural creation? How do people learn in a group? How is social memory defined? How might an archive or

collection be constructed collaboratively in order to allow patterning and connections to emerge and change, rather than be built into the categorization of a methodology? What are the forms of new digital media, how do they work, and what are the implications for new interdisciplinary interests in the humanities?

More generally Traumwerk is a framework for exploring different ways of correlating information and communication, and mapping these correlations onto a topology or community or both. For example, the system could be used to address the ways a group constitutes itself through different kinds of links – correlations through concepts, lexical analysis, information content, image recognition.

Hence the Traumwerk project builds on the latest initiatives in reflexive anthropology and cultural theory. It has immediate and direct relevance to the understanding of web based virtual communities, to the management of complex multidisciplinary collaboration, to anthropological, archaeological and historiographic projects that aim to work with rather than upon their communities. It is an experimental environment for exploring information theory in relation to group and culture dynamics. It will be one of the first products for collaborative learning and interpretation in Cultural Resource Management.

PILOT CASES

The first pilot cases have been designed to make the most of the opportunities offered by an educational and research institution like Stanford. They do not, of course, represent the limits of application of the software.

Knossos – a site report (to March 2003)

In a sophomore seminar running Fall 2002 Michael Shanks explored eight archaeological sites in Europe. As an assignment the group were asked to collaborate in producing a report on one of the most famous and evocative of European prehistoric sites – Knossos on Crete.

Monte Polizzo, Sicily – a ‘project report’ in the form of a deep map (May to July 2003)

Four nearly five years a team from Stanford, comprising over 120 faculty, graduates and undergraduates, has been conducting archaeological research into this hilltop settlement from the middle of the first millennium BCE. They

have been working as part of a broad international project that includes also many members of the local Sicilian community of Salemi. Members of the Monte Polizzo project from Stanford and Sicily will be invited to collaborate in producing a site report in Traumwerk. This will run throughout the second half of academic year 2002/03.

A collective memory book (May to June 2003)

As a follow up to an IHUM class (Bodies in Place) that ran Fall 2002 under Shanks and Haun Saussy (of Comparative Literature), undergraduate volunteers will be invited to explore some of the course themes in a Traumwerk diary.

Epic Memory (June to September 2003)

Richard Martin and colleagues are gathering and exploring contemporary cases of epic performance in Crete. They are receiving great interest from local and national agencies as a project of recording and making accessible cultural heritage. The multifaceted nature of the project and its subject matter will lend itself well to a Traumwerk trial and this is planned for summer 2003.

Further afield, negotiations are already underway.

The Head of the Valley's Project in Wales

(under David Austin of the University of Wales) – a community-based project that is developing a deep map of this region in Europe. A preliminary run anticipated for September 2003.

Cardiff/Bucharest field project in Romanian prehistory

(under Douglass Bailey) – a site report and deep map. A preliminary run is anticipated for September 2003.

AN EARLIER PROJECT – THREE LANDSCAPES

AN OVERVIEW

More and more of the world is wired up as information technologies pull people into new and intimate associations. The social and political form of the nation state and its attachment to an unrestricted free-market economy is part of a tendency toward cultural uniformity that touches everyone. Yet an intensely felt and centripetal urge tightly associated with these centrifugal energies is toward individuality and local, regional and national identity.

Within The Academy these issues are at the heart of many cross-disciplinary interests. Terms such as post-industrialism, post-colonialism and globalism are used to summarize the complexity. Beyond The Academy whole cultures are changing as some see a new (post)industrial revolution underway. Some commentators are evangelical about the emerging new order, others are less certain of the benefits.

The line of engagement taken by The Three Landscapes Project is through the concept of Landscape, a complex ideological and metaphorical notion that has been the subject of much academic and artistic reflection. Place and locale are also significant elements in this globalist world just described. It is not just that these issues loom large - the issue is also about how we deal with them. We cannot stand back as disengaged commentators. That option seems so less tenable now; we are always already committed and involved in our object of interest. There is a necessary connection between our topic and how we deal with it. The project is interested in Landscape and, simultaneously, in the creative strategies available now for dealing with all that is associated with the concept. While aiming to produce new work on landscape, The Three Landscapes Project also aims to model the creative work at the heart of academic research and cultural production.

BACKGROUND – ‘THE ACADEMY’

Still too often in Higher Education and University research - in what we are calling ‘The Academy’ - there is that distressing experience of detached, narrow academic work on subjects of tremendous intrinsic interest. We continue to be disappointed with papers, essays, books and lectures prepared in ways which seem oblivious of the need to attend to the media of delivery and the sophistication of audiences - even in this field of professional communicators. Still too often the model of research in The Academy is one which deliberately erects a boundary or filter between researcher and wider cultural and political values, under an ideal of knowledge for its own sake, untarnished by what is seen as subjective opinion, or through notions like that of the remarkable and public intellectual. Still too often academic research seems intent on avoiding creative and innovative approaches to its topics, preferring instead the formulae accepted by orthodox interests and institutional agencies. How difficult, for example, it is to have an old European university accept a doctoral dissertation written in hypertext and questioning the universal applicability of the thesis format.

We note, in contrast, what we see as some of the most exciting developments in The Academy:

- the boundaries of the established disciplines, and the activities deemed appropriate to them, are being questioned;
- there is growing critical awareness and reflexivity, with members of The Academy looking closely at what they do;
- the relation between research, authorship and teaching is under reconsideration.

The influence of critical theory, that continental branch of philosophical reflection upon the social and political context of knowledge, is far reaching. Rather than disengaged and independent mind, the academic is seen as located and committed. Subjective opinion and objective data are no longer so easily held apart as we come to understand more the social location of both sciences and humanities, and their contribution to the formation of ideologies and cultures. Knowledge in The Academy is coming to be seen not as discovered or produced by singular minds of genius, but understood as a social and cultural achievement in which everyone – researcher, student, any interested party – can participate. So in the best institutions serious attention is being paid to the role of the academic intellectual – from the rhetorical and performative skills of lecturing, to the role of writing and text in disseminating the results of research.

New roles are being negotiated for researcher, teacher and learner.

BACKGROUND – ‘THE STUDIO’

Still too often we labor under a constellation of beliefs regarding the nature of creativity and the artist. The artist has sometimes been seen as solitary 'genius' operating outside of, and commenting upon, the society at large. The artist as cultural 'shaman' is seen as capable of delivering messages directly from the 'human condition' or 'the state of man'. Almost all of these notions are, by now, unsustainable, and yet careers, institutions and even government funding programs continue to hold them in place. All of them – based upon simple, essentialist and modernist notions – feed a cultural scene that relies on individualism and makes a fetish of particular artistic techniques, processes and formats. That the artists and their works are culturally located and historically constructed is denied. Under-problematized, and under-theorized, the western cultural producer is expected to operate instinctively, emotionally

and directly, and not intellectually, critically or analytically. The artist and their product are judged as detached, unique and 'pure' object.

But there is a growing body of work that challenges this detachment - from both artists and commentators. And there is a radical split taking place between those that are committed to the creation of saleable artifacts servicing a market, and those who seek a new and integrated socially creative role developed from a set of critical and politicized attitudes. There is a debate between supplying the marketplace and engaging with culture at all levels, between the creation of the unique commodity and the creation of the creative field or network.

Nowhere is this argument being taken more seriously than in the emerging new creative and cultural spaces being opened up by digital technologies.

BACKGROUND – THE DIGITAL

Proposed, therefore, is a 'short circuit' between The Academy and The Studio, charging up the best features of both - rigor and discipline, creativity and refined technique, researching the facts and devising innovative strategies.

To achieve this short circuit, The Three Landscapes Project aims to establish intellectual and creative relationships and practices across and through currently separate and diverse social and institutional spaces. Then the act of cultural production (as opposed to detached research or 'art') can re-engage with social, economic and political processes that have real effect and influence.

We propose to bring The Academy and The Studio together in the new spaces being created by what we will call The Digital.

We note some features of The Digital:

- the interchangeability and easy juxtaposition of what were previously separate material media;
- the absence of predetermined outputs;
- the generation of new creative environments;
- the generation of new associative arenas;
- the relentless de-structuring of relationships in the media industries;
- the challenging of 'hierarchical' structures by 'geodesic' ones - single linear and dendritic patterns and relationships replaced by networks;

- the proliferation of modes of 'authorship';
- the proliferation of modes of 'publishing';
- the proliferation of modes of 'reading'.

The Digital allows the gathering of moving image, still image, music, text, 3d design, database, geological survey, graphic detail, architectural plan, virtual walk-through etc, into a single environment. These may be infinitely manipulated and re-mobilized without loss in that space. The eventual output as video, photograph, CD ROM, DVD, paper based print, web page, broadcast, archival database, live event, exhibition, site specific installation etc, is in no way predetermined by any factor in the original material.

Numerous characteristics of this environment - cutting, pasting, undoing, reformatting, layering, and so on - define an entirely new and creative arena in which even the simplest of tasks becomes less predetermined and more speculative. Even while working with complex visual and sound environments, these characteristics help to create a working space that can be much more investigative and more creative. Digital networks notoriously create the possibility of new associative and collaborative arenas, new ways of moving ideas and communications around. Potentially this raises issues about differences of power and influence between center and periphery, between the urban and the rural. There is increased potential for small-scale and locally-based 'artisan' and 'non-industrial' modes of operation. The 'virtual', as an extensive and sophisticated cultural space, may move into competition with, or parallel to, the 'real world'. The Digital may imply a re-negotiation of the relationship between the global and the local.

We suggest that these features of The Digital create what we will refer to as an expanded and 'poetic' space.

The Poetic is a key concept in our endeavors. By poetic we are not referring to a kind of ephemeral and personal way of writing, one belonging with ideas of subjective inspiration and expression. By poetic we mean the combining of materials (here, as described above, in the digital realm) - materials from different sources and of different orders, in such ways that they resonate to create meanings within the spaces of their combination as much as in the elements themselves.

MEDIA AND 'MODES OF ENGAGEMENT'

The choreography of previously diverse materials through the digital realm inevitably breaks down the structural properties of what have been commonly referred to as 'media'.

The term 'medium' has usually referred to an institutional agency of communication, such as TV, or the materials and methods used in the production of an artwork, such as oil on canvas. But the fluid manner in which visual material, for example, is turned into animation, photographic print, painting, digital video grab, film, photographic transparency and so on, is less and less important in defining the 'medium' of the product generated.

Instead, and in celebration of Roland Barthes notion of the 'death of the author', the way a reader or viewer is engaged by those agencies which distribute cultural works is an increasingly significant factor in any attempt to mark the difference between given works. Hence we propose that the notion of Modes of Engagement might offer us a more accurate and useful way to categorize the format and placement of cultural works in the public or private arena.

Crucially, these formats are not being driven so much by subject matter or discipline (one concern of The Academy), nor the material or form (one concern of The Studio), but by an interface or hybridization of distributing institutions, individuals, families and social or professional groupings. We propose, therefore, to adopt four schematic working categories for the media productions in The Three Landscapes Project:

- those that we experience 'in the privacy of our own homes' - such as the website, the interactive CD-ROM or game, the sound CD, and most printed materials;
- those that are experienced 'in the company of ones family and friends' - such as television and radio;
- those that are experienced 'with colleagues at the school or in the workplace' - such as the formal lecture, demonstration or multimedia presentation;
- those that are experienced 'in the public arena' - such as the billboard, the exhibition, the public performance.

In addition, the decision to adopt this way of characterizing 'media' will place us in confrontation or, at least, in conversation with some powerful generators

of cultural meanings - the media industries and institutions. A component of the study will therefore be to track the negotiations, at conceptual and administrative levels, with such organizations. The gatekeepers in the distribution and mandating of cultural authors and their productions are the commissioning editors, the business managers and the commercial analysts of these institutions. Our study must embrace them and their attitudes.

LANDSCAPE

This is a project in the study of Landscape - perhaps the most physical and least 'virtual' of arenas, and one in which long traditions have been built up within both The Academy and The Studio. The subtlety and fuzziness of the concept will be embraced as a route into some vital and contemporary questions:

- people's relationships with locality;
- cultural constructions and perceptions of place and space, nature and culture;
- the interface between aesthetic and expressive models of land and the political economy of people's everyday lives.

The concept has been chosen as a distinctive interdisciplinary arena, uniting human and physical geography, art history, history, archaeology, travel writing and literature, and indeed, through interests in tourism, environmental issues, regional development, people's attachments to land, many of the humanities and social sciences.

AIMS

Proposed is a 'short-circuit' between the two separated worlds of The Academy and The Studio.

Through the vehicle of an interlocking program of academic research and creative media production, we intend to generate a rich field of new practices and possibilities within a 'no mans land' between currently alien disciplines, methodologies and ambitions. We will bring together a team of academic researchers and digital media designers to address, both intellectually and creatively, issues surrounding 'landscape' and its representation, at three locations and in a range of media formats.

This process of 'critical creativity' will be designed to expand horizons, extend practices, map new theoretical territories, develop hybridized methodologies

and attitudes and we will actively seek to speculate on new media templates for the two worlds. In tandem we propose the monitoring and formalization of the 'findings' or 'results' of the creative research program, the development of a number of new media prototypes and the extensive publishing of a documentation or record of The Three Landscapes Project, by the Project Directors - Michael Shanks and Clifford McLucas.

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THE ARGUMENT

Landscape is only incidentally a genre of painting, photography or anything else. The concept refers to a particular mode of engagement – it is about people's relationships with environment, land, place and history.

There are very specific and recognizable forms that these relationships take, rooted in redefinitions of looking, visiting and inhabiting that developed with western modernity from the seventeenth century.

These forms of looking, visiting and inhabiting, once revolutionary, have become narrow and politically compromised.

THE THREE LANDSCAPES

- The surface – Hafod – an eighteenth century estate in Wales.
- The volume – Monte Polizzo – an archaeological site in Sicily.
- The line – the San Andreas Fault of California.

OBJECTIVES

- To investigate ways of dealing with landscape – in what the concept has come to stand for, in its permutations in various media (painting, photography, poetry, performance ...), in its disciplinary field of landscape studies (incorporating historical and cultural geography, art history, archaeology), in its association with contemporary notions of place and identity, in its implied cultural politics.
- To work across different fields and media.
- To pursue the critique of landscape in finding new ways of working upon people's relationships with environment, land, place and history.

THE WORKS

- Six performed lectures.
- A large graphic work – a deep map.

- An (artist's) book in a room.
- Three essays.
- Twenty five discussions.
- A report on the year.

ONE OF THE WORKS – A DEEP MAP

This work, which in its full size is 8 feet high and 42 feet long, is a work towards an idea. It seeks ways of combining a variety of mappings, aerial surveys, photographs, journal and journey, with a single figure in the landscape and several orders of text. It is the beginnings of an attempt to develop new techniques for representing places, peoples and events – techniques that are more complex and (dis)located than those associated with the landscape painting, the photograph, or the conventional map.

There are ten things that can be said about these DEEP MAPS.

FIRST ☞ Deep maps are big – the issue of resolution and detail is addressed by size.

SECOND ☞ Deep maps are slow – they will naturally move at a speed of landform or weather.

THIRD ☞ Deep maps are sumptuous – they embrace a range of different media or registers in a sophisticated and multilayered orchestration.

FOURTH ☞ Deep maps are only achieved by the articulation of a variety of media – they are genuinely multimedia, not as an aesthetic gesture or affectation, but as a practical necessity.

FIFTH ☞ Deep maps have at least three basic elements – a graphic work (large, horizontal or vertical), a time-based media component (film, video, performance), and a database or archival system that remains open and unfinished.

SIXTH ☞ Deep maps require the engagement of both the insider and outsider.

SEVENTH ☞ Deep maps bring together the amateur and the professional, the artist and the scientist, the official and the unofficial, the national and the local.

EIGHTH ☞ Deep maps might only be possible and perhaps imaginable now – the digital processes at the heart of most modern media practices are allowing, for the first time, the easy combination of different orders of material – a new creative space.

NINTH ☞ Deep maps do not seek the authority and objectivity of conventional cartography. They are politicized, passionate, and partisan. They involve

negotiation and contestation over who and what is represented and how. They give rise to debate about the documentation and portrayal of people and places.

TENTH 20 Deep maps are unstable, fragile and temporary. They are a conversation and not a statement.

'Reflecting eighteenth century antiquarian approaches to place, which included history, folklore, natural history and hearsay, the deep map attempts to record and represent the grain and patina of place through juxtapositions and interpenetrations of the historical and the contemporary, the political and the poetic, the discursive and the sensual; the conflation of oral testimony, anthology, memoir, biography, natural history and everything you might ever want to say about a place ...'

Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology*: page 64-65 (Routledge 2001).