

https://dspace.org/

Challenges facing artists and institutions when showcasing and collecting internet art: a comparative study

Vezi, Mazwi

2011-11-02
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/10683

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

CHALLENGES FACING ARTISTS AND INSTITUTIONS WHEN SHOWCASING AND COLLECTING INTERNET ART: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

RESEACH REPORT

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Masters Degree in Interactive Digital Media at Wits School of Arts

By

Mazwi Vezi

* * * * * * *

The University of Witwatersrand

2011

Johannesburg 2011

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

_____

Mazwi Paul Vezi

_____ day of_____20

ABSTRACT

Internet Art is an art form that uses the Internet as its primary medium from its production to presentation. Internet Art characteristics and attributes bring about presentation, preservation and colleting challenges to the curatorial practice; especially if presented in a museum or gallery structure. Strategies used by early Internet Artists were influenced by the characteristics of this medium; these are variability and technological obsolescence. Internet Art is inherently process based, ubiquitous, ephemeral and dynamic in nature. This challenges the traditional role of the curator in a gallery and museum structure. The curator is increasingly expected to create platforms of exchange of ideas between the viewer of the artwork and the project itself. Additional the curator also has to provide some insight in the decision making process regarding maintenance, support, contracts and documentation.

Internet Art questions the principles in which galleries and museum structures are based; these include objectification, not touching objects and authorship of Internet Art projects. These projects are collaborative in nature and created by more than one artist, normally geographically dispersed. Internet Art demand for new modes of presentation, documentation and preservation that are more suited for online art. These new modes of presentation fundamentally change the role of the curator. If galleries and museums want to start or continue growing their Internet Art collections, they need to start understanding challenges facing the Internet as a medium, develop appropriate presentation and preservation strategies that seek to address identified challenges.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank my advisor, Tegan Bristow, for the support, patience, encouragement and opportunities she has given me throughout my graduate career. I would also like to thank my two managers at Mutual & Federal, Fikile Mkhize – Group Manager IT Finance Risk & Compliance and Executive General Manager – IT, David Entwilse for their support throughout my studies.

Special thanks to all the academics, artists and curators who helped me in gathering information for this study. This includes Antoinette Murdoch - Johannesburg Art Gallery, Neil Dundas – The Goodman Gallery, Barbara Freemantle -Standard Bank Corporate Collection, Joanne Green - Turbulence, Joasia Krysa, Andreas Broeckmann, Domenico Quaranta, Nathaniel Stern and Marcus Neustetter.

I would also like to thank my friends, Unathi Msengana, Cuma Mpantshwa, Wande Makhunga, Mark Anthony-Addison, Sthembiso Mngadi, Greg Maqoma, Teresa Mojela, Sean Lekobe, Mcebisi Mbhayi, Lindiwe Msibi and Fumbatha May for their help and endless support whilst completing this research.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT 3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 4
INTRODUCTION 7
1. CHAPTER 1 10
1.1 History of Internet Art 10
1.2 Internet as a Medium 11
1.3 Net Art and New Modes of Distribution and Organisation by Artists 13
1.4 Internet Art Challenges 15
1.5 Internet Art Case Study 21
2. CHAPTER 2 22
2.1 OVERVIEW OF ISSUES FOR CURATING INTERNET ART 22
2.2 Presentation of Internet Art 29
2.2.1 The exhibition as a software programs or data flows 29
2.2.2 The exhibition as a trade show 30
2.2.3 The Exhibition as a Broadcast 30
2.3 New Curatorial Models 31
2.3.1 Iterative model 32
2.3.2 Modular model 32
2.3.3 Distributive model 33
2.4 Funding strategies 34
3 CHAPTER 3 36
3.1 INTERVIEWS ON CURRENT CURATORIAL PRACTICE - INTERNATIONAL AND SOUTH AFRICA 36
3.2 Curatorial issues leading to Preservation and Collection Challenges 37
3.2.1 Strategies by Artists 37
3.2.2 Audience Participation and public interest 40
3.3.3 Maintenance and Support 47
3.3.4 Funding Strategies 51
3.3.4 Promoting and Preservation of on-line art works 54

4. CHAPTER 4 61
4.1 COMPARATIVE REVIEW AND CONCLUSION 61
4.1.1 Strategies by Artists 61
4.1.2 Audience Participation and public interest 62
4.1.3 Maintenance and Support 65
4.1.4 Funding Strategies 66
4.1.5 Promoting and Preservation of on-line art works 67
4.2 Conclusion 68

INTRODUCTION

The use of digital technologies is pervasive in our lives. Technology has changed and revolutionalised the way we produce and experience art in contemporary culture. New forms of arts such as Internet Art, Software Art, Digital Installations and virtual reality have emerged as recognised artistic practices. Carly Berwick in Voyeurschism (2001) defines digital art as art created with computer code or digitised information. Digital art includes a broad range of genres including video installations, sound art and Internet Art. The focus of this study is on a specific genre of Digital Art, and that is Internet Art. Internet Art is often referred to as Online Art, Net Art or Web Art.

This study transpired after an observation I made regarding showcasing and collecting of Internet Art in South Africa. Internet Art is arguably one of the least showcased or collected art forms in South Africa, at least between 2008 and 2010. This report seeks to provide clarity on whether the observation made is indeed valid. This study sets out to explore challenges faced by Artists and art collecting institutions when showcasing and collecting Internet Art; a comparative study between United States of America, United Kingdom and South Africa. In so doing, it additionally outlines a brief overview of Internet Art history, with a specific focus on strategies applied by early Internet Artists in creating and showcasing this form of art.

The initial study will briefly highlight how Internet Art grew globally using online modes of distribution and organisation by artists, in an attempt to provide insight to these challenges faced in showcasing and collecting Internet Art. This will additionally begin to highlight the intent behind the creation of Internet Art and further provide clarity on how the Internet has become the artistic medium. Internet Art academics like Christian Paul and Steve Dietz writing on this topic highlight that Internet Art's attributes and characteristics are amongst other key challenges that hinder growth of Internet Art collections. Christiane Paul in Challenges for a Ubiquitous Museum; From the White Cube and Beyond, John Ippolito in Death by Wall Label, Steve Deitz in Curating Net

Art: A Field Guide, Charlie Gere in New Media and the Gallery in the Digital Age and Michelle White in Body and the Screen: Theories of Internet Spectatorship writing on this topic have brought up two common characteristic of Internet Art, these are: variability and technological obsolescence. It is shown that variability and technological obsolescence create a massive hindrance to showcasing and collecting Internet Art.

Presentation and preservation of Internet Art for collection, appear as major challenges for curators and art collecting institutions. Thus far, no Internet Art has been formally collected in the country though various exhibitions have been curated. I intend to better understand the circumstances around this claim or observation in my study. In my dual investigation I will take cognisence of the differences in the infrastructure and economy between South Africa, UK and North America. Interviews were conducted with artists and curators based in South Africa, namely: Marcus Neustetter (Internet Artist), Antoinette Murdoch (The Johannesburg Art Gallery), Barbara Freemantle (Standard Bank Corporate Collection) and Neil Dundas (The Goodman Gallery); in trying to ascertain whether the observation with regards to showcasing and collecting Internet Art is valid and further look at underlying reasons for this seemingly low interest in this genre of art. Further discussions were held with curators based in the US and UK respectively; Joanne Greene (Turbulence.org), Domenico Quaranta (Bressia- Italy) and Joasia Krysa (Kurator). These curators revealed that the process of collecting Internet Art has slowed down considerably in the past two years both in the US and UK. Further interviews were conducted with Nathaniel Stern, a South African born artist currently residing and creating Internet Art in North America. This study will also provide clarity on why there is seemingly a decline in the collection on Internet Art abroad.

Following this I look at a more positive outlook of how other Internet Art theorists such as Steve Dietz, Sarah Cook, Patrick Litchy, Joasia Krysa and Sara Diamond provide an alternative way of rethinking the curatorial practice in relation to Internet Art with the hope of sustaining and growing Internet Art collections. These theorists suggest that although the collection of Internet Art may have slowed down in the past few years, discussions aimed at identifying possible solutions are taking place around the globe;

amongst others, the *Guggenheim Foundation*'s *Variable Media Network*[1] and *The Pool* collaborative environment. Christian Paul in New Media The White Cube and Beyond: The Curatorial models for New Media Art states that these new curatorial possibilities are brought about by the "shifted focus from object to process: as an inherently time-based, dynamic, interactive, collaborative, customizable, and variable art form, new media arts resists "objectification" and challenges traditional notions of the art object" (Paul, 1). The new curatorial possibilities Paul is referring to will provide clues on how to present and preserve forms of art as ubiquitous as Internet Art. This shift has inevitably placed stress on the curator's main role in the gallery space. The central aim for my research is to critically assess these two contradictory views through interviews and reflection on current Internet Art practice, curating and collecting in order to highlight a possible change in rethinking the role of the curator, artists and gallery as a platform for showcasing Internet Art. The spin off would hopefully be to sustain and grow already existing collections of Internet Art. In addition help in encouraging other art collecting institutions to start showcasing and collecting Internet Art.

[1] The Variable Media Network is a consortium project of the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Cleveland Performance Art Festival and Archive, Franklin Furnace Archive, and Rhizome.org

CHAPTER 1

Internet Art is a form of cultural production that uses the Internet as its primary medium and main platform for the creation of artworks. Internet Art often includes e-mail projects, text based performances, and other Internet based forms. Steve Dietz (2009) in Curating The Web, states that the term Internet Art does not usually include "artworks that are retroactively ported to the Internet for viewing purposes, typically as an online gallery, portfolio or archive and in certain instances the Internet is the explicit subject matter of the piece" (Dietz, <http://www.archmisuse.com/mw98/papers/dietz/dietz_curatingtheweb.html#artist_museum_t>, 29 January 2009).

1.1 History of Internet Art

Origins of Internet Art approximately date to the early 1990's. The World Wide Web was launched in 1989 but only gained popularity in the mid 90's. According to Tim Berners-Lee2 the World Wide Web was originally designed as, "an interactive world of shared information through which people could communicate with each other and with machines" (Berners-Lee[3], < http://www.w3.org/People/Berners-Lee/1996/ppf.html>, 03/12/08) Christiane Paul in Digital Art (2003), states that initially "the internet was designed for academic use, research and sharing of information", (Paul, 111). Dietz states that over the past two decades the internet has grown beyond its primary use as a research and information sharing tool to include a broad user community and increased commercial activity (Dietz, <http://www.archmisuse.com/mw98/papers/dietz/dietz_curatingtheweb.html#artist_museum_t>, 4 January 2009)

[3] Tim Bernes Lee is the founder and inventor of the World Wide Web. In 1989 he invented the World Wide Web, an internet-based hypermedia initiative for global information sharing while at CERN, the European Particle Physics Laboratory

1.2 Internet as a Medium

The Internet provided instant connectivity ease of access to communication amongst its users and created a global communication platform. It should be noted that the Internet was not designed as an artistic medium, but as a communications platform; as a site for both social and commercial engagement it has over time also become a valued and critical artistic medium and platform. When the Internet is refereed to as an artistic medium, Paul in Digital Art believes it implies that the work is exclusively using this platform from production to presentation. Ideally the work should additionally exhibit and explore the platform's inherent possibilities (Paul, 2000, 67).

Michele White and Rachel Green writing on the history of Internet Art highlight amongst others some of the characteristics of the Internet as a medium, i.e. variability and the ephemeral nature of the technology. These are characteristics of early Internet Art. Whites (2002) states that:

> Internet and computer engagements are punctuated by error messages, software that malfunctions and "crashes", slow and stalled processing, unreadable texts and graphics, web sites and webcams that do not load, and other failures. Internet Artists engage with the Internet and computer by intentionally quoting such failure (White, 88).

White argues that the variability of the Internet and its failures, the employment of misquotation and misdirection of the spectator influenced most of the early Internet Artworks. Art collecting institutions usually dealing with static objects are somewhat challenged with showcasing and collecting Internet Art as it changes and mutates with new trends and developments in the technology. Internet Art's erratic nature makes presentation of Internet Art challenging and requires art collecting institutions to think of new way of curating, showcasing and collecting it. Paul points out that what makes Internet Art unstable are the rapid changes and developments in hardware, software and

changes in operating systems and screen resolution. According to Paul collecting software and hardware as it changes rapidly is the least elegant solution to preservation (Paul, 2008, 25).

The process of collecting Internet Art also entails constant maintenance and support of the artwork. This is arguably one of the major challenges that Internet Art poses. The erratic and ephemeral nature of Internet Art makes it difficult to collect just like a performance. Additionally Internet Art requires continuous maintenance and a flexible and technologically equipped exhibition environment (Paul, 2008, 59). Whilst Rachel Green (2003) believes that the ephemeral nature of technology is what most artists are critiquing when she states that:

> …by virtue of its constantly diminishing and replenishing medium and tools (e.g. software and applications become obsolete, web pages are abandoned and removed, software is upgraded, new plug-ins are brought onto the market, web sites are launched), Internet Art is intertwined with issues of access to technology and decentralisation, production and consumption (see Green, 2000; 8).

These issues surrounding the Internet influenced artists around the globe engaging with this medium and they started to critique the structures and content of the Internet (White, 2002, 178). The ephemeral nature of Internet Art makes preservation a challenge as this art form leaves no permanent trace on the net. Identifying boundaries of each individual Internet Artwork then becomes a challenge. Michelle White in Body and the Screen: Theories of Internet Spectatorship in the chapter *The Aesthetics of failure: Net Art gone wrong,* highlights that strategies used by early Internet Artist resisted the continued institutionalization and commercialization of Internet Art (White 2002; 178). From White's statement it is clear that early Internet Art was not meant to be collected and institutionalised because of the strategies it employed; strategies not meant to be implemented within a confined gallery space or paradigm of art collection. These Artists were rather challenging the medium by creating works that were meant to be performances and not to be collected. Michael Rush also concurs with White's

suggestion when he states that for some Internet Artists, galleries and museums are not their goal; these are considered as outposts of a pre-net-historic time (Rush, 2005, 222).

1.3 Net Art and New Modes of Distribution and Organisation by Artists

In the early 90's Internet Art gained popularity amongst Internet enthusiast; already exploring endless communication possibilities presented by this medium. Vuk Cosic, Heath Bunting, Alexia Shulgin and Jodi were amongst the first artists that engaged with the Internet in an artistic and critical manner (Green 2000, 1). According to Rachel Green (2000, 3) in A History of Internet Art the term Net Art is not a short version of Internet Art but this term came about:

> …in December 1995 Vuk Cosic, a Slovenian artist coined Net Art after opening an "anonymous e-mail with conjoined phrases bungled by a technical glitch (a morass of alphanumeric gibberish, its only legible term was 'net art'), which he began using to talk about on-line art and communities (Green 55).

The term Net.Art was first used on the occasion of the "net.art per se" series, a meeting of artists and theorists in Trieste, Italy in May 1996, to point to a group of people who worked closely in the first half of the 1990s (and into the 2000s). These meetings gave birth to the online website "net.art per se/CNN Interactive", which is a fake CNN website commemorating the event and is additionally considered the first form of artistic parody made on and about the web. Rachel Greene sums up the core ideas discussed at this meeting, "ideas that were to become the basis for the works related to net.art: "a serious engagement with popular media, a belief in parody and appropriation, a skepticism towards commodified media information and a sense of the interplay of art and life." (http://en.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enwiki/490080 retrieved 23.08.2010). E-mails were of paramount importance as a mode of communication in the Net Art community as it enabled anyone who was wired to communicate on equal ground across the globe instantaneously (Green, 2000, 1), and therefore became part of their medium.

Just like the military and the academy were critical to the Internet's early years as a communication tool, Eastern Europe—and Russia were crucial to the Internet's early years as an artistic medium. Early to mid 1990's were characterised by media openness and pluralistic politics after the birth of the "civil society" in Eastern Europe. (Green 2000) The Internet presented a utopian halo to Eastern Europe artists. Few NGOs such as the Ldjudmila in Ljubljana, Slovenia and the George Soro's Open Society initiative funded media centers and in that way create opportunities for motivated artists to participate in the brave new world of international communications (Green 2000). Around the globe Artists were starting to collaborate in developing new forms of art using the Internet as the medium sometimes as content. In 1994, the Internet was still comparatively uncluttered. Rachel Green in History of Internet Art, (2000) highlights that,

> Populated largely by homepages flaunting hobbies and personal histories, advertising technology companies, or promoting online communities of all stripes, the Net was far removed from the asceticism of white-cube galleries or the high ironies of neo-Conceptualism[4]. Indeed, the exhausted, commercially exploited art culture that had soared in the '80s and crashed in the early '90s was in recovery when the Internet began to take off. Very few people who associated with art-world institutions were logged on at that time (http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0268/is_9_38/ai_65649375/ April 2010)

In 1994 some artists were already congregating at online nodes like *The Thing*, *Echo Nettime*, and *The Well*. These took form of mailing list and bulleting board systems which were more than structures of distribution and organisation by artists. Rachel Green states that "these were nodes of discussion which sprouted up internationally. The Thing hosted discussions, reviews and art projects, and was for a long time a standard – bearer

4 In Britain, the rise to prominence of the Young British Artists (YBAs) during the 1990s, generated a media backlash, where the phrase "conceptual art" came to be a term of derision applied to much contemporary art. The Stuckist group of artists, founded in 1999, proclaimed themselves "pro-contemporary figurative painting with ideas and anti-conceptual art, mainly because of its lack of concepts." They also called it pretentious, "unremarkable and boring" and on July 25, 2002 deposited a coffin outside the White Cube gallery, marked "The Death of Conceptual Art".

for many art platforms" (Green, 2008, 56). This was the first platform that sold and distributed arts on-line. These platforms were also seen as content and community; allowing subscribers to mailing lists and forming global communities (Green, 2000, 3). These provided artists with an opportunity to present their works in different ways online and form different relationships to art structures (White 2002, 176). The Internet allowed Internet Artists to work and communicate independently of any bureaucracy or art world institution without being marginalized or deprived of community. (Green, 2000, 1) It is clear that collaboration amongst artists around the globe grew substantially during the mid 1990's. The Internet allowed artists to organise themselves and create artworks that were essentially for the Internet and for the user's enjoyment and consumption. According to Paul artists creating Internet Art grew fairly quickly, establishing their own world in the net with online galleries, curators and critics (Paul, 2008, 112).

In 1996, as the Internet use and popularity grew a group of artists predominantly in Europe formed a movement called Net.Art. This group was based on the previous online intervention by Vuk Cosic, which drew a lot of attention to the genre of the art of the Internet. These artists were connected through an online mailing list – *Nettime* which was devoted to Internet culture and criticism. The core group of artists that formed Net.Art included amongst them "Russian artists Olia Lialina(b.1971) and Alexei Shulgin (b.1963), British artist and activist Heath Bunting, Slovenian Vuk Cosik, and the Barcelona-based team Jodi (Joan Hemskeerk and Dirk Paesmans)"(Paul, 112). Over the years Internet Artists have built digital art communities through an active practice of web-hosting and web art curating. These Artists have defined themselves through an international and network mode of communication, an interplay of exchanges, collaborative and cooperative work (http://en.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enwiki/490080 retrieved 23.08.2010).

1.4 Internet Art Challenges

These new on-line modes of distribution and organisation of Internet Art by artists have challenges and limitations. One of which is that, the structure of the Internet makes it

difficult to identify limits of a website; resulting in difficulties in identifying boundaries of an individual Internet Artwork (White, 2002, 176). This lack of clear boundaries within Internet Art may discourage some art collecting institutions in showcasing process based artworks as apposed to static objects; which they are accustom with. The ubiquity of Internet Art makes it difficult to physically display in a museum structure and some artists rely on the Internet Arts' position outside the art market for its impact. According to Dietz curators are now spending lot of time digitising assets which, is not dissimilar from the historical function of the museum to preserve artifacts. According to Dietz this process lacks contextualizing of artworks but rather focuses on creating the content as opposed to presenting context for it (Dietz, 1998, 6). Since one of the roles of a curator is to identify, contextualize and present a point of view about artworks it seems that a gap exists with regards to contextualizing Internet Art. According to Dietz, The Musee d'art contemprain de Montreal has one of the most organised and comprehensive on-line listings of contemporary arts but they do not provide much contextualization for the links appearing on their website and online artworks (Dietz, 1998, 6). It is clear from Dietz suggestion that contextualization of artworks is one of the challenges with growing Internet Art collections. Artworks should be contextualized for collection. According to Dietz thinking in terms of information in a gallery context almost validates collection of immaterial or intangibles including Internet Art. This shift in museum's perception of their mission has placed stress on the curator's central role in the museum. Dietz suggests that museums and curators can then be used to respond to the web in the Interface culture (Dietz, 1998, 6).

Internet Art is commonly created by various artist groups connected through the Internet, this questions authorship of the artwork. These groups often consist of theorists, programmers, and activists as much as artists, and often no single person is named as the originator of a project (Cook, 2008, 31). White suggests that museums and other structures used for displaying and selling art are faced with new challenges online as they fail to fully transform digital reproductions into original and aura-imbued works of art (White, 2002, 176). With Internet Art it is difficult to determine original artworks as it is created by a networked community and changes over time; with each input or navigation.

As the majority of net based artworks are collaborative one would assume to see a wall label on an artwork that lists artist's assistants and technicians working on the project. However Internet Artists normally go by an "e" name for the groups like *e*toy. According to Ippolito these artist group names fluctuate and change over time. It would then be inappropriate to publish these groups as fixed artist group names. Ippolito point out that, artworks created by many artists, often geographically dispersed, create documentation issues if collected in a gallery space. Such artworks require more information and details which may not be readily available for the longevity and success of the artwork being exhibited in the future. However Ippolito point out that many artists groups choose such group names intentionally to avoid the art star system (Ippolito in Paul, 2008, 109). These artist group names create documentation and preservation issues; critical information about members of the group vital for the preservation of the artwork may not documented. It is clear that documentation strategies used in traditional museums and galleries need to take cognisence of new forms of art that are collaborative in nature. This would help in ensuring that documentation of artworks to be collected reflects the artistic production and curatorial process involved in selecting and presenting each collected net based artwork.

Galleries and museums are commonly tasked with the role of maintaining the aura and the originality of each artwork that is collected for preservation and future display. Rush suggests that museum and other websites which seek to maintain the aura of objects still struggle with issues of authorship. The collaborative nature of Internet Art makes authorship a huge hindrance in the collection of Internet Art mostly by galleries and museums. Steve Dietz points out that museum have been perceived as institutions responsible to collect and preserve objects from around world, as well as places for scientific study of their collection and display (Dietz, 1998, 1). Dietz and other theorists writing on this topic have questioned whether galleries and museums should be used to showcase Internet Art as it is inherently time based, dynamic and ubiquitous. One of the key roles of a museum is to preserve art objects that have been collected. Internet Art is similar to a performance; it changes over time. Strategies used in maintaining such artworks should reflect and take cognisence of the variable nature of the medium.

Additionally maintaining the authenticity of each version of the artwork becomes a problem for registrars in a controlled environment like a museum or gallery. Internet Art projects are often expensive to show and ideally require consistent maintenance (Paul, 78). The question is who provides the support and maintenance; the artist or the institution? This question is imperative as it is directly linked with preservation process of an artwork. This is explored further in the next chapter.

Galleries and museums face infrastructural challenges when it comes to presenting Internet Art. Steve Dietz in curating Net art (2008) highlights that the primary argument on Internet Art in a museum structure is that it is not presented in its natural state (Dietz in Paul, 2008, 5). Presentation of Internet Art in an institutional context raises its own set of issues since the work itself may run counter to what an institution represents. Some institutions are weary that artworks may create conflicts that museums are not willing to face (Paul, 2008, 211). Museums and galleries operate within set hours and rules. Brian O'Doherty in Inside the White Cube (1986), states that museums and galleries operate on the lines of the "white cube" that operate within set hours of selected days. Yet Internet Art is created to be seen from anywhere and anytime by anyone, which makes the presentation of the art created for the Internet within a public physical space a problem. O'Doherty describes the gallery space as "constructed along laws as rigorous as those for building a medieval church" (O'Doherty, 7).

According to Christiane Paul museum and gallery buildings are mostly based on the white cube model than being completely wired and equipped with flexible presentation systems to cater for new works in new media (Paul, 2008, 23). If Internet Art is presented in a museum or gallery structure, it is often presented in a separate public space. Paul refers to this as ghettoisation which she claims raises a lot of criticism amongst art practitioners. Even though it has been seen that separating the pieces encourages participants to spend more time with an artwork, Paul believes that this prevents the art from being seen in the context of a traditional media. Curators and institutions need to facilitate exchanges with and about the artwork in order to grow their audience (Paul, 2008, 24). According to Paul this will be an important step in "getting

new media out of the ghetto and integrating it into the art world" (Paul, 2008, 66). The exclusivity that Internet Art promotes may be a hindrance in the promotion of this genre of art.

This identifies another challenge for the gallery space in showcasing Internet Art. Engagement with Internet Art is encouraged through interactivity; touching or clicking of a mouse. This behavioral trait is somewhat unwelcome in a museum structure where artworks are hung high up, specifically so that the audience cannot touch. Brian O'Doherty further states that the basic principles behind these laws are that "the outside world must not come in, so windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white, the ceiling becomes the source of light….The art is free, as the saying used to go, to take on its own life. (O'Doherty, 7) The visitor at the gallery is scared to touch or feel the artwork because of the way if has been placed which is contrary to the norms of Internet Art. The interactivity element of Internet Art is perceived as a challenge by some of the curators interviewed specifically Neil Dundas of Goodman gallery in Johannesburg, South Africa. According to Dundas some participants intentionally break artworks whilst exploring the piece. Whilst some gallery and museum visitors are not techno savvy enough to fully engage with exhibited artworks.

According to Michael Rush (2005) art that requires viewer participation to be complete has emerged as a new medium and is central to Internet Art (Rush, 2005, 213). Internet Art addresses the radical impermanence of interactivity in that once engaged it forces the user to move around or by clicking the mouse or whatever is on screen disappears (Rush, 2008, 220). The danger with this is that the participant looses track of where they started with the navigation of the artwork; blurring boundaries between each individual artwork and the next. Without a doubt this creates curatorial challenges where boundaries of an individual work are difficult to determine. How does a gallery develop preservation methods or techniques for something that seems to be endless? Michael Rush states that "reading, as is often noted, has re-emerged as an integral of the interactive art experience. The computer and the Internet are, at least at this moment, dependent on words and require reading skills that popular visual media do not (Rush, 2008, 218). Coupled with

this digitised works including Internet Art requires audience engagement and do not reveal their content at a glance Internet Art often requires private engagements over a longer period of time (Paul, 2008, 23). Gere believes that Internet Art requires a degree of media literacy or else exhibitions, presentation and collections will never grow as expected (Gere in Paul 2008, 5). Discussions held with curators based in Johannesburg, South Africa, Antoinette Murdoch, Neil Dundas and Barbara Freemantle - revealed that there is a lack of public interest in this genre of art. They suggested that this is attributed to the fact the Internet Art requires relatively private engagements and a degree of computer expertise from the participant. The lack of public interest in Internet Art is explored further in more detail in the next chapter.

It is important to note that artists creating early Internet Art did not want their artworks to be collected, institutionalised and commecialised in anyway. However galleries and art collecting institutions commenced collecting this genre of art. The Internet's attributes influenced new modes of distributing and organizing Internet Art on-line. The new modes of distributing and organising Internet Art presented a set of challenges with regards to presentation and preservation. One of the main challenges with Internet Art is its characteristics; variability, ubiquitous, process based, dynamic and ephemeral. Audience engagement has been highlighted as one of the challenges including low interest in Internet Art by the general public. Additionally structures of the Internet makes it difficult to identify limits of a website which makes identification of boundaries of an individual artwork blurred. Most online works including Internet Art lack contextualization. In additional Internet Art is created by various artists groups located in different parts of the world. This questions authorship of the artwork. Internet Art is created to be seen anywhere at anytime whilst the gallery and museum structures operate within a set of hours which runs counter to how Internet Art is presented. Maintenance and support of Internet based artworks still poses a challenge to art collecting institutions; the question is; who is ultimately responsible for maintenance and support of the artwork post sale? Is it the artist or the institution acquiring the artwork? Lastly promotion of any art form requires funding. The ephemeral nature of Internet Art require constant

maintenance which maybe costly. Internet Art shows are often expensive to put up and require financial support. The next chapters will be exploring these issues in more detail; comparing the international to the South African art industry.

1.5 Internet Art Case Study

One of the early Internet Artworks with attributes already mentioned and employing strategies of instilling frustration and confusion is *readme (Own, be owned or remain invisible* - 1996) by Heath Bunting; an Internet Artist based in the United Kingdom. *Readme.html* is presented in a form of on-line bibliography about the Artist, Heath Bunting. Words in the bibliography are dismembered and hyper-linked to multiple dot com websites of the corresponding name (http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/readme/ retrieved 26.11.2010). When this artwork went online in 1997 most of the links ran into dead ends. This brought a sense of discomfort and frustration to the viewer; whether the computer was malfunctioning or Internet not working properly. As years went by most of the names were subsequently bought as domain names by organisations entering the Internet space. To date *readme.html* provides casual endless surfing experience to the viewer; casual language linked to various website registered with similar names in the information space (http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/readme/ retrieved on 26.11.2010). Strategy employed in this artwork was aimed at critiquing the hirachical structure of the Internet and its variability. Although to date *Readme.html* works; provides endless surfing as opposed to providing links that lead to dead ends, mimicking computer crashes, this piece has never been commissioned nor collected. The artwork exists in the artist's webpage and Media Art Net archives. (Bunting, *Addendum A*, 26.11.2010)

CHAPTER 2

2.1 OVERVIEW OF ISSUES FOR CURATING INTERNET ART

Technological transformations have forced art collecting institutions to consider new forms of art like Internet Art into their practice and collections. The shift from showcasing objects to process based artworks has evidently presented curatorial challenges. This chapter discusses challenges in the curatorial practice in presenting and preservation of on-line artworks. According to Paul Internet Art challenges the customary techniques used by the traditional art worlds in presenting, documentation as well as the approach to collection and preservation (Paul, 2008, 1). Charlie Gere in New Media Art and The Gallery (2008) points out that, art forms like Internet Art are still underrepresented in museums today. Michael Rush witting on New Media in Art (2005), also concurs with Gere's claim that art collecting institutions have not done enough in embracing and engaging with Internet Art when he states " the art world has done little to encourage the future of the art on the net" (Rush, 2005, 221). It is his belief that most art collecting institutions fail to engage with this art form unless they are devoted to new media (Gere, 2008, 22). Cook highlights that in North America very few galleries and museums are devoted to new media. This could be partly attributed to the fact that the Internet as a medium presents a number of challenges to the traditional art world because of its characteristics. Additionally this form of art requires funding as technologies used is often too expensive and complex to present in a traditional museum and gallery structure (Cook in Paul, 2008, 23). These technologies normally require constant maintenance and support. Most galleries and museums are not equipped with such technologies nor have the right technical skill-set to provide support for digital artworks.

In 1994, new modes of presenting on-line arts had already emerged in the US. These include amongst other Rhizome.org and Turbulence.org. Rhizome.org is an Internet Art portal that was created by Rachel Green, Alex Galloway and Mark Tribe. These were

online portals used for presenting, curating and distribution of Internet Art (Cook in Paul, 2008, 33). Ted Byfield's writing on the history of Rhizome in the *nettime-1* (2003) highlights that Rhizome was started as a mailing list which was hosted by desk.nl. The idea behind Rhizome was to build a web-based archive for e-mail discussions amongst artists and also serves as a collaborating platform (Byfield, 2003, 1). Discussions about Internet Art have taken place on Rhizome as it developed over years into a community platform for Net Art in particular (Paul, 2008, 112). According to Byfield most of these discussions and lists were about lack of state funding and support for the arts in the US (Byfield, 2003, 1).

Cook points out that, Rhizome gained popularity amongst the art community because this platform was not dedicated to just any old art, but art that wrestled with its relationship to technology. Platforms like Turbulence and Rhizome were influenced by the Internet Art's characteristics. Rhizome was registered as an non-profit organisation in 1998 when Rachel Green took over running it as a sole employee. At the time Rhizome did not have any physical space and had minimal funding. According to Sarah Cook in Immateriality and Its Discontents (2008), Internet based artist's primary activity had been to administer bulletin board systems and hosting e-mail lists – in addition to artworks on their servers. With the new platforms for presenting Internet Art, new on-line dialogues emerged, new projects conceived, discussed and critiqued. Cook suggests that this is when the hierarchies of the museum structure and curatorial "gatekeeping" are sidestepped with the networked culture (Cook, 2008, 30). Although Rhizome news and e-mails were similar in style to the bulletin boards, these were totally different in content and artist intention.

In 1995 one of the first online organisations Ada' web by Benjamin Weil released its first project offering spectators with access to works of Heath Bunting, Jodi and prominent net artists but the term net art was never used. This early online gallery, Ada web was considered as a digital foundry that featured works by new as well as established Internet Artists (Paul, 2008, 113). Michel White suspects that some spectators would have immediately marked this as an art site (White 2002, 176). Ada web went out of business

when it lost its financial support. Its holdings and archives were donated to the Walker Art Centre in Minneapolis, which relinquished its net-art initiatives in 2003 (Rush, 2005, 221). It is important to note that financial support is an important factor in promoting new art forms especially Internet Art.

Although new modes of presenting online arts had emerged and were becoming popular amongst artists led groups, these platforms inherited issues presented by the internet as a medium. These issues place stress in the curatorial practice in that preservation of online artworks, particularly documentation still poses a major problem as online art mutates and changes over time. Christian Paul states that "as an inherently process-oriented and participatory art form Internet Art has a profound influence on the roles of the curator, artist, audience and institution" (Paul, 2008, 2). Internet Arts characteristics' forces the curator to consider how to best engage an audience for such artworks. According to Cook this process takes place both on the technical and theoretical level. Theoretically, Internet Art challenges the curator to rethink exhibiting static objects in favor of presenting dynamic, durational and ephemeral projects. On the technical level the curator has to consider security appropriate flexible environments, equipped with technologies and networks that would allow for longer periods of viewing. Both on the theoretical and technical level, the curator has to work with the artists to create a platform for the exchange of ideas; between the viewer and the project itself (Cook in Paul, 2008, 28). This presents challenges not only to the institutions traditionally mandated with the collection and preservation of arts but also to the curatorial practice.

Responding to this curatorial challenge Cook suggests alternative models of presenting and curating on-line arts to be considered to ensure proliferation and growth of this art form. New media including Internet Art redefines the traditional role of the curator, artist and audiences that contribute towards the artwork. The artist often becomes a mediator and collaborator with other artists contributing to the artwork. The role of the public or audience is also altered as they have to participate in the artwork. In addition Cook believes that, there are political aspects of the networked culture that impact and change the role of the curator; "rather than play a role of exhibition caretaker, collector, and

conservator, curators increasingly act as filters and commissioners, seeking out opportunities for meaningful exchange between artist and community partners" (Cook in Paul 2008, 32). The curatorial practice has been changing to accommodate process based methods that focus on temporal exhibitions with specific context for their audience. According to Paul "one of the greatest challenges of curating and presenting new media art to a traditional art audience is to balance the demands of the art and of visitor" (Paul, 2008, 64). Participants familiar with the medium and its history are likely to enjoy a richer experience of art as opposed to those not familiar with the medium. However art institutions neglect to involve the audience in the curatorial process. According to Paul the idea of involving the public in curating is still in the experimental stage. However, Paul believes that efforts are growing in developing curatorial models for such collaborations (Paul, 2008, 73). In 2001 the Massachechussetts Museum of Contemporary Arts (MASS) explored this method of public curators in the project called *Your Show Here*. Visitors of the gallery were invited to participate to use curatorial software to project their selection of images from the museums collection. Visitors could browse through the database of images according to artist name, date, title and medium. The virtual exhibition remained in the gallery until the next participant installed new choices. Printouts of each participant's curatorial decisions were posted on the bulletin board near the gallery entrance (Paul, 2008, 73). This curatorial model blurs boundaries between the audience and the curator; allowing a curatorial model that is more aligned with the tastes, demands and approaches of an audience.

Paul points out that the process of presenting artworks starts with agreements and loan forms specifying what will be shipped and shown. This is an important requirement for museum registrars and curators preparing for an exhibition. With new media, physical components are normally delivered to the museum and configured according to specifications. According to Paul, categories in a traditional loan forms do not cater for new genres of art forms like Internet Art. Critical data for the presentation about artworks like dimensions, screen sizes, pixel specifications and others are not identified and captured (Paul, 2008, 55). Traditional loan agreements have been seen to be outdated when Internet Art is shown as part of an online show. The loan agreement specifies

consent to establish a link to the artist's web site. Paul point out that the ephemeral nature of this transaction has often led organisation to assume that they do not need permission to link to someone's websites as this is common practice on the net. This practice has been called dubious and unethical on the institutions part and curators should ensure proper contextualization of artworks through adequate documentation strategies and obtain permission from artists (Paul, 2008, 55).

Responding to these curatorial issues, the Guggenheim Museum in New York established a foundation called Variable media Network that focuses on identifying solutions pertaining to documentation and preservation of online art. The Guggenheim Museums is one of the most prominent and recognised art collecting institutions with its early involvement in new media and art created for the web. Guggenheim launched its first artist project for the web in 1998 (Rush, 2005, 214).

Ippolito point out that initiatives by the Variable Media Network and *The Pool* project were aimed at developing adequate documentation and preservation strategies. These included reviewing and replacing the standard wall label used in galleries with variable media methodologies. These include taking cognisence of the collaborative nature of Internet Art projects, diverse geographical artist locations, mutability of artworks and others. Jon Ippolito suggests that art collecting institutions should start by reviewing the standard method used for defining artworks; the wall label. According to Ippolito the wall label imposed on any artwork defines fixity, yet for digital culture, fixity equals death (Ippolito in Paul 2008, 102). The challenge with the wall label is that it focuses on documenting details about the artwork and less on contextualization; which is critical for the artworks presentation and preservation. Ippolito believes that documentation issues are posed by the variable authors, titles and media. He suggests that a variable media questionnaire be used as an alternative to using the standard wall label (Paul, 2008, 7). The structure of the questionnaire attempts to remove the blinders that prevent curators in understanding that artworks can have more than one author, title, date, medium, dimension and credit line (Ippolito in Paul, 2008, 109). Steve Dietz critically looks at the Guggenheims' Variable Media Questionnaire –

> "an interactive questionnaire that enables artists and museums and media consultants to define how artworks behave independently of media and to identify artist-approved strategies for preserving artworks - Ippolito proposes an alternative to the standard wall label".(New Media In The White Cube and Beyond, 7).

The Variable Media Network suggests that if Internet Art collections are to grow in the future then online art should be presented in a platform that would accommodate its characteristics. Additionally also be curated using models that will take cognisence of its nature and challenges. Documentation strategies proposed by the Variable media network recognise the collaborative nature of Internet Art projects and that artworks are created by more than one artist; the wall label does not. Ippolito points out that collaboration in net based projects is the rule rather than an exception. It is important then that strategies, techniques and tools used for documenting net based arts recognise the need, not only to record details about each artwork but also include critical information that is required for the preservation of Internet Art (Ippolito in Paul, 2008, 108).

Ippolito highlights that, to safeguard the legacy of new media, Internet's revolutions requires something more than storing of an artist website as a data file on a CR ROM. Ippolito points out that in twenty to thirty years the technology including browsers used to read those files would have changes and obsolete; meaning for new media fixity equals death (Ippolito in Paul, 2008, 107). Ippolito goes on to stating that "yet fixity is what the wall labels impose on artworks in any form of new media" (Ippolito on Paul, 2008, 107). Registrars spend a lot of time recording details about the artwork whilst neglecting information about the work critical to its presentation and preservation. Ippolito believes that "eyes trained in traditional conservation are not necessarily prepared to see what matters in new media installations, where adaptability and change are the means, rather than an obstacle to survival" (Ippolito on Paul, 2008, 107). Ippolito suggest that as the production process of online artworks can change anytime that "variable title" is used for

naming such artworks; project names are sometimes changed when adding or scaling down project. Just like the art form itself, titles assigned to artworks mutate multiple times due to numerous releases of different versions of the artwork (Ippolito on Paul, 2008, 107). New media artists and technicians are used to this fast pace of media turnover, but for the curators and archivists charged with capturing an artwork's vital statics are not (Ippolito in Paul, 2008, 115) Ippolito suggest adapting to the numbering systems derived from software development.

In 2002 Turbulence.org had already started using this numbering system in the project called *Apartment* where the first public release was assigned with a variant 1:1. The next release could then be assigned with the next logical variant, 1:2. and so on. What is important with this numbering system within the art as opposed to the software development industry is that, version 1:2 does nor mean that version 1:1 is obsolete or 1:2 supersedes 1:1. However in the arts, the later versions hold better and richer experiences for the user as more nodes or module are added or dropped in an artwork. What this means is that lower numbers in the series of new media variants will most likely become technologically obsolete before higher numbers; however this will not make them aesthetically obsolete. In fact Ippolito points out that "the main difference between numbering versions of software and of new media works is that the latter gives user experience priority over software and hardware implementation" (Ippolito in Paul, 2008, 115).

The variable Media Network also suggests that the variable medium should be explored when it comes to preserving new media. This approach invites creators of arts to imagine how the work might be translated into new mediums once the current medium expires. Workshops and interviews are conducted with artists based on the questionnaire which challenges what aspects of the work might change in the future. These are stored in a multi institutional database, where participants can share and compare different perspectives on the long term maintenance of their work (Ippolito on Paul, 2008, 117). Artist and Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archive curator, Richard Rinehart speaking at a conference on variable media in 2001 stated that, an opportunity exists for

museums to engage with preservation strategies which are commonly used in the world of information technology in relation to digital information; that is data redundancy. Rinehart suggests that a good preservation strategy for digital information including Internet Art is to back it up, create multiple copies and distribute them geographically (Ippolito in Paul, 2008, 123).

In line with the Variable Media Network, Cook suggests alternatives to the traditional museum exhibition space for curating and presenting Internet Art. Cook point out that presenting new media work in a museum and gallery structure always reconfigures it and recontextualises it due to its variability and modularity. It is important for the curator and the artist to work together in establishing a connection between the physical and virtual space as it ultimately affects the aesthetics of the artworks (Cook in Paul, 2008, 56). It is Paul's belief that traditional exhibition spaces create presentation models that are not suited for Internet Art. Paul points out that exhibitions for new media can take form of a software program, exhibition as a trade show or exhibition as a broadcast.

2.2 Presentation of Internet Art

2.2.1 The exhibition as a software programs or data flows

Cook highlights an alternative way of presenting Net based artworks as they generally challenge a museum or gallery structure. This method has been used in the UK, Cardiff as early as in 2002 in the exhibition called *Art for Networks* by artists like Heath Bunting, Rachel Barker, Nina Pope amongst others. This took form of a "travel group exhibition focusing on a practice engendered by networking presented in a range of media and art forms. The premise for this project was that it could be modified with each new gallery exhibition; offering an ever changing data flow that could be modified to demonstrate aspects of each project and produce different outcomes depending on audience and organizers (Cook in Paul, 2008, 33). The advantage for using this approach is that it can be used as a network building exercise; adding nodes as the project grows whilst understanding expected outcomes and consequences.

2.2.2 The exhibition as a trade show

Cook suggest that instead of having net based artworks showcased for periods between six weeks to three months, Internet Artists may have to consider hosting one day shows with the artists present to explain conceptual and technological challenges (Cook in Paul, 2008,35). Paul suggests that it is crucial to provide documentation that translates the project to the audience during the time when the project is not actively used (Paul, 2008, 65) As opposed to hiring equipment to fit a traditional-term gallery exhibition; standard museum exhibition would prove to be costly. This method of presenting Internet Art has been tried and tested. It is has been used by artist in Europe, North America and South Africa; 2009 Joburg Art Fair. The Joburg Art fair is organised by the Art Logic, which also provided wireless network connection to the Internet. According to Bristow this project was organised partly as a research and through the Digital Arts Division of the Wits School of Arts. Bristow point out that a company called Core Group lent the project 4 iMacs desktops for the duration of the exhibition period. The Core group considered this as advertising for Apple Mac products from their end.

Cook highlights that in Europe artists including, I/O/D, Furtherfield, among others, have previously organised their own networks within the wider community of Internet Artists (Cook in Paul, 2008, 35). According to Cook these artists recognised that presentation structures for new media essentially work if they are self-generated. Cook claims that most Internet Art works have failed to translate into the gallery. This is due to differences in networks and operating systems used by creators of artworks and galleries (Cook, in Paul, 2008, 35)

2.2.3 The Exhibition as a Broadcast

This method of presenting new media art has been used by artists like Nina Pope for example in a project called *TV Swansong*. These often begin with a research question about the inherent attributes of the medium. Artists were invited to create projects under the umbrella of the Nina Popes' initiative using the Internet as broadcasting medium. In addition to Popes work *TV Swansong* include eight works of other artist. These works

were about websites or events made famous by television. Cook points out that "this commissioning aspect of their work makes their artistic practice inherently curatorial, geared towards project management and the creation of context" (Cook in Sarah, 2008, 37). One of the challenges presented by collaborations is that funders or audience might interpret the artist-led activity as taking over a space and, by extension, perceive visitors as attendees of a live broadcast (Cook in Sarah, 2008, 37).

These alternative ways of exhibiting new media including Internet Art challenges the traditional museum structure; new media is variable and is often developed by more than one artist. Web based artworks also depend on the context; they are site specific and cannot be separated from the network connections into a gallery or museum space. Not unless these artworks are totally redesigned for such presentations (Cook in Paul, 2008, 38). In comparing the three techniques for exhibiting Internet Art, Cook points out that the trade shows method is often appealing to funders and exhibitions organizers; cost of renting the necessary equipment for longer periods and getting technical support when the artwork breaks down maybe costly. These presentation models suggested by Cook also require different curatorial practice to that used in a traditional gallery context. These curatorial models are most appropriate for art forms using technologies and the Internet as a medium; they challenge traditional museum exhibition which normally showcases static objects. Cook highlights these models of curating as, iterative, modular and distributive. These curatorial methods are concerned with practical and the technical aspects of a curator's job.

2.3 New Curatorial Models

Models used for curating online art should take cognisence of technical and practical aspects of the curators' role.

2.3.1 Iterative model

According to Cook this method of curating proposes inviting artists to investigate a topic. The curator would then filter and select projects that are most successful or interesting and build another show around those; which might be in a different venue or environment. The challenge with this model is very few exhibition concepts explicitly recognise work that is not complete; work that is that still susceptible to changes. Cook points out that institutions prefer work that is complete as they expect predictable results they can count on. Branding of such exhibitions then becomes a problem; because the exhibition is movable, this often supersedes the contents of the artworks (Cook in Paul, 2008, 40). Securing flexible financial support from funders for projects using this curatorial model is often a challenge; these projects normally have longer development time and changes in location. Unless outcomes can be guaranteed at some point funders are unlikely to support such projects (Cook in Paul, 2008, 40).

2.3.2 Modular model

This curatorial method is often used in projects expected to run for longer periods. Independent curators would build their projects in collaborative modules with a network of institutions and exhibiting venues. The curator can drop or add an element of the artwork as the project progresses; as long as the intent of the work is not affected. The degree of interactivity maybe scaled down or augmented because of a technical difficulty; preferable than dropping a single artwork from an exhibition. According to Cook this model of curating is mostly useful where technological goalpost and funding criterion constantly changes (Cook in Paul, 2008, 43). The iterative and modular curatorial model "overlap however they both reflect the variable and collaborative characteristics of new media art" (Cook in Paul, 2008, 43). According to Paul the modularity of the digital medium offers an advantage in configuring a work for physical space which is as a good thing. The benefit to this curatorial model is that different versions of an artwork exists which can be exhibited in different venues.

2.3.3 Distributive model

This model of curating entails having a groups of curators organised into institutions or organisations. According to Cook these curators are office based and commission work in a non-museum context; they emphasize on getting work out to the public with little interference from anyone. Cook point out that this model has been prevalent mostly in the UK where funding is more flexible than in North America. This model has been used by various organisations including Low-fi, New Media Scotland, Forma and ArtAngel. These organisations have intentionally avoided establishing resources such as a gallery space instead; they have dedicated media labs and production facilities. In this way projects can be allocated the most appropriate equipment and resources for the exhibition (Cook in Paul, 2008, 43). Cook states that "this curatorial model reflects that curators dealing with new media art must increasingly follow strategies employed by artists themselves (Cook in Paul, 2008, 45).

One of the on-line portals that employ this curatorial model is Runme.org. Runme.org is a software art on-line repository that was started by Olga Goruinova and Alexei Shulgin in 2002 (Kyrsa in Paul 2008, 97). Although this portal does not host Internet Art per se, software art shares similar attributes and characteristics when it comes to its presentation and preservation. In light of the differences in these genres of art, Runme.org has been selected as an example of an on-line repository using proposed curatorial models. According to Krysa, Runme.org represents a new approach to the curatorial process. The aim of the Runme.org is to create an exchange interface for artists and programmers, which works towards the contextualisation of submitted software artworks. According to Krysa this repository functions as an archive, employs software aided systems for selecting, categorising and contextualizing, presenting and evaluating software art. Runme.org employs a model that is collective and partly automated. The process of selecting works is handed over for the most part to the user which takes away curatorial control from the curator. According to Krysa the curatorial control is only exerted by setting initial categories and by review systems in which experts highlight works that are

most suited for exhibiting. This model can also be suited for net based artworks as they are distributed over networks and are self replicating, self generating, mutating and unpredictable (Krysa in Paul, 2008, 89). Krysa suggests that this curatorial approach be used in a mainstream museums or galleries in curating online art. It is her belief that the difference would be profound (Krysa in Paul, 2008, 99). In Runme.org authors play an active role in developing context rather than taking a passive role as objects of classification, description and curating.

Ippolito point out that, discussions have been held between the Museum of the Modern Art in New York, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and London Tate Gallery to establish a shared collection of their media art collections. An initiative called Open Art Network has been exploring the new economic and legal framework that encourages artists to distribute duplicable jobs. Ippolito point out that, many artists still want to keep control of their work during their lifetime. However it is important for those artists to recognise that their legacy may be lost to history if master copies of their artworks are damaged or source code corrupted before being transferred to a public trust (Ippolito in Paul, 2008, 124). Additionally the Open Art Network is exploring legal possibilities of deferring access to source materials by such artists. Ippolito states that;

> According to such an agreement, an artist might deliver to a collector or museum a duplicate master along with the artwork, with the understanding that the artwork's owner cannot access the master until the artist gives permission or die. A neutral third party could serve as an artistic escrow account, holding artist's source code until the time when a need for open access outweighed their proprietary interest in keeping it secret (Ippolito in Paul, 2008, 124).

2.4 Funding strategies

One of the major problems with new forms of art like Internet Art face is funding. In the early years Paul claims that funding strategies for Internet Art and online galleries was said to be experimental just like the art form itself. That is how Ada' web lost its

financial support and had its collection permanently archived at the Walker Arts Museum in Minneapolis. Another prominent organisation highlighted with regards funding Internet Art would be the Machida City Museum of Graphic Arts in Tokyo.

It has been shown that galleries and museums still fail to engage with Internet Art, unless the institution is devoted to new media. The shift from showcasing object to process based artworks in a museum and gallery structure has inevitably places stress on the curators traditional role. The curatorial practice has to adapt to new exhibition and curatorial models that recognise and the medium's inherent characteristics and challenges. Curators are increasingly expected to create platforms of exchange of ideas between the artist, viewer of the artwork and the project itself. It appears that self organised environments equipped with flexible presentation technologies are ideal for showcasing this form of art. Alternative models of presenting digital arts include exhibition as a software program, trade show and a broadcast. The most challenging aspect about these presentation models is that they are generally expensive to put-up. Security financial support to host digital art exhibitions is often expensive. Perhaps this is why sponsors prefer the trade show exhibition model which runs for few days and less costly.

CHAPTER 3

3.1 INTERVIEWS ON CURRENT CURATORIAL PRACTICE - INTERNATIONAL AND SOUTH AFRICA

This chapter will focus on presenting current curatorial challenges in the practice of showcasing, preserving and collecting Internet Art in the North America, Europe and South Africa; a comparative study. Interviews were conducted with curators from prominent art collecting institutions based in North America, Europe and South Africa respectively. Amongst others these include Joanne Green from Turbulence.org in the US, Dominico Quaranta based in Brescia, Italy; a freelance curator who also teaches Internet Art in various places including at the Academia di Brera in Milan, Italy, Joasia Krysa an Independent Curator residing in Plymouth –United Kingdom. Joasia is affiliated to a number of on-line galleries including Kurator, and Nathaniel Stern , born and studied in the United States but did residency in South Africa in 2008. Stern is still producing Internet based art projects and exhibiting them abroad with some of his digital artworks collected in South Africa.

Discussions held with curators representing various sectors of international art collecting institutions already highlighted revealed that institutions that have collected Internet Art in the past have now slowed down their collection due to various reasons. Amongst others these could be attributed to the strategies employed by some Internet Artists posing challenges in the curatorial practice of Internet Art. There is a notion that there is a lack of public interest in Internet Art whether by participants or art collecting institutions whose role is to promote arts in our society. User engagement has also been identified as a challenge in presenting this form of art. In addition the nature of digital artworks requires for constant maintenance and support to ensure longevity, accessibility and preservation of artworks in the future. The responsibility of providing maintenance and support after the sale of the artwork is still a challenge across the industry since there is no agreed industry practice providing guidance.

Internet Art development in South Africa has been very slow in comparison with the rest of the world. This is according the art collecting experts representing various sectors of institutions responsible for art collection in South Africa. These include Neil Dundas Chief Curator at The Goodman Gallery – commercial gallery; Barbara Freemantle, Chief Curator of The Standards Bank Corporate Art Collection and Antoinette Murdoch, Chief Curator at The Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG) – public collector. These experts also come from the art collecting institutions that have been selected for this study. Discussions with each expert were conducted through one on one interview which occurred between September and October 2010 in their respective areas of practice; (Johannesburg, South Africa).

The curatorial and archival practice of Internet Art in South Africa is still fairly new. Arguably the 2009 Joburg Arts Fair was the first major platform where such works have been exhibited locally. A number of reasons discussed in this chapter could provide insight to this and include the following considerations; strategies employed by artists, user engagement and public interest in the art, funding strategies, maintenance and support, lack of education and awareness and inadequate promoting, presenting and archival of Internet Art including other forms of new media arts.

3.2 Curatorial issues leading to Preservation and Collection Challenges

3.2.1 Strategies by Artists

Jon Ippolito in At the edge of art (2006), states that "some digital artists are content for museums to collect the by-products of their investigations even if they no longer preserve the executability that attracted those artists to digital media in the first place. For others, the ability to run a work is more important that the ability to save it."

One of the few early Internet Artists; Jodi, Peter Luining and Michael Samny's who employed strategies that makes the collection of Internet Art a problem, i.e. anti-aesthetic

art, resisted being institutionalised and commercialised. According to Cook these Internet Artists

> "often respond to the failure to understand the unbreakable link between the medium and networked culture. Bringing together the technological stages of production and distribution in creating exhibition strategies seems the most sensible way to proceed, reflecting the collaborative, variable, and participatory characteristics on Internet Art" (Cook in Paul, 2008, 45).

This presents the view that not all Internet Artists want their art works to be preserved and collected.

US/UK

Strategies employed by early Internet Artist were aimed at critiquing the Internet as medium due to its instability, ubiquitous, ephemeral nature and other reasons. Michelle White in Body and the Screen: Theories of Internet Spectatorship the *Aesthetics of failure: Net Art gone wrong* highlights that strategies used by early Internet Artist resisted the continued institutionalization and commercialization of Internet Art (White 2005:178). From White's statement it is clear that early Internet Art was not meant to be collected and institutionalised because of the strategies it employed; strategies not meant to be implemented within a confined gallery space. Some strategies employed by artists currently producing Internet Art to date still align to those used in early Internet Art pieces i.e. anti-aesthetic, anti- commercialisation and anti- institutionalised. Nathaniel Stern, an active Internet Artists based in Boston –America stated that some strategies employed in his work "certainly question, or intervene in, or accent the problems of aesthetics, commercialization – whether of the art world or structures of the Internet" (Stern in Addendum A, 2010, 1). However Stern pointed out that he does not prefer using the phrase "anti" because he is not inherently against all things powerful but believes power should be critiqued in all forms; the internet somewhat heralds that power Stern is referring to.

Joasia Krysa believes that the Internet is more stable and more widely available which has brought about advancements in technologies. Joasia Krysa is an independent online Curator who also runs an online curatorial agency and a research platform Kurator is based in Plymouth –United Kingdom. Krysa further highlighted that recently she has had a lot of interesting critical work that deals with emerging technologies as opposed to critiquing the medium; works that examine relationships between new platforms or tools and a wider social, political and economic content. According to Krysa the challenge now for Curators is to remain critical and experimental as technological changes emerge (Krysa in Addendum A, 2010, 31). It is clear that strategies employed by Internet Artists who are currently in practice are adaptive in that they reflect issues facing the Internet and they will continue to change as long as the medium changes.

Joanne Green, curator at Turbulence.org also pointed out that strategies employed in recently submitted projects engage new platforms and tools which make them interesting. It seems that in North America artists' strategies are changing somewhat. Green states that;

> "Turbulence.org has seen a rapid evolution of augmented reality applications, location aware devices, hybrid games, and networked textual narratives using tools like Twitter for instance. Works that continue to explore binaries such as physical/virtual, connection/distance, material/immaterial, object/experience, open/closed, production/consumption are also still quite prevalent." (Green, *Addendum A*, 2010, 10)

Maybe artists are beginning to recognise the importance of art collecting institutions in the survival of their artworks; although most theorists writing on history of early Internet art believe its not artist's intention to be collected. Green believes that in the United States, there hasn't been a question about the stability of the Internet's infrastructure for many years; it's simply been a matter of faster delivery and more users. (Green, *Addendum A,* 2010, 9) Mobile technologies on the other hand have added an interesting component, allowing people to navigate physical spaces as they access the Internet

SA

Marcus Nuestetter, South African artist creating Internet Art highlighted that some works that he has created in the past was responding and challenging the industry. Neustetter was mostly critiquing the establishment on the industry as well as what it symbolised on the Internet. Nathaniel Stern before going back to the US together with Neustetter created an Internet Art piece that tackled the notion of the sign and the signifier as being something that could be more personal and locally produced and handmade. The name of the piece is *thegatwayexperiment.net*. In this piece Stern and Neustetter have transformed several information-based web pages into collaboratively constructed communication sites. According to Neustetter initially, they commissioned Johannesburg based sign-makers to manipulate and re-mix five, live websites by painting stylised versions of each image on their main pages. Newsletter points out that for a limited time, participants from anywhere in the world could edit any one of these web pages. This was done by uploading their replacement images. When not editing a given page, each individual image would be randomly pulled from the site's live database, thereby transforming these websites into dynamic collages that signify something completely new (http://turbulence.org/Works/getawayexperiment retrieved on 24.01.2011). Coupled with artists strategies there seem to be a general consensus amongst the Curators claiming that there is a lack public interest in Internet Art; whether it is in promoting or collecting it.

3.2.2 Audience Participation and public interest

Christiane Paul suggests that presentation of arts created for the Internet within a public space generally complicates exhibitions. The success of an exhibit and the audience's appreciation of the art is invariably dependant on the effort the museum puts into the exhibition; including technical and educational aspects. It is her belief that Internet Art does not need to be presented or introduced to the public; it is created to be viewed by anyone and anywhere at anytime (Paul, 2008, 23). However Paul believes that the physical art space has an important role to play in providing context for the work, assisting in its preservation and growing its audience (Paul, 2008, 24). Internet Art

projects are often marginalized in public places and it requires specialised and technical skills to maintain and support. Often they also require relatively private engagement over a long period of time. As a result Internet Art is often presented in a separate space of a public area. According to Paul this has received a lot of criticism in that Internet Art often enjoys exclusivity which prevents the art from being seen in a context of a traditional media and allowing the audience to enter into a dialogue with the art (Paul, 2008, 23). Paul point out that, the audience plays an important role in integrating new media into the museum gallery structure. According to Paul the museum audience can be categorized into experts; those familiar with the art form and the medium, those who are highly technical but don't know much about art and those that are open to and need assistance using it and navigating it (Paul, 2008, 66). Getting it right for all these people is almost impossible Paul adds. It is important to identify the audience the art is presented to as it may impact the success or failure of ones project or art piece.

US/UK

Joasia Krysa argues that art collecting institutions have done enough to stimulate interest and growth of Internet Art amongst the general public. Krysa states that Internet Art, or more broadly Digital Art, entered the public and private art institutions, amongst others; the Whitney Museum of American Art (Artport portal), Tate Modern In London-Britain – for instance the exhibiton '*Art and Money Online'* in 2001. According to Krysa even commercial galleries were actively promoting and exhibiting Internet Art for instance the Bitform gallery in New York and commercial arts fairs such as ARCO International Contemporary Art Fair in Madrid. (Krysa, *Addendum A*, 05 Nov 2010). ARCO has been exhibiting digital art including Internet Art in their dedicated section 'Black Box' showing key artists of the field such as Ubermogen in 2009, Jodi in 2010 and others. There are also dedicated awards and prizes established to stimulate and promote the field for example ARCO/Vocento 2.0 award held in Madrid, Spain. (Krysa, *Addendum A*, 05 Nov 2010

Joanne Green of Turbulence.org believes that the relevance of Internet Art resides in the size of its audience; and that a small audience would be a measure of the "genre's" (lack

of) importance. Green stated

> "It's impossible to gauge the size of Internet Art's public without resorting to the usual art world reliance on mainstream media coverage of gallery and museum shows; how often they include Internet Art in exhibitions, and how the public responds to it. Internet Art utilizes the Internet as a site of both production and transmission. It can often be accessed through portals such as Turbulence.org; but it also resides on artists' websites where, often, it fails to attract very much attention. The more one cloisters it within sites such as Rhizome.org, the less likely the general public will want to experience it, because it is perceived as "art" and, for many that means "not for me." (Green, *Addendum A*, 2010, 7)

What sets Internet Art apart from traditional art is that anyone can access it from anywhere at anytime. This grants works a much broader – and larger – audience than it might have in a gallery or museum. According to Joanne Green most of the works Turbulence has commissioned have enjoyed thousands of visitors; some well over 250,000, far greater in number than most contemporary art enjoys in traditional art venues (Green, *Addendum A*, 2010, 7). Discussions held with US based Curators revealed that Internet Art collection has slowed down in the US in the past two years or so. The perceived lack of public interest could be one of the contributing factors attributed to the decline in the collection of Internet Art in the US and Europe.

SA

The Johannesburg Art Gallery which is referred to as JAG in this study is the largest public art collecting institution in South Africa with its oldest collection dating back to 1914. Antoinette Murdoch, Chief Curator at JAG (since 2009) expressed her views during an interview. When asked whether there was enough public interest amongst South Africans in Internet Art, Murdoch's opinion is that the South African public interest in Internet Art is quite minimal (Murdoch, *Addendum A*, 2010, 27). This includes the art world in South Africa Murdoch adds. There are varied reasons behind the minimal interest amongst South Africans. According to Murdoch these could be

attributed towards amongst others; “slow technological & infrastructural developments, limited access to technology, limited IT skill set amongst general public, lack of education and funding” (Murdoch, *Addendum A*, 2010, 29). JAG as an art collecting institution has not purchased nor collected an Internet based artwork to date. However JAG has hosted projects where people from different countries used blogs to share outcomes of public programs hosted by the JAG. This project used the internet as the medium for hosting communication amongst participants globally. *One square mile*[vi] project was a community outreach project that encouraged participants to use the Internet as a communication platform through blogging. The *One square mile* is the only Internet based art project that the JAG has been involved in. This is the closest this public art collecting institution has been with Internet based art (Murdoch, *Addendum A*, 2010, 29).

> In ‘*One square mile* community – “which comprises individuals who live near, or bide their time in, Joubert Park – assist the artists in creating various maps of their experiences of the neighborhood. These maps, like the psycho geographic records created by the Situationists in Paris in the 1950s and 1960s, suggest that the apparent character of the city is derived from ambulatory truths – things discovered in the thick of Joubert Park’s frenetic street life – rather than from official historical narratives. 1mile²’ are then connected to other, similarly construed communities around the world through the ‘1 mile²’ website”. http://www.artthrob.co.za/Reviews/Review-of-1-mile-squared-by-Anthea-Buys-at-Johannesburg-Art-Gallery.aspx retrieved on 29 October 2010

The Goodman gallery is a commercial gallery whose mandate or role is to sell art. Neil Dundas, Chief Curator at the Goodman Gallery in Johannesburg South Africa concurs with Murdoch’s opinion regarding South African general public’s interest in Internet Art. Dundas highlighted that in his opinion “South Africa is still lagging behind with technological developments which hinder technological progression and public interest in comparison to the developed countries” (Dundas, *Addendum A*, 2010, 21). Despite general public’s low participation and interest in Internet Art, Dundas believes that:

> "an opportunity exists for the growth of Internet Art in South Africa; if South African Artists produced artworks of interest to South Africans and simultaneously have institutions of higher education, museums and galleries promote Internet Art adequately amongst South Africans (Dundas, *Addendum A*, 2010, 18).

According to Dundas South Africa is still years behind in comparison with other parts of the world where Internet Art has become prevalent. Questions like "is this art" are still being asked by the general public when new media artworks are showcased. Paul also states that This does not mean however that the public is not intrigued by use of computers in gallery space. P Neil Dundas goes on to stating that

> "South African general public has a large gap to fill with regards to arts education. The South African society is being fed same old art for the past 40 years or so in magazines, television programs which hinder progress with keeping up with contemporary arts" (Dundas, *Addendum A*, 2010, 18).

A plausible solution for bridging this gap according to Dundas could be initiatives launched by magazines like Art South Africa; to help the general public by focusing on promoting the idea that the contemporary art world is moving and shifting barriers and simultaneously grow the magazine's circulation, however this shouldn't be done in isolation, Dundas adds. All key role players in the promotion of arts should be involved; those who run the museums, galleries and art collecting institutions. It is their role to educate the greater public with the understanding on new media especially Internet Art. (Dundas, *Addendum A*, 2010, 21).

Antoinette Murdoch feels that what is fundamentally happening with Internet Art is not isolated to this genre of art but common to other new media art forms. "Internet Art has not gained much popularity amongst South Africans including other types of new media art forms; video installations, software art and others" (Murdoch, *Addendum A*, 2010,

27). Murdoch's suspects that this could be attributed to the fact that artists themselves are reluctant to create this genre of art partly because artists are aware of the low or lack of interest in the market for new media. Furthermore the general public is still intimidated by technology. Antoinette Murdoch further highlighted that if one had to look at exhibitions currently running in 2010 around Johannesburg only one artwork had used the Internet as the medium. However this artwork cannot be classified as Internet Art; *Hotel Yeoville*[vii] a community website and an interactive exhibition installation directed by a Johannesburg based artist Terry Kurgan in close collaboration with a hybrid mix of professionals. http://www.hotelyeoville.co.za/component/content/article/556-hotel-yeoville-a-public-art-project 29 Oct. 2010

Barbara Freemantle, Chief Curator of the Standard Bank Corporate collection claims that the bank has not received any submissions of Internet Art in the past. Standard bank does not own nor has it showcased any Internet Art or Internet based artworks. According to Barbara the bank does not have any experience in dealing with Internet Art (Freemantle, *Addendum A*, 2010, 16). Antoinette Murdoch, responsible for public collection shared similar concerns with regards to submissions of Internet Art. Murdoch highlighted that

> "during the last JAG's Board Committee meeting, where a wide genre of contemporary art is represented, a question was asked whether any board member had identified artworks that JAG could possibly acquire which has been showcased or submitted anywhere?" (Murdoch, *Addendum A*, 2010, 27).

None of the artworks that were discussed during this meeting fell in the digital or new media genre, let alone Internet Art. From these discussions it is clear that a lot of work still needs to done to raise public awareness and interest with regards to understanding what Internet Art is in South Africa.

With interactive digital artworks audience participation is always a challenge. Most web based projects require familiarity with the interface and navigation paradigm. Cook highlights that one cannot expect every member of the audience to be an expert (Cook in

Paul, 2008, 54). According to Murdoch the *1 square mile* project hosted by JAG was not Internet Art per se, it used the Internet as a communication platform thus faced similar challenges as any digitised work may face. Murdoch highlights that the most challenging part of this project was that it was not user friendly and therefore did not generate adequate attention; especially since the project was targeted to the youth. The audience that JAG attracted for this project was teenagers from poor schools and youth around Joubert Park. Generally, this youth is not digitally savvy enough or familiar with computers to navigate through such that enough public interest is generated. The IT skill set amongst the majority of the youth on this project was low, Murdoch claims. The level at which this project was pitched was also not appropriate which contributed towards the success and failures of using blogs and the Internet in this project. (Murdoch, *Addendum A*, 2010, 29). Another set-back was that computers had to be set-up at the foyer of the gallery where children fiddled with computers until installed programs broke or malfunctioned (Murdoch, *Addendum A*, 2010, 29). Another problem that the JAG has encountered is that most digital art works that they have collected have so many technological restrictions in terms of presentation of artworks in a public space. These include connectivity and network problems, slow response times, power cut in the CBD and so forth. Antoinette Murdoch further highlights that she understands why galleries and museums steer clear of digitised artworks because it is so complex to set-up, run, maintain and eventually to keep.

Christiane Paul believes that any experience with an artwork is interactive; whether painting, sculptures or new media works. However the interaction remains a mental event for viewers when it comes to traditional art forms. Internet Art allows for navigating, assembling and contributing to the artwork which surpasses the mental interactivity (Paul, 2008, 67). Neil Dundas of the Goodman Gallery pointed out that in his experience "the audience is sometimes nervous of having to touch the mouse or computer thinking maybe it is an installation" (Dundas, *Addendum A*, 2010, 20). The audience that the Goodman gallery attracts is familiar with computers and technology in general. Dundas pointed out that "the way the art piece is presented then becomes critical in that it should allow for people to still have the interactivity and their fun without

messing with the art piece" (Dundas, *Addendum A*, 2010, 20). Cook highlights that interactive artworks work counter to what museum structure demands; not to touch artworks. According to Cook a larger segment of the audience still hesitate to engage physically with the artwork in a gallery space (Cook in Paul, 2008, 54). Institutions need to take more initiatives to overcome the reluctance of the public to engage with the art. An artist may create some artwork using the Internet as the medium and have techno savvy participants, not interested in the art at all, intentionally breaking the artwork.

3.3.3 Maintenance and Support

One of the most challenging aspects of Internet Art is the need for continuous maintenance and a flexible exhibition environment technologically equipped with the most appropriate technology. Galleries and museums are based on a white cube model and often struggle to always provide such environments (Cook in Paul, 2008, 54).

US/UK

It appears that maintenance and support is the responsibility of the artist until the artwork has been purchased. At least that is what Stern suggests. Stern further elaborates his statement by stating that "Internet Art is contextual just like performance". (Stern, Addendum A, 2010, 2) In Stern's practice he tries to archive his works in the technology, time and place in which it makes the most sense. (Stern, *Addendum A*, 2010, 3)

Krysa also shares similar views as Stern regarding after sale maintenance and support. Krysa believes that after the art piece has been exhibited the copyright remains with the artist(s) and hence also the responsibility for maintaining the work. Joanne Krysa further highlights that in a commercial gallery context she would imagine that contracts are drawn between the artist and the gallery or museum. Ideally these documents should outline responsibilities of the institution as well as the artist in relation to maintenance of the artwork. (Krysa, *Addendum A*, 2010, 30) In Krysa's practice being involved with the ARCO/Vecento 2.0 prizes, the awarded project would be normally maintained by the

artist for a period of a year and thereafter became the responsibility of the Vocento. (Krysa, *Addendum,* 2010, 30).

> "Contextual information about the work and the artist (s) would normally be included in a form of documentation, the work itself or a link to an external page where the work is hosted. Depending on the nature of the project, these would be often accompanied by visual material such as images, video, or sound files" (Krysa, *Addendum,* 2010, 30).

Commissioned artists at Turbulence retain copyright of their work. Joanne Green explains that artists are required to allow Turbulence exclusivity for a period of three years. During which Artists are expected to keep the work running. After that, Artists are not responsible for maintaining the work, and are free to host copies of it elsewhere. (Green, *Addendum,* 2010, 10) Currently Turbulence does not have documentation strategy for their online work. However there are plans in place to commence with documenting works that have been collected thus far. Starting with 50 works, Turbulence began (in June 2010) to record each work according to the hardware and software technologies it was designed and built on and for; what was the typical processing speed of a PC. Joanne Greene further highlights that documentation will extend to even include "which browsers were available; which plug-ins and players were available?, how fast was Internet delivery service?" (Green, *Addendum,* 2010, 10) According to Green if this information is not readily available, Turbulence would then interview the Artist about his/her intentions for the work; "what was possible when it was made; how (if) they would want the work to be reconstructed". (Green, *Addendum,* 2010, 10) The chief Curator at Turbulence would then have to collect reviews, mentions in articles and books; and, if the work was shown at a festival or in a gallery, how was it installed. The server at Turbulence has trails or logs which are also examined to document how many times the work has been seen, and which sites referred the traffic to it. Finally, all digital files are then copied to a DVD. The resulting book and DVD will be archived at the Rose Goldsen Archive for New Media Art at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York (Green, *Addendum,* 2010, 10).

Stern as an Artist would like his artworks to be collected though. In fact one of his pieces *hector.net* has been archived by the Rose Golden Archive of New Media at Cornell University. JAG has not collected Internet Art to date but has collected few artworks in the genre of interactive digital or new media. In 2008 JAG acquired an interactive software installation by Nathaniel Stern called *Step Inside*[viii]. "*Step Inside* has presented many challenges after acquisition regarding after sale maintenance and support" (Murdoch, *Addendum A,* 2010, 27). *Step Inside* is broken however and does not work anymore due to lack of adequate maintenance and lack of technical skill set at JAG (Murdoch, *Addendum A,* 2010, 27). Stern however goes on to stating that as an Artist he does not worry himself about copyright. It is his belief that "the job of the museum or the collector, as well as their passion, is the ownership and archive of the original work. If there is no original, they won't want it; if there is, then every copy that is circulated will make the original of that much more value" (Stern, *Addendum A,* 2010, 2).

Art practitioners around the globe seem to agree on who should take-on the responsibility of maintenance and support of the art piece. Discrepancies arise when deciding on the timeframe the artist has got to provide support; how long after the sale does the artist continue supporting the art work? This will vary from one art collecting institution to another. It is the Curators role to also provide some insight in the decision making regarding maintenance, support, contracts and documentation.

SA

According to Christian Paul the process of collecting art also entails the responsibility of maintaining it (Paul, 2008, 25). *Step Inside*, a digital artwork by Stern was purchased by JAG along with the supporting IT equipment it runs on. This includes an Apple Mac laptop, cabling, and software. The downside to this purchase is that JAG invested a substantial amount of money on an artwork that has only been showcased once as it does not work anymore. The artist is currently residing in America and there was no signed agreement drawn between JAG and the artist for after sale maintenance and support (Murdoch, *Addendum A,* 2010, 28) Murdoch further highlights that personally she does

not feel very comfortable exhibiting Nathanial Stern's piece regardless of the fact that documentation was submitted with the artwork. According to Murdoch digital artworks require a high level maintenance by highly technical personnel with expensive IT equipment. Institutions like JAG do not have such resources or budget allocated for such acquisitions (Murdoch, *Addendum A*, 2010, 28). JAG's position on showcasing Stern's piece is not surprising or anything new in the arts. Sarah Cook (2008), in Immateriality and its discontents highlights that,

> Since the first computer driven arts emerged in the 1960, museums- unfamiliar with the medium, concerned about technological complexity, not to mention limited in terms of wiring or air conditioning systems – have been woefully unprepared to exhibit new media (Cook in Paul, 2008, 29).

Neustetter pointed out that in his experience maintenance and support of net based artwork has paned out in this manner; "where a work has been commissioned, the commissioned if often interested in maintaining the art work. However there have been incidents where Neustetter has offered technical support and maintenance for a commissioned piece. This inevitably brought so many challenges Neustetter claims. He noticed that media-based artworks, which is time-based is not always adaptable; the specific relevance of the piece changes over time. According to Neustetter the decision to not to provide technical support for the commissioned art piece becomes an interesting time-based production, much like a performance (Neustetter, *Addendum* , 2010, 4).

The Goodman gallery is currently working on a project called *Third Sight*; a digital installation by a South African artist Minnette Vari together for Nedbank in Sandton, Johannesburg. It should be noted that this installation is not Internet based but used digital technologies. It falls within the same genre of new media art as Internet Art which faces similar challenges regarding after sale maintenance and support. The installation uses randomized programs displaying images of digital film-making from static archived data. "The installation is presented in a series of VDU screens that are mounted on a cabinet inside elevators at Nedbank headquarters in Sandton -Johannesburg. Nedbank's

commitment to this project has been a major step for them in relation to new media; to get a bank collection to even consider being part of the project (Dundas, *Addendum A,* 2010, 21) Nedbank has had to provide a dedicated air-conditioned, temperature and humidity controlled room, with solid plate players, memory cards, server and computer that run the randomization program. Furthermore the bank has had to sign a contractual agreement to maintain the software and the artwork for a specified period of time. (Dundas, *Addendum A,* 2010, 24)The Goodman gallery on the other hand has had to include in the artwork's purchase price and contract that the artist, Minnette Vari remains involved with the artwork whilst on display at Nedbank headquarters in Sandton. A contract with a third party service provider has also been signed to ensure longevity of the artwork. A bank as big as Nedbank can afford to set-up a room like this because they have dedicated technicians and high-tech equipment. It would be very difficult for a gallery or museum to do this with their limited budget and funds, Neil Dundas adds (Dundas, *Addendum A,* 2010, 25). It is clear that art forms using digital technologies require careful relationship management between artists, curator and art collecting institution to ensure longevity of the artwork. Roles and responsibilities for all parties should be adequately defined, documented and agreed by all involved, or else art collecting institutions run a risk of acquiring artworks that may potentially pose functional problems in future.

3.3.4 Funding Strategies

US/UK

According to Cook funding strategies in differ from country to country. In Canada for a example the majority of public arts funding for new project goes directly to the artists. Whereas in the United States support for artist's projects is often channeled through museums and galleries (Cook in Paul, 2008, 44). Internet Art shows are often expensive and require high level of maintenance and support. Funding strategies are always required for such high-tech and high-maintenance projects to provide financial support. According to Christiane Paul funding strategies for this form of art was experimental especially in the early year of Internet Art. In 1995 institutions like the Machida City

Museum of Graphic Arts in Tokyo had started sponsoring Internet Art with the hope of stimulating and growing interest in this form of art (Paul, 2008, 113). Some organisations that have flourished in starting online art media labs in Eastern Europe include the Soros Foundation. According to Cook Soros was deeply dependant and sponsored by the state funding. This funding led to the establishment of office based public curatorial agencies in the UK. These are organisational using distributive curatorial model have been referred to in chapter 2 which include amongst others Low-Fi and Forma.

SA

"The South African public sector in art is seriously under funded…" Neil Dundas

In the early years Internet Art funding was experimental Just like the art and practice itself (Paul, 2008, 113). According to Antoinette Murdoch and Neil Dundas "galleries in South Africa are currently facing limitation with regards to acquiring new works; new acquisition budget constraints" (Murdoch, *Addendum A,* 2010, 29). Funding from the South African Arts and Culture Department is low, especially in promoting new genres of arts. The Tshwane Museum for an example, Murdoch states, is kept running however there is no acquisition budget for new works; irrespective of the genre of art or public's interest in the form of art. Murdoch adds that this is a major problem is South Africa (Murdoch, *Addendum A,* 2010, 29).

According to Neil Dundas the gallery finds itself in a very difficult position in that although they might take on a project or host an exhibition where the gallery does not expect to sell a percentage of works, the gallery still has to consider gallery operational expenses as well as the artist's percentile profits after sale. Public interest and finding the right level of pricing then becomes a very important factor in commercial galleries. The gallery should always ensure that they sell enough to fund other projects (Dundas, *Addendum A,* 2010, 25). With Internet Art the scarcity model of demand equals supply does not work as multiple copies of each work are created and can be accessed from anywhere. Considering selling this form of art would definitely require careful thinking on what selling strategy to apply; determining the purchase, mark up and selling price.

Internet Art exhibitions are often expensive to showcase as they require dedicated equipment for presenting and displaying artworks. These exhibitions often require high bandwidth network connections, high resolution screens; or else artworks cannot be displayed and interacted with. Without financial support galleries and museums find it difficult to host exhibitions that may be costly. Which brings forth a lot of questions, one of which is; how then does one set-up a room with a web based artwork that depends on technology which becomes obsolete every six months to a year? According to Paul collecting software and hardware as it changes rapidly is the least elegant solution to preservation (Paul, 2008, 25). Paul points out that hiring equipment to fit a traditional-term gallery exhibition; standard museum exhibition would also prove to be costly. It seems that galleried and museums are trying to base Internet art to an economic model. Most Internet Art is not made to be collected and valued however galleries have tried to collect it. If online art could be presented in a flexible environment, appropriate for such artwork like a trade show, perhaps convincing potential sponsors for financial support may not be too difficult. An opportunity exists for the South African arts industry to engage and explore such presentation models when sourcing potential sponsors.

Paul believes that the value of art is inextricably linked with its economic value. The scarcity equals demand value model does not work with Internet Art. Internet Art has the potential of generating multiple artworks overtime which makes collecting a problem. Some artists have adopted a model used by photographers of limited editions. This is how these artists have managed to enter their artworks into collections with major art collecting institutions. Although Internet Art in comparison with other traditional art forms hasn't been collected as much, Paul claims that Internet Art is increasingly being commissioned and collected by museums. These artworks are collected with their source code which is hosted on respective museum's servers (Paul, 2008, 24 & 25). If the gallery was to sell the art piece it would sell an art piece that is based with technology; technology which goes obsolete every couple of years (Dundas, *Addendum A*, 2010, 25). The buyer would continually have to spend money to keep the art up to date and

functional for an art piece that is ephemeral in nature. If the art piece was really Internet based that people are able to add to it, change, obliterate it as they go along, no-one owns a tangible asset which may eventually have value, the way it was first seen (Murdoch, *Addendum A,* 2010, 29). According to Neil Dundas this bred a suspicion that investors may end up loosing money investing in Internet Art. The experimental nature of the wider arts industry has however allowed Internet Art to grow. Around the world especially in Europe and North America bigger art collecting institutions have slowed down in growing their collection of Internet based art works. According to Dundas this could be attributed to the fact that there is no technological solution that exists or that has been tabled to resolve the preservation issue. Perhaps, if in the cyberspace artworks were to be preserved almost in a "state" with all its editions or newer versions as more details are added. However keeping records of these activities will still be a challenge; traceability, which has not been successfully resolved yet (Murdoch, *Addendum A,* 2010, 29). Initiatives at the Guggenheim Musuem – Variable Media Network have emerged in an attempt to providing solutions responding to documentation and preservation strategies.

3.3.4 Promoting and Preservation of on-line art works

US/UK

Paul in Digital Art (2008), stated that "the success of an exhibit and the audience's appreciation of the art is invariably dependent on the effort that an institution puts into the exhibition, both in technical and educational respects" (Paul, 2008, 23). There is a general consensus with art practitioners dealing with Internet Art on developments in preservation techniques. All curators interviewed agreed that there is nothing that is being done by their various institutions to ensure preservation and longevity of on-line and networked artworks. Green highlighted that the majority of galleries in the United States neither show Internet Art nor sell it, thus they have zero interest in preserving it. On the other hand, "Turbulence.org, has commissioned, exhibited and archived over 170 works since 1996" (Green, *Addendum A,* 2010, 8). According to Joanne Green Turbulence's focus has always been on commissioning new work rather than preserving

the older works. This has been Turbulences mission all along. Green further states that there are limited financial resources they have access to. Until recently Turbulence has not been able to secure funds and resources to support the creation of new work (Green, *Addendum A*, 2010, 8).

According to Domenico Quaranta between 1998 and 2003, many institutions made an effort to understand and support Internet Art and to find ways to collect and preserve it. In most of the cases, they stopped everything, and while some of them like the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the Whitney Museum in New York, the Centre Pompidou in Minneapolis, and the Tate Modern in London still have their collection available online, most of them don't. (Domenico, *Addendum A*, 2010, 13) It seems preservation initiatives are coming from small art centers in Europe and US as opposed to internationally recognised museums and galleries. This is evident in Domenicos statement when he questions this and also provides a response to his question,

> "What happened to the SFMoMA's e-space? and the New York Guggenheim's online collection? Of course, something is happening. In 2008 INCCA (International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art) restored Olia Lialina's 1997 piece *Agatha Appears*, belonging to the collection of the Center for Culture & Communication Foundation in Budapest. The piece is still online at the original address (cfr. http://www.incca.org/resources/106-preservation/390-wysocka-e-agatha-re-appears-net-art-resoration-project). This is a good example, but does not come from an internationally recognized museum, but from a little art center in Eastern Europe". (Domenico, *Addendum A*, 2010,)

Joasia Krysa curates an online agency and a research platform which is different from a gallery space or museum; where issues of collection and preservation might be part of their remit. Joasia Krysa's practice hosts online works as simple links or documentation. The preservation is left for the artists. However with rapidly changing technology, hardware and software, the issue of preservation is of great importance. As a result there are regular conferences and research in this area Krysa explains. These would include

lengthy discussions that were held for instance CRUMB discussion list. (Krysa, *Addendum A*, 2010, 30).

On the other side of the continent in the US, Turbulence has experienced a few problems with art works that they have collected in the past. According to Joanne Green their original server had to be replaced in 2008, and they were suddenly faced with broken works that could no longer function with the later versions of software on the new server. Turbulence had to contact each of the artists and ask them to debug their works so that they would run again. Some Artists refused; others said that the technology environments in which they had created the work no longer existed, and that work was now "changed". Joanne further highlights that some browsers had become obsolete or undergone numerous upgrades; processing speeds of computers had increased exponentially; screen resolutions and sizes had changed the aesthetics; software had become obsolete. (Green, *Addendum A*, 2010, 31) The growing number of broken works forced Turbulence to reconsider their priorities. Turbulence recognized the importance of saving as many of these groundbreaking works as possible, before they disappeared from view after such a short time span. Following the preservation research and methodologies being developed by the Variable Media Initiative, Daniel Langlois Foundation, and DOCAM, Turbulence applied to the National Endowment for the Arts for a preservation grant in 2009. At the moment they are still waiting for the response on the preservation grant. (Green, *Addendum A*, 2010, 31). Paul believes that galleries and museums or rather what she refers to as physical art spaces have an important role to play when it comes to contextualizing Internet based artworks. This would radically help in the preservation as well as its audience (Paul, 2008, 24).

Nathaniel Stern, an Internet Artist is also concerned by longevity of his artworks when purchased or collected; but not for all of his work. He revealed that if the artwork created is for the gallery spaces, as with his prints and video objects; Nathaniel makes the artwork as archival as possible. If the piece is interactive; Nathaniel provides pseudo-code tools so others may re-write the wares later down the road. He goes on to stating that he thinks of Internet Art as pieces of performances. Whilst he strives to keep his

work as up do date as possible, Nathaniel is content with whatever form of archive his works are archived in. It is his belief that good work should be mediated, contextualized and archived. According to Stern the form of archive the artwork should be archived in should be dependent on the work itself. (Stern, *Addendum A*, 2010, 2)

SA

Galleries and museums often struggle to always organise educational programs for audiences to make them more familiar with new media including Internet Art (Cook in Paul, 2008, 54). Paul suggests that an important step in integrating Internet Art into the art world is to grow its audience; which is possible only if the curators and art collecting institutions facilitate dialogues with and about artworks (Paul, 2008, 66). Paul suggests that Internet Art is often expensive to show and ideally require consistent maintenance (Paul, 2008, 23). Challenges presented by digital technologies regarding the stability and being ephemeral are not unusual to any art form. Oil painting for example is also not stable in itself, it changes over time. (Murdoch, *Addendum A*, 2010, 27) An oil painting's lifespan can be estimated to be "x" number of years, contemporary printing like photography has a shorter life span, artworks created on the Internet promises even much more shorter lifespan. This challenge is not unique to new media or Internet Art. . (Murdoch, *Addendum A*, 2010, 27)

The Goodman gallery has had a handful of interactive artworks that they have exhibited in their space; however like JAG they have not exhibited or sold Internet Art before. To date only one interactive artwork has been sold by Sue Williamson called Truth Games. Some of the interactive art pieces have been seen as quite important as they were borrowed on exhibitions and museums but not sold partly because of the longevity and preservation issue. Internet Art mutates and lives on the Internet which makes preservation a major challenge. Neil Dundas recommends a possible solution for preserving interactive digital artworks based on an interactive digital artwork by Sue Williamson. Dundas believes that although Williams' piece was not Internet based it is interactive and uses new media technology facing similar challenges as those faced by Internet Artists. This art piece had a number of options; almost like a digital video game

which was pre saved and archived, the user used an edition of this artwork. The participant would manipulate and remix scenes in a way that the artist hadn't brought into the piece. In this way the participant would contribute somewhat towards the art piece and buy an edition that they'd contributed towards. In the end Sue Williamson had 10 editions of her artworks and she'd managed to also sell 10 editions of her artwork. Each edition was slightly different from each other. According to Neil Dundas selling of art in editions is not yet exploited by galleries in South Africa. (Dundas, *Interview* 09 Oct 2010) The traditional model of valuing art is inextricably linked to its economic value. According to Christiane Paul the scarcity equals value model does not work when it comes to Internet Art. Paul suggests that some international artists have used the model of limited editions established in photography. This has allowed their artworks to enter collections of major museums around the globe (Paul, 2008, 24).

Preservation of digital artworks is a problem in that artworks whether saved in a disk, chip or magnetic tape or wherever can easily be corrupted and lost just like unexpected computer crashes. How to archive or how to ensure that the construction of the artwork is sufficiently safe and yet remain interactive particularly if its web based artworks is still a challenge? According to Dundas Google may provide a solution to this problem with its cyberspace storage where there is no physical storage but this is still work in progress. Perhaps part of the reason why interactive and net based artwork is viewed with suspicion even in countries where it has become more common is the sense that it is not really permanent. From a buyers perspective what is important maybe is whether the collector is willing to pay the money for a piece which will live on the Internet; where access might pose a challenge one day , where it can be hacked, destroyed and altered for whatever reasons. (Dundas, *Interview* 09 Oct 2010)

Neil Dundas and Antoinette Murdoch both agree that the imperative has to be directed by the following things;

- Galleries need to educate the public and artists so that the people working with this medium are kept at the cutting edge of technology. This will also help if they are going to be successful in marketing works that is based in techno survey.

- Finally museum and galleries should be convinced in some way that the art works that they acquire have some longevity and can gather value and be preserved safely. That could mean having good digital archives as well as master tapes; maybe three or four different ways of archiving so that failure of one thing does not mean destructions of other materials.

Perhaps it would be best for something that is interactive and allows new inputs all the time to be backed up, saved and added to its archives on a regular basis; especially if its in the public space or museums. Institutions like The Walker Arts Centre in Minneapolis and the Big World Wide Video festival based in Rotterdam are looking at archiving interactive artworks. The problem would be how big does the archive have to be, and who pays for it? How much does it costs? These are questions Barbara Freemantle of the Standard Bank Corporate collection claims steers the bank away from collecting any digital art works including Internet Art.

According to Neil Dundas the arts industry needs to get inventive enough to think outside the box the way galleries are asking artists to make the work; if galleries are to find ways to preserve the art and market it. Dundas claims that talks are already underway of trying to bring a commercial streak to viewing Internet Art. A suggestion has been made, of an internet on-line arts arcade, where the general public would feed the slot with money for the rights to play interactive and add their bit to the artwork. Dundas believes that if the arts and marketing industry could work together in making Internet Art as addictive, as interesting and creating hype similar to that created in video games arcade; maybe galleries could then start growing an audience with an interest in this genre of art. Galleries could also grow a way of controlling new versions of the artworks produced however so often; in a form of a DVD or other digital forms, be permanently archived, re-archived and constantly updated. In this way there will always be an opportunity to look at the new version. For those that cannot afford to buy the new version; they can always go to the Internet Art Arcade and play. (Dundas, *Addendum A*, 2010, 25)

Murdoch's suggestions are inline with Dundas's suggestion. She further highlighted that artists will have to sign contracts together with a maintenance support contract. However as time passes and people grow older, artists will pass-on and galleries would have to deal with the inevitable problem of dealing with artworks that do not work. "Curators in galleries and museums are very afraid of being branded as those who tried something new 20 or 30 years ago; collecting foolishly without thinking about the future, not having worked out their preservation strategies appropriately" (Murdoch, *Addendum A,* 2010, 25). Some means of understanding how digitization can be archived in a way that can constantly be reinvented and updated comes down to being the main base point that will help drive the kind of collection, public money, institutional interest and public education that will help keep the arts alive. Unless galleries and museums find a way of solving the technology problem to the point that makes people convinced that their money is well spent when acquiring Internet Art, it will be a poor system to the arts.

Neustetter point out that some "artworks and processes are being lost that could assist in the understanding of a specific approach and artistic intervention into a system that may longer be in use" (Neustetter, *Addendum* A, 2010, 2). According to Neustetter documentation is vital for the preservation of some of these works and for the identifying of ne processes and opportunities, especially given the time and performative-based possibilities of the media art production (Neustetter, *Addendum* A, 2010, 2).

CHAPTER 4

4.1 COMPARATIVE REVIEW AND CONCLUSION

Looking at the challenges facing the international curatorial practice in comparison with the South African practice, both practices are still grappling with similar issues prevalent in online arts. It is worth noting however that the South African curatorial practice has not had much experience in exhibiting this form of art. Additionally SA faces infrastructural limitations as opposed to the US and UK where the curatorial practice is not much concerned about infrastructural limitations. Initiatives in North America in particular have identified few possible solutions in addressing documentation and preservation strategies of net based artworks. Discussions with SA based curators revealed that efforts by artists and the arts industry at large in addressing issues facing the curatorial practice have been minimal. This is partly because South African IT infrastructure is not as developed as the US and the UK. Hence art created with digital technologies can be expected not to as developed in comparison with the developed countries. This is evident by the small number of online works that have been showcased and collected in the country between 2008 – 2009.

4.1.1 Strategies by Artists

Artist strategies have evolved with time to embrace and critique new technological development and tools. From an artist perspective Stern has created artworks that questions structures of the Internet; critiquing the aesthetic or commercial aspect of the medium. It is his belief that every thing that heralds power should be critiqued. His premise and strategy for critiquing the Internet is not aligned to that of being anti institutional as he would like his artworks to be preserved and collected in the future. If Stern creates artworks for the gallery space, he ensures that each artwork is as archival as possible and provides pseudo code if the work is interactive. This indicates that Stern as an artist does not particularly oppose his digital art pieces to be collected and as he is willing to help in the preservation of his works. Strategies employed the South African

Internet Artist; Neustetter in his digital artworks also aligns to that of Stern. Neustetter is mostly critiquing the establishment of the industry as well as what it symbolises on the Internet. It may not be surprising however that both artists' strategies share similar vision as Stern and Neustetter have previously developed net based projects together. Although geographically dispersed this pair has collaborated in creating digital artworks in the past when Stern was in residency in South Africa. This includes *thegateawayexperiment.net*, which has been exhibited in various countries. Both artists have expressed concern about the longevity of their artworks which clearly signifies that their strategies have changed from that of early Internet Art pioneers. A shift has emerged in artists strategies; it appears that these strategies are critiquing the emerging technologies, platforms and tools and less of the stability of the medium.

Curators alike, Green and Krysa in North America and UK also believe that artist strategies have changed from those used by early Internet Artists. Both curators have seen interesting artworks about emerging technologies as opposed to critiquing the medium. Early Internet Art strategies were critiquing the medium however strategies employed by artists actively creating Internet art today seem to be critiquing other aspects of technological developments other than the mediums' inherent characteristics. This can be seen as a positive step by artist in trying to integrate Internet Art into a museum and gallery structure.

4.1.2 Audience Participation and public interest

Paul points out that the success of any exhibition depends on its audience. There are few examples in the online art world of self organising portals that allow the public to participate in the curatorial process. However art institutions are still neglecting the audience, failing to involve it in the curatorial process (Paul, 2008, 73). It appear that the role of stimulating public interest of any art form within communities resides with art organisations including galleries and museums. In South Africa very little has been done is promoting this form of art. To date in South Africa, only one exhibition has been successful in showcasing Internet Art; that is the 2009 Joburg Arts Fair.

The US and UK has better technological infrastructure in comparison to South Africa. It is not surprising than that art created by technologies, which resides on the network has not been showcased much or collected in the country. If the public or audience is familiar with the medium, they are likely to enjoy the experience of the artwork. Maybe time has come for the South African arts industry to continue from where the 2009 Arts Fair festival left off; in terms of showcasing online art in a location as large and busy as Sandton Convention Centre. The Joburg Arts Fair is an annual exhibition which runs over a period of 4 days. This is arguably the biggest art festival in the SADAC. This exhibition showcased 18 Internet Artists from 8 countries located within the global south. Amongst other artists, Nathaniel Stern and Marcus Neustetter were featured (http://jafnetart.digitalarts.wits.ac.za/, retrieved on 30.01.2011). The model used for this exhibition can be aligned to that Ippolito recommends for on-line art; it is less costly and preferred by funders. That would be presenting the exhibition as a trade show. The South African arts industry should take initiative in promoting on-line arts in order to stimulate public interest.

Challenges encountered at JAG during the *One Square Mile* exhibition are not new to digital arts nor JAG as an art collecting institution. It has been highlighted that Internet Art requires a degree of media literacy, so the participant can engage with artworks and fully enjoy the experience. Gallery and museum visitor has always questioned digital arts in a controlled public space. Paul points out that, it is important to understand your audience; in most instances on-line art requires user participation to be complete. She goes-on to stating that "if a museum visitor is unfamiliar with a specific technology or interface, it automatically becomes the focus of attention – an effect unintended by the artists" (Paul, 2008, 67). If participants are not fully engaged, the artists and art collecting institution run a risk of creating and collecting artworks which may not be understood by the public. Additionally this might not be an appropriate strategy growing the South African on-line arts audience. This is evident on the *One Square Mile* project where the project was pitch to an audience that did not understand technology and

computers enough. This contributed negatively in the success of the show. The audience could not fully engage and experience the project. Paul highlights that comments like "it does not work, it belongs in a science museum, I work on a computer all day I don't want to see art on it in my free time, I want to look at art not interact with it, where are the special effects" are common amongst museum goers when engaging with interactive on-line arts (Paul, 2008, 68).

It is therefore correct to conclude that, one of the major failures of the *One Square Mile* project can be easily associated with the audience and its lack of computer skills to stimulate interest from its participants. Perhaps if the project was presented to an audience that was at least familiar with the medium maybe the project may have enjoyed better outcomes. The targeted audience in this project could not contribute positively towards the art piece. It is then important for museums, galleries, artists and curators to continually work together in developing on-line art; to ensure that the audience, ultimately needed to complete the artwork is not alienated from the production to the presentation the artwork.

Both Green and Krysa believe that in the US and UK, art collecting institutions have done enough in encouraging this form of art. However due to the ephemeral nature of the medium Internet Art exhibitions are relatively expensive and require constant maintenance and support which galleries cannot afford. Security proper financial support then becomes an important factor for the presentation and preservation of art; potentially growing Internet Art collections. Paul however still believes that Internet Art does not need to be presented and introduced to the public as it is created to be seen and viewed anywhere. Museums and galleries are based on principles that work counter to what Internet Art requires.

4.1.3 Maintenance and Support

Paul suggests that instead on presenting Internet Art in a gallery space maybe exhibiting it in an environment that suggests an office environment; with computers, monitor and desks, may sometimes be the best option but may create certain reception problems (Paul, 2008, 71). Paul and Ippolito suggest that the arts industry can adapt methods and techniques used in the software development process. These curators further highlighted that Internet Art may be better presented in environment that has the necessary technological requirements it demands. This environment would ideally be flexible and equipped with high tech- equipment, supported but technically skilled for maintenance of the artwork.

Dialogues with curators and artists in the US, UK and SA revealed that the responsibility of maintaining any artwork remains with the artist until the sale of the artwork. It appears as if there is no formal industry standard providing guidelines on how to deal with maintenance issues. Additionally there is no defined strategy for addressing identified digital arts' documentation and preservation issues. This included JAG, Goodman gallery and the Standard Bank Corporate Collection. The only artwork that JAG has collected is the interactive software installation by Nathanial Stern *Step Inside* which does not function anymore. Although documentation was submitted with the artwork, JAG does not have the adequate technical skill to reconfigure this installation; the artist now relocated back to the US. Additionally no formal agreement or contract was drawn and signed between the artist, third party and the gallery; to ensure longevity of the artwork. An escrow agreement could have been signed with a third party security that the source code of the artwork remains available even after the artist dies. These techniques are used in the software industry in ensuring that applications can be enhanced, modified and upgraded whenever a need arises. Artists and art collecting institutions should actively continue in exploring techniques used in the software development industry. Rinehart has suggested that artists should sign formal contractual agreements with art collecting institutions and third parties to ensure longevity of their

artworks (Ippolito in Paul, 123). Internet Art require a high level of technical skill even for its presentation. Galleries and always challenged in this regard as they are built in line with a white cube. Having spaces dedicated to digital art may prove to be costly for a museum or gallery structure.

Since the South African art industry has done little in addressing maintenance issues maybe lessons can be drawn from the Turbulence.org which has a policy on this issue According to Green the artist has to keep the work running for at least three years and further allow exclusivity for the same period of time.

4.1.4 Funding Strategies

One of the major obstacles in growing online art is the lack of adequate financial support from sponsors and from the government. Although the US and UK receive better state funding from their governments, it appears that art institutions that have stopped the process of Internet Art collection. According to Green this is partly because they do not have enough funds to continue the collections. Turbulence have applied for funding so they can continue with their project aimed at documenting, contextualizing and archival of collected on-line artworks. The South African art industry faces an even bigger problem regarding funding of new forms of art like Internet Art. Dundas pointed out that prominent public galleries and museums in the country have had their acquisition budgets cut-off by the state due to lack of funds. Funding of exhibitions that have a potential of being costly and not well understood by the general public may still discourage potential funders. Unless appropriate presentation and curatorial models are used in promoting and selling of such show; securing funding from sponsors could still pose a major hindrance in the promotion and collection of on-line art.

In the 2009 Joburg Arts Fair, Bristow was able to secure some funding from the University of Witwatersrand through the ad hoc research funding. Bristow points out that these funds were small and could only pay for the designer of projects' website. This project was fortunate in that Art Logic did not expect the project to pay for the stall space

allocated to the project at the art fair. Additionally Art Logic also supplied the project with furniture used in the exhibition space. Bristow states that "the furniture was an extension of the book store stand designed specifically for the Joburg Art Fair in 2009 by Notion Architects" (Bristow, *E-mail*, 31.01.2011). It is clear that the curator in this instance did not have to worry as the funding strategy employed in this project seemed to suit and work for this show. This may not always be the case.

4.1.5 Promoting and Preservation of on-line art works

Ippolito suggest that an opportunity exist for projects like *the Pool* to be used and possible draw lessons from it. *The Pool* has been successful in addressing some of the preservation issues highlighted in this report, most importantly documenting of online art (Ippolito in Paul, 2008, 113). The approach employed at *the Pool* project regarding development of artworks clearly distinguished between the initial conception of an artwork and its subsequent versions. Releases take form of prototypes or finished projects, implemented in the medium intended for public distribution (Ippolito in Paul, 2008, 113). From Ippolito's suggestion perhaps art collecting institutions in South Africa can explore the idea proposed by the Variable Media Network and *the* Pool project for documenting forms of art which are variable in nature. The proposed documentation strategy by the Variable Media Network's and *the Pool* project may be the key in providing preservation solution suited for online art. Ippolito suggests that documentation strategies used for Internet Art including the wall label should take cognisence of the variable nature of the medium and the art form. Additionally art collecting institutions should continue exploring the process of presenting Internet Art in environments that are more suited for it; for example the Joburg arts fair festival.

The 2009 Joburg Art Fair hosted a range of computers that were dedicated to showcasing Internet Art. Students from the Digital School of Arts Division of the Wits School of Art helped to install and set up for public viewing. I was one of the students helping out with setting up and manning the Internet Art stall throughout the exhibitions. The show enjoyed a lot of participants intrigued by the use of computers in a traditional art

exhibition. The success of the show could be attributed to the fact that the curator, Tegan Bristow had secured adequate funding from participating partners, including The First National Bank, Art Logic and the Core Group. The selection was featured as a special project and presented at the fair on four Apple iMacs as part of the bookstand area at the Joburg Art Fair. The selection artworks can be viewed on this website, http://JAFnetart.digitalarts.wits.ac.za . The stage in which Internet Art was exhibited was appropriately set-up with network cables hidden from the public to avoid technological problems. If the local art industry could draw lessons from successful shows like the Joburg Art Fair, *the pool* project and Variable Media, maybe we can start expecting to see changes in the curatorial practice as well as growth of on-line art in mainstream collections. However curators like Paul and Ippolito still believe that other avenues and models specific to digital art can still be explored in presenting online art.

4.2 Conclusion

This study has revealed that an opportunity exists for the South African art industry, both art creators and art collecting institutions to start working together in developing strategies that will focus in stimulating public interest of Internet Art in the country. Ideally these strategies should be developed as a collaborative effort; ensuring that artist and art collecting institutions are continually working together in the creation of online works. The role of the curator in this instance is that of a mediator as the primary duty is to create platforms of exchange of idea between the viewer of the artwork and the project itself. If new forms of art like Internet Art are to prosper and grow their audiences, curators would have to engage more with the artists, public and explore new models of curating. Krysa suggests that curating new media needs to be seen as intellectual activity, critical conceptualising expressed in selecting, classifying and organising works. This may involve establishing display modes and handling technological aspects of production.

Paul questions whether Internet Art will ever find its place in a museum and gallery structure when she states “whether digital art will find a permanent home in museums

and art institutions or exist in different contexts – supported and presented by a growing number of art-and-technology centres and research-and-development labs – remains to be seen" (Paul, 2008, 25). It has been shown that institutions already equipped with flexible exhibitions environments and adequate technological solutions for presenting art forms as ubiquitous, ephemeral and variable as Internet Art should be explored. The nature of this art form requires constant maintenance and support as the technology malfunctions, breaks down and replaced ever so often. Additionally these a high level of technical knowledge is needed for the maintenance of such technologies. According to Paul, Dundas and Murdoch, most galleries have limited budgets and don't have the right level of technical skill set to be able to maintain such artworks.

Dundas highlighted that the South African art industry is seriously underfunded. Now, to expect a country faced with so many infrastructural challenges to have organisations and exhibitions devoted to media art would be asking for too much. Perhaps as Paul suggested, environments like office spaces, which already have these resources can be an ideal place for presenting digital artworks. However there may be reception issues; a gap in understanding the art form. In South Africa particularly, institutions like the Standards Bank, Nedbank, First National Bank, Anglo Gold Ashanti, Spier Corporate Collection and other big corporate organisations with existing art collections could be targeted as possible avenues for the presentation of Internet Art. These institutions can provide the well needed funding for flexible exhibitions environments; they have highly skilled technical personnel with third party contracts protecting over their source codes. As Rinehart suggested that maybe Internet Art creators and art collecting institutions should adapt methods used in the software industry in terms of developing, testing and deploying nodes or modules of artworks as they develop.

Rinehart further suggests that like in the software industry, information needs to be backed up, restored to test whether the data is recoverable or not and distributed geographically for storage purposes. Additionally data redundancy is also encouraged through distributed archives. It has been suggested that online art should also be backed up, tested and stored in more than one location to ensure recoverability and longevity of

the artwork in the future. With on-line art more than one copy of the artwork exists at any given point in time. Again, big corporate organisations already have divisions that are dedicated to performing such functions and would be easier if on-line art was to be presented and preserved in such environments.

However this does not mean that galleries and museums do not have a role to play in this relationship. Curators would still mediate between the various artists, the corporate providing the exhibition venue and finally the audience needed to complete the experience. Registrars and archivists in galleries and museums have previously been tasked with contextualising artworks for collection for many years. Online art can certainly take advantage of this rich experience that galleries and museum structures have, but ensure that documentation strategies used cater for the variable nature of this form of art; variable title, medium, date and so on. The advantage for using these new curatorial models is that they are self organised. The artist does not have to wait for an authorising institution to recognise their work. Additionally these models are dynamic just like Internet Art; they allow for additions and contextualization. Perhaps, dialogue about showcasing digital artworks in corporate environments should begin to manifest within the SA community. Should environments equipped with appropriate resources, financial support, tools and adequate technical skill set, be used for the presentation of online art, this could go a long way in addressing challenges highlighted in this study. Through adequate preservation techniques, Internet Art collections have a potential, not only to grow, but to emerge from countries and institutions that have previously disassociated themselves with this form of art. Working closely with curators corporate organisations could now start their own collection of net based artworks.

[vi] 1 Square mile project - In '1mile the community - which comprises individuals who live near, or bide their time in, Joubert Park – assist the artists in creating various maps of their experiences of the neighbourhood. These maps, like the psychogeographic records created by the Situationists in Paris in the 1950s and 1960s, suggest that the apparent character of the city is derived from ambulatory truths – things discovered in the thick of Joubert Park's frenetic street life – rather than from official historical narratives. 1mile² are then connected to other, similarly construed communities around the world through the '1 mile²' website. http://www.artthrob.co.za/Reviews/Review-of-1-mile-squared-by-Anthea-Buys-at-Johannesburg-Art-Gallery.aspx 29 October 2010

[vii] Hotel Yeoville project – comprised a community and an interactive exhibition installation which took form of a series of private booths in which the members of the public were invited to document themselves through a range of digital interfaces, interactive media and on-line publications. http://www.hotelyeoville.co.za/component/content/article/556-hotel-yeoville-a-public-art-project 29 October 2010.

[viii] Step Inside step inside is an immersive, multi-sensory environment, which calls attention to the perceptions of, and imperceptible within, identity. Participants 'step inside' the 3 x 3 x 3 meter interaction space, viewer-participants are immediately confronted with an amplified and echoed trail of noise. i.e sound of each footstep they take, of all the footwork in the room.A video camera, opposite them and connected to the step inside software, reads their bodies, and separates them out from the background. http://nathanielstern.com/2004/step-inside/ 29 October 2010.

Bibliography

Art Encyclopedia. The Concise Grove Dictionary of Art. Oxford University Press, Inc.. http://www.answers.com/topic/conceptual-art April 2010

Bentkowska-Kafel, A. Cashein, T. Gardiner, H. Digital Arts History, Bristol UK, 2005

Berners-Lee, T. The World Wide Web. Past, Present and Future http://www.w3.org/People/Berners-Lee/1996/ppf.html, 03 December

Berwick, C. (2001), Voyeurschism. Artbyte, 2001, March – April

Betsy, Ennis/Sasha Nicholas. Public affair, Internet Art Commissions, www.guggenheim.org/new-yor/press-room/, February 2009

Blais, Joline. Ippolito, J. (2006) At the edge of art. Thames & Hudson

Bristow, Tegan. *E-mail Interview*, (11 January 2011), WSOA, Internet Art Curator

Buys, Anthea. *Gauteng Reviews* http://www.artthrob.co.za/Reviews/Review-of-1-mile-squared-by-Anthea-Buys-at-Johannesburg-Art-Gallery.aspx , 15 October 2010

Chun, W. Keenan, T. New Media Old Media: A history and theory reader, Routledge, 2006.

Depocos, A. Ippolito, J. & Jones, C. (2003) Performance Through Change: The Variable Media Approach, Guggenheim Museum.

Dietz, Steve.
http://www.archimuse.com/mw98/papers/dietz/dietz_curatingtheweb.html retrieved on 14.08.2010.
Academic dictionaries and encyclopedias, http://en.academic.ru/dic.nsf/enwiki/490080 retrieved 23.08.2010

Dietz, Steve. Curating (on) the Web. Director of New Media Initiatives, Walker Art Center. 1998 http://www.archmisuse.com/mw98/papers/dietz/dietz_curatingtheweb.html#artist_museum_t, January 2009

Dietz, Steve. Interfacing the Digital, http://www.archmisuse.com/mw2003/papers/dietz/dietz.html, January 2009.

Dundas, Neil. *Interview*, 09 October 2010, The Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg.

Freemantle, Barbara. *E-mail Interview,* 11 October 2010, Standard Bank Corporate Collection

Greene, Joanne. *E-mail Interview*, Turbulence.org Boston, Americas

Green, Rachel. Internet Art, (2004) London, Thames & Hudson

Greene, Rachel. "Web Work: A HISTORY OF INTERNET ART". ArtForum. FindArticles.com. 14 Aug, 2010. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0268/is_9_38/ai_65649375/

Krysa, Joasia. *E-mail Interview*, 05 November 2010, Plymouth United Kingdom

Leiner, Barry. Internet History, http://inventors.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=inventors&cdn=money&tm=96&gps=137_27_932_561&f=00&su=p554.2.150.ip_&tt=2

&bt=0&bts=0&zu=http%3A//www.isoc.org/internet/history/brief.shtml, 03 December 2008

Moffit, J. Media Gallery, (2008) http://www.walkerart.org/beuys/hyper/index.html, 28.December 2008

Murdoch, Antoinette. *Interview*, 01 October 2010, The Johannesburg Art Gallery, Johannesburg

Nuesstetter, Marcus. *E-mail Interview*, 08 April 2010. Trinity Session, Johannesburg - South Africa

O'Doherty, B. (1986) Inside the White Cube, The Ideology of the Gallery Space, San Francisco

Paul, Christiane. (2003). Digital Art. Thames & Hudson.

Paul, Christiane. (2008). New Media In The White Cube and Beyond: Curatorial Models for Digital Arts. Thames & Hudson.

Quaranta, Domenico. *E-mail Interview*, 01 October 2010, Brescia, Italy

Rush, Michael. (2003) New Media in Art. Thames & Hudson.

Sherman, D. (1994) Rogoff, I. Museum Culture. Routledge London.

Stern, Nathaniel. http://nathanielstern.com/2004/step-inside/ 29 October 2010. http://www.hotelyeoville.co.za/component/content/article/556-hotel-yeoville-a-public-art-project

Stern, Nathaniel. *E-mail Interview*, 01 October 2010, Boston Americas

Wands, B. (2006) Art of The Digital Age, Thames & Hudson

White, Michelle. (2006) The Body and the Screen. Theories of Internet Spectatorship, 2006

ZKM|Center of Arts and Media Karlsruhe. (1997) Media Art Histories. Prestel Munich

http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/readme/ retrieved on 25 January 2010

Addendum A

Interview with Nathaniel Stern, Internet Artist, Interviewed via e-mail communication, 13 April 2010.

1. Mazwi Vezi: Are strategies deployed in your works aligned to those used in early Internet Art pieces? i.e. anti-aesthetic, anti- commercialization and anti -institutionalised? Why?

Nathaniel Stern: It depends on the work. Certainly, some of my pieces question, or intervene in, or accent the problems of, aesthetics, commercialization and institutionalization - whether of the art world, the structures of the internet, etc. I prefer this phrasing to "anti-" because I'm not inherently against all things powerful - but do believe power should be critiqued in all its forms. It's my conviction that artists no longer simply make images, they make discourse. They ask us now only to "look," but to "look again," to re-examine. I'd say two more recent works that use the Internet - both as medium and as tool - to do this are Wikipedia Art and Doin' my part to lighten the load. I'd highly recommend you look at the texts provided on my web site around these works.

2. Mazwi Vezi: The Internet has become progressively, over time, stable and less prone to errors and malfunctions, has this influenced or changed your strategies in anyway?

Nathaniel Stern: I'm not sure I agree with this statement. Or, for that matter, the assumption you are making behind it. "The Internet" is not a singular thing that has errors or malfunctions - web sites and online applications and browsers individually do. The longer standing ones may have less bugs for spans of time,

but new technologies come along, or overhauled versions, and we're back to square one.

What has had a much more profound impact on my practice is that technologies of the Internet have become less important as people become used to them. They are less interested in how Wikipedia works as a technology, and more so how it works as a social platform. I'd perhaps looks at some of the writing Moody as done about "artists with computers" and MTAA / T.Whid have done on net.art 2.0 regarding this.

3. Mazwi Vezi: Infrastructural requirements & support: who is ultimately responsible for the maintenance and support of your artworks? Please answer this question to including on-going technical support?

Nathaniel Stern: Until it's purchased, me. But I think of net.art as contextual. I try to archive it in the technology and time and place in which it made the most sense, in which it was made. net.art is a performance.

4. Mazwi Vezi: Documentation: Should Internet based art be properly documented for future use like other art forms? For preservation, educational purposes etc?

Nathaniel Stern: I believe all good work should be mediated, contextualized and archived. The better question is what form the archive should take... That, of course, is dependent on the work itself. It may be the original web site, as with hektor.net, or a collation of the discourse around it, as with wikipediaart.org

5. Mazwi Vezi: Are you concerned with longevity of your art works? If so how do you propose the longevity of your artworks can be extended.

Nathaniel Stern: Yes, but not so with all of my work. If intended for gallery spaces, as with my prints and video objects, I make them as archival as they can be with the tools available. If it's an interactive piece for the same space, I provide pseudo-code tools so others may re-write the wares later down the road. With net.art, I tend to think of the pieces as performances, and so while I do occasionally update my work as best I can for now, I am alright with their archives taking other forms.

6. Mazwi Vezi: Would you like your Internet Art pieces to be collected? If so how would you deal with copyright issues as Internet Art mutates on the network?

Nathaniel Stern: Sure, and in fact hektor.net has been archived by the Rose Golden Archive of New Media at Cornell University (and step inside, an interactive installation, has been purchased by the JAG). But I don't worry about copyright. The job of the museum or the collector, as well as their passion, is the ownership and archive of the original work. If there is no original, they won't want it; if there is, then every copy that is circulated will make the original of that much more value.

Interview with Marcus Neustetter, South Africa based Internet Artist, Interviewed via e-mail communication, 08 April 2010

1. Mazwi Vezi: Are strategies deployed in your works aligned to those used in early Internet Art pieces? i.e. anti-aesthetic, anti- commercialization and anti -institutionalised? Why?

Marcus Neustetter: there were some works in the past that did respond to challenging the industry, establishment and what it symbolized on the internet. An example of this would be thegetawayexperiment.net, where nathaniel stern and i

tackled the notion of the sign and signifier as being something that could be more personal and locally produced (i.e. handmade), to pose questions around the contextual relevance of the internet and its power relations

2. Mazwi Vezi: The Internet has become progressively, over time, stable and less prone to errors and malfunctions, has this influenced or changed your strategies in anyway?

Marcus Neustetter: yes, as artist i use the bandwidth, the accessibility to facebook, flickr, you tube, etc. much more interestingly. research, exchange and publishing have become easier and quicker which seems to be more interesting than trying to produce artworks for the internet, but rather to produce interventions that speak to people on the network directly.

3. Mazwi Vezi: Infrastructural requirements & support: who is ultimately responsible for the maintenance and support of your artworks? Please answer this question to including on-going technical support?

Marcus Neustetter: where a work has been commissioned, the commissioned is often interested to maintain the work. however, when i attempt to maintain other works i quickly notice that often media -based work is also time-based and that specific relevances change and so the work is not always adaptable. The decision to then no longer give it the technical support it needs becomes and interesting time-based production, much like a performance.

4. Mazwi Vezi: Documentation: Should Internet based art be properly documented for future use like other art forms? For preservation, educational purposes etc?

Nathaniel Stern: yes. There are constantly works and processes being lost that could assist in the understanding of a specific approach and artistic intervention into a system that may no longer be in use. Documentation is key for the preservation of some of these works and for the identifying of new processes and opportunities especially given the time and performative -based possibilities of the media art production.

5. Mazwi Vezi: Are you concerned with longevity of your art works? If so how do you propose the longevity of your artworks can be extended.

Marcus Neustetter: many of the works have a specific date by which they expire as actual works, given the technological and contextual needs, but then continue to educate, develop and build on the ways forward through their documentation. Longevity does not mean that the work has to be as it once was, but that it can at least be able to reflect on its time and spurn debate.

6. Mazwi Vezi: Would you like your Internet Art pieces to be collected? If so how would you deal with copyright issues as Internet Art mutates on the network?

Nathaniel Stern: internet and network art is challenging to collect in the conventional notions of collecting art. Alternative understanding by trying to collect the medium-specific work start to deal with issues of copyrights and the relatively temporary nature of the virtual context as we engage in it.

Interview with Joanne Green, Chief Curator, Turbulence .org, Interviewee via e-mail communication, 19 May 2010

1. Mazwi Vezi: Is there enough public interest in Internet Art?

Joanne Green: This question implies that the relevance of Internet Art resides in the size of its audience; and that a small audience would be a measure of the "genre's" (lack of) importance. It's impossible to gauge the size of Internet Art's public without resorting to the usual art world reliance on mainstream media coverage of gallery and museum shows; how often they include Internet Art in exhibitions, and how the public responds to it.

Internet Art utilizes the Internet as a site of both production and transmission. It can often be accessed through portals such as Turbulence.org; but it also resides on artists' websites where, often, it fails to attract very much attention. The more one cloisters it within sites such as Rhizome.org, the less likely the general public will want to experience it, because it is perceived as "art" and, for many, that means "not for me."

What sets Internet Art apart from traditional art is that anyone can access it from anywhere at anytime. This grants works a much broader – and larger – audience than it might have in a gallery or museum. Most of the works we have commissioned have enjoyed thousands of visitors (some well over 250,000), far greater in number than most contemporary art enjoys in traditional art venues.

2. Mazwi Vezi: How is the gallery dealing with preservation and longevity of on-line and networked artworks.

Joanne Green: Turbulence is not a gallery, so I cannot answer for galleries. Since the majority of galleries in the United States neither show it nor sell it, they have zero interest in preserving it. Turbulence.org, on the other hand, has commissioned, exhibited and archived over 170 works since 1996. Our focus has always been on commissioning new work rather than preserving the older works. This has been our mission all along. There are so few financial resources we have access to that, until recently, we've only been able to secure them to support the

creation of new work.

However, our original server had to be replaced three years ago, and we were suddenly faced with broken works that could no longer function with the later versions of software on the new server. We had to contact each of the artists and ask them to debug their works so that they would run again. Some didn't want to; others said that the technology environments in which they had created the work no longer existed, and that work was now "changed": browsers had become obsolete or undergone numerous upgrades; processing speeds of computers had increased exponentially; screen resolutions and sizes had changed the aesthetics; software had become obsolete.

The growing number of broken works forced us to reconsider our priorities; we recognized the importance of saving as many of these groundbreaking works as possible, before they disappeared from view after such a short time span. Following the preservation research and methodologies being developed by the Variable Media Initiative, Daniel Langlois Foundation, and DOCAM, we applied to the National Endowment for the Arts for a preservation grant in 2009. We will begin work on the grant next month.

3. Mazwi Vezi: Despite industry initiatives in preserving Internet Art why is the collection of Internet Art slowing down? (North America)

Joanne Green: As far as I know, there were no industry initiatives to preserve Internet Art. Collecting Internet Art never took off. There are myriad reasons for this. For one, Internet Art – because it is produced, distributed, and experience online – could never be preserved or collected as one would art objects. In this respect, it has much more in common with Fluxus, Experiments in Art and Technology (EAT), Telecommunications Art (CCTV, Slow Scan TV, Satellite Art), Land Art, Performance Art, and Relational Art. One has to be there. The

residual artifacts are after-the-fact documents of real-time experiences that can't possibly be re-enacted through them.

Another reason collecting never took off is that Internet Art's purpose is to duplicate itself and develop in perpetuity; be available to as many people as possible; and change according to updated data and the input of its users. Taking it offline is like taking an animal from the wild and placing it in a zoo. The animal is forever changed. The audience thinks they're seeing an elephant, but it's not an elephant at all. To experience an elephant – as much as any human being can – one has to experience it as part of the ecosystem to which it belongs. This is one of the reasons many museums and galleries don't show it; they're not that ecosystem.

One of the most interesting recent, ongoing projects is Christiane Paul's Sunset series. No longer part of "artport" on the Whitney Museum's website, Paul's commissions are interventions into the actual Whitney website. They're not set aside in a special Internet Art section; they're experienced in surprising ways as one browses the main site.

4. Mazwi Vezi: Looking at latest Internet Art projects curated, has the artists strategies changed now that the Internet is more stable? What are the challenges with new Internet Art strategies, if changed?

Joanne Green: It's almost impossible to speak in general terms about Internet Art, because this genre can include software, plugins, extensions, real-time performances, generative systems, social networks, virtual worlds, etc. In the United States, there has not been a question about the stability of its infrastructure for many years; it's simply been a matter of faster delivery and more users. That said, mobile technologies have added an interesting component, allowing people to navigating physical spaces as they access the Internet. We have thus seen the

rapid evolution of augmented reality applications, location aware devices, hybrid games, and networked textual narratives (with tools like Twitter for instance). Some of the most interesting works are those that engage these platforms and tools. Internet Art of increasing personal interest is that which is contributing to the "semantic web"; works that access freely available, massive amounts of data – air quality, wind, country demographics, mobility, etc. – and use it to create meaningful visualizations or sonifications that respond in real time to reveal invisible/ignored patterns of human, ecological, and social behaviors. Works that continue to explore binaries such as physical/virtual, connection/distance, material/immaterial, object/experience, open/closed, production/consumption are also still quite prevalent.

5. Mazwi Vezi: How are online or network artworks in your collections or under your supervision documented?

Joanne Green: Starting with 50 works, we will begin (in June) to record each work according to the hardware and software technologies it was designed and built on and for: what was the typical processing speed of a PC?; which browsers were available?; which plugins and players were available?; how fast was Internet delivery service? If this information is not readily available, we will interview the artist about her intentions for the work; what was possible when it was made; how (if) they would want the work to be reconstructed. We will also collect reviews, mentions in articles and books; and, if the work was shown at a festival or in a gallery, how was it installed. Our server logs will also be examined to document how many times the work has been seen, and which sites referred the traffic to it. Finally, all digital files will be copied to DVD. The resulting book and DVD will be archived at the Rose Goldsen Archive for New Media Art at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York (they already have our old server, which they plan on maintaining for scholars and historians).

6. **Mazwi Vezi: How do you deal with maintenance and support? Is the artist required to provide after sale maintenance and support?**

Joanne Green: The artists we commission retain copyright of their work. They are required to allow us exclusivity for a period of three years, during which they are expected to keep the work running. After that, they are not responsible for maintaining the work, and are free to host copies of it elsewhere.

7. **Mazwi Vezi: How are you dealing with artworks that concern themselves with anti-institutionalization and non-commercialization?**

Joanne Green: By being anti-institutional and non-commercial.

Interview with Domenico Quaranta, Internet Art Curator & Lecturer, Bressia, Italy, Interviewee via e-mail communication, 25 October 2010

1. **Mazwi Vezi: I s there enough public interest in Internet Art?**

Domenico Quaranta: Let me do a premise. Your question clearly asks for an opinion. I mean, “enough” according to what? The presumed relevance of the art form? The number of relevant artworks out there? In 2008, when Ekow Eshun, the Director of the Institute of contemporary Art (ICA) in London, closed its Live and Media Arts Department, he said: «New media based arts practice continues to have its place within the arts sector. However it's my consideration that, in the main, the art form lacks the depth and cultural urgency to justify the ICA's continued and significant investment in a Live & Media Arts department». Clearly, according to Eshun, the institutional interest in media arts was even too much.

So: personally, I think that Internet Art is a relevant art form and that there are many relevant Internet Art pieces that will deserve the interest and support of an institution. Now, since a few institutions are currently developing an Internet Art program, for me this interest is not enough.

On the other side, I think that an institution can't but recognize that the Internet as a medium completely changed the world we are living in along the last ten years, and had a terrific impact on contemporary culture. So, even if they have doubts on the relevance of the art form and on the quality of the artworks, institutions should engage much more than they do in the Internet as a potential art medium. And this is not an opinion.

2. Mazwi Vezi: How is the gallery dealing with preservation and longevity of on-line and networked artworks?

Domenico Quaranta: Quite simple: it is not doing it. Actually, we have to recognize that, between 1998 and 2003, many institutions made an effort to understand and support Internet Art, and to find ways to collect and preserve it. In most of the cases, they stopped everything, and while some of them (the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the Whitney Museum in New York, the Centre Pompidou in Minneapolis, the Tate Modern in London) have still their collection available online, most of them don't. What happened to the SFMoMA's e-space? And to the New York Guggenheim's online collection?

Of course, something is happening. In 2008 INCCA (International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art) restored Olia Lialina's 1997 piece *Agatha Appears*, belonging to the collection of the Center for Culture & Communication Foundation in Budapest. The piece is still online at the original address (cfr. http://www.incca.org/resources/106-preservation/390-wysocka-e-agatha-re-

appears-net-art-resoration-project). This is a good example, but, as you can see, it is not coming from an internationally recognized museum, but from a little art center in Eastern Europe.

3. Mazwi Vezi: Despite industry initiatives in preserving Internet Art why is the collection of Internet Art slowing down? (North America and Europe)

Domenico Quaranta: I don't know if I have enough elements to answer this question. I don't know anything about the « industry initiatives in preserving Internet Art» you mention, and I'll be grateful if you can update me about them. Yet, generally speaking, I'm used to explain the low interest in collecting Internet Art as a consequence of:
- ignorance (private collectors, corporate collectors and institutions all ignore the role that Internet Art played in the art of the last decades);
- laziness (why researching how we can collect “new media”, when there is so much “old media art” waiting to be collected?
- lack of targeted founding.

4. Mazwi Vezi: Looking at latest Internet Art projects curated, has the artists strategies changed now that the Internet is more stable? What are the challenges with new Internet Art strategies, if changed?

Domenico Quaranta: I don't think the Internet is more stable now. The Internet is an ever changing environment, and even if we can perceive a slow-down in the speed of its evolution, in ten years it will probably be completely different.
That's why artists who want to be collected often try to translate the online work into offline, old media objects such as prints, videos, sculptures, installations and so on. This is not just an attempt to adapt to the art market. The fact is that the Internet – not just as an art medium, but as a cultural environment – is now part of our contemporary cultural landscape, influencing the ideas and works of artists

who are not working – and don't want to work – only online. That's why artists such as Olive Laric, Aleksandra Domanovic, Rafael Rozendaal, Harm Van Den Dorpel etc., while keeping a strong online presence, rarely show "online arworks" when they come to the exhibition space.

5. Mazwi Vezi: How are online or network artworks in your collections or under your supervision documented?

Domenico Quaranta: I can't reply this question, since I don't direct or supervise any collection.

6. Mazwi Vezi: How do you deal with maintenance and support? Is the artist required to provide after sale maintenance and support?

Domenico Quaranta: Same as above.

7. Mazwi Vezi: How are you dealing with artworks that concern themselves with anti-institutionalization and non-commercialization?

Domenico Quaranta: Same as above.

Interview with Barbara Freemantle, Chief Curator, Standards Bank Corporate Collection, Interviewee via e-mail communication, 11 October 2010

1. Mazwi Vezi: How do they determine selection criterion for on-line arts

Barbara Freemantle: NONE SPECIFICALLY FOR ON-LINE ARTS. THEY WOULD FALL IN WITH OUR GENERAL COLLECTIONS POLICY WHICH INCLUDES SOUTH AFRICAN ART BY SA ARTISTS OR BY OTHER ARTISTS HAVING SA THEMES.

2. Mazwi Vezi: What challenges are you facing in the curatorial and archival process of Internet Art? What are the solutions thus far?

Barbara Freemantle: WITH "NEW MEDIA" FOR THE CORPORATE ART COLLECTION, WE TEND TO AVOID AS WE ARE NOT ABLE TO DISPLAY EFFECTIVELY IN A CORPORATE ENVIRONMENT. IN OUR GALLERY (WHICH IS SEPARATE FROM THE CORPORATE COLLECTION AND HOUSES TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS), WE SET UP A COMPUTER.

3. Mazwi Vezi: What curatorial and archival strategies are employed in dealing with Internet Art? What are the key challenges?

Barbara Freemantle: WE DO NOT OWN AN ONLINE WORK SO HAVE NOT DEALT WITH THIS CHALLENGE YET.

4. Mazwi Vezi: How do Curators and Commissioning agents determine the price to pay for Internet art collected i.e. pricing model (is it based on the complexity of the source code or the aesthetics?)

Barbara Freemantle: UNABLE TO ANSWER AS WE ARE NOT A COMMERCIAL GALLERY.

5. Mazwi Vezi: How do you deal with submission of documentation of collected on-line art pieces?

Barbara Freemantle: WE HAVE NOT HAD ONE SINGLE SUBMISSION.

6. Mazwi Vezi: How do you deal with maintenance and support? Is the artist required to provide after sale maintenance and support? For how long?

Barbara Freemantle: WE DO NOT OWN A WORKS SO HAVE NOT HAD ANY EXPERIENCE IN THIS AREA.

Interview with Neil Dundas, Chief Curator, Interviewed at the Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, Gauteng, 10 October 2010

1. Mazwi Vezi: Is there enough public interest in Internet Art?

Neil Dundas: is an interesting thing to know about what are the possibilities to going outside of the genres that are so typically expected and that in an institutions like ours which we required kinda institution because of scale and stature partly because the public sector in arts is so underfunded and underutilized in South Africa, but really speaking we are still a commercial gallery; that's what we do, we still sell art. Apart from the fact that we might take on a project or host an exhibition where we don't expect to sell a very large percentage of works we still having to consider the bottom line. We still have to pay the expenses, pay the salaries, and sell enough to make sure the artists get an income back out of a show, after they have paid out their expenses.

On the other hand, is there enough public interest of Internet Art? South Africa is still suffering from this lag; our publics are amazingly active and involved in the art, when you produce something that they like and they want and you promote it well, but they are still years behind, decades behind, parts of the world where something like internet art has become prevalent. People here go, it this art? Literally….we think it's a cliché. so you put on that show that say interactive on a computer and people may be intrigued that this is new, and when you try to explain that its was something really new about 20 years ago, and its only so unusual here, they still don't buy it.

So we have large gap in education and that is the1st thing. And that goes for the general public. Those people, that interested audience that might watch TV programme or read the magazines are being fed same old things for the last 40 years. They are not really keeping up with the developments of the contemporary

arts. What we need to see is something like Arts South Africa really focus on trying to promote the idea that the contemporary art world is moving and shifting barriers and grow its circulation. But they can't do it on their own, it's gonna be upto all of us; those who run museums, galleries, institution, its gonna be our duty to try bring that greater public along with us, and hopefully show them that something lies behind the ides of new media.

2. Mazwi Vezi: How is the gallery dealing with preservation and longevity of on-line and networked artworks?

Neil Dundas: the commercial galleries imperatives are so different that, and probably you would have no seen a couple of shows I'm gonna mention but on the exhibition called *Nations State* that we had recently, there was an interactive work with a computer and text showing on the wall, and installation to look like a classroom, Now people were quite interested by it. But the idea that they were hoping that they would photograph it when there was an image they liked on the wall, and the place maybe had the people sitting down so that it looked like an installation. Because they've gotten somewhere far enough to say installation is some new form of art. But the idea that they have to get up there and direct the mouse, they are almost nervous of it.

The other thing that happens is that when that collective got together said initially we going to make interactive work, and showed it the first time, they found people being mischievous enough to come in and say "we gonna come in and mess with your head, we gonna hide part of your program,", where you can't find it, so you have some kind of underground who are so networked and so techno savvy that they probably haters of the artists who's creating this works. And you do expose yourself to a problem where you saying ok I'm working with this new medium, there are tech people out there who maybe don't give a damn about the artwork but who are actually quite keen to show you up as not being so techno

savvy after all; that's part of the problem in terms of preserving it you need to make sure that it is presented in such a way that people can have their interactivity and fun without messing with your work.

So, one thing that we have actually found; Sue Williamson had a work which has been exhibited here and the Joao Ferreira gallery, and interestingly enough was the first ever interactive work that we sold, but it wasn't live to the Internet. It had a certain number of live options. Think of a digital video game, already saved and archived. So what you doing is using an edition of it. And people would come up with ideas, connecting or bringing one scene into another in ways she hadn't yet played with that would give her ways of developing it……so it remained interactive to a degree and that she kept tweaking as the how went along, and the people who bought it first and the people who bought it by say the edition of 10, weren't around the show when edition 5 was sold, it still looked like the same work but it had significant differences. So each person bought an edition of something that was a little influence by what they found in it, and each one was slightly different from the other. So it has benefits that I think haven't been well exploited yet, if you say you a person we gonna sell you this edition but your edition going to be slightly different from everybody else's, it will have a unique point and you can influence what goes into your unique piece, it's a selling point that hasn't been explored.

So preservation of these things is a problem only in that only (in my view) I don't know technology well enough but what I know is you can put something on a disk or chip, they can be lost, and corrupt just as easily as your e-mail can go offline and not be back for two days, so its how to archive and how to somehow ensure that the construction of something is sufficiently safe and yet still remains interactive particularly if it's a web based art piece. Google and its kinda cyber space storage where there is no physical storage and no one thing that can get corrupted, may come up with some answer to that but I think it's still WIP. So,

perhaps part of the reason that interactive and net based work has still been viewed with suspicious even in countries where is has become more common, is this worry and sense that; is it really permanent, particularly for the buyer, is the collector going to say I'm paying this good money but whatever I'm giving or whoever influences it however long it stays on the web it will always be accessible to me and I still have the right to it, or is some clever person gonna come along and say I'm shutting it down, I'm blocking it off, or oops something just went wrong and it got corrupted.

4. Mazwi Vezi: Despite industry initiatives in preserving Internet Art why is the collection of Internet Art slowing down? (North America)

Neil Dundas: I think partly ist (again the word I would use very is "suspicion") that the Internet itself in the time of Internet wars, has changed and in the techno world has changed enough to have given people different attitudes in the last five years or so. So if you think about the dot.com boom and how the Internet itself just had suddenly seemed exponentially to expand, suddenly there was not limit to the expansion and the possibilities that were coming along. Maybe 15 – 12 yrs ago, but 10 years ago they all went burst and boomed; burst followed the boom rather. And at the same time the arts were not picking it up and you had people now arranging Internet based exhibitions in galleries or in museums certainly., commercial galleries were not really big on it. So you'd find at the Brooklyn Museum Center in New York or Tate Modern a room dedicated with a mouse and a video monitor for people to get on board and do things; working interactively sometimes with thing that were solidified and archived and sometimes with things that allowed themselves to be morphed so no hard copy and this was seen as a great boundary breaker and a great change. But what happened of course was that there was then a growing dawning perception that perhaps the dot.com and Internet base thing were not going to make people so much money, some of the

people who were supporting those initial art initiatives were people who'd made great big money in the Internet. Now they were loosing their money; so that support started to filter away.

And people looking say okay, if you are a museum and there isn't a lot of private collecting support for this sort of work, can we get the museums to be the repositories, can they preserve it, house it, safeguard it in some way. How then do you take up a room with work that depends on technology that goes obsolete every couple of years, so you've moved to CD ROM to then small video chip card to now small solid state players, it's a very interesting problem. In that you sell something to someone that is based with technology; the technology is obsolete every six months to a year, they are continued having to pay more money for to keep it at its most up-to-date point; for a work that is so ephemeral in nature that if it is really Internet based and people can add to it, change it, obliterate it, as they go along, you own no tangible assets that may eventually is still going to have the value the way you first saw it and that I think bred a kind of suspicion that of people saying we could end up loosing a lot of money in this. I think the experimental nature and the wider audience has allowed at least for the genre to continue but the bigger collections, are saying until somebody comes up with a proper solution or that is gonna be a better solution, technologically, and someway of saying that maybe in cyberspace its preserves almost in like a "state" of an ancient plate; as you add more details, but you've got a record of what has happened, that hasn't been solved. There are people that have tried to address some of these issues, but there is still a lot missing in terms of what probably motives collections and private collections and museums probably look at the same kinds of thing.

5. Mazwi Vezi: Looking at latest Internet Art projects curated, has the artists strategies changed now that the Internet is more stable? What are the challenges with new Internet Art strategies, if changed?

Neil Dundas:

6. Mazwi Vezi: How are online or network artworks in your collections or under your supervision documented?

Neil Dundas: hat we've tried to do with something like that, and the artist strategies are connected into that. The imperative has to directed by a number of things; we need to educate the public, we need to educate the artist, so that the people that are working with it need to keep themselves at the cutting urge of technology if they are going to be successful in marketing works that is based in technology

Then finally museums and the collections should be convinced that what they acquire is something that has longevity that can gather value and be preserved safely. That could mean having good digital archive as well as master tapes maybe 3 or 4 different ways of archiving, so that no one thing means the destruction of all the material. And also perhaps something that is genuinely interactive as allows new input all the time, that it is backed –up and saved and added on its archive on a monthly basis, its especially if its in a museum or gallery. At the moment I don't know anybody who's been doing this. I have heard that at the Walker Arts Museum there have been talks about this and the Rotterdam video museum are looking at things like interactive video based on *youtube* based, now the question is how big the archive , what are the costs involved and who pays, and that's get very scary. So there are talks about trying to bring some kind of a commercial thing, that instead of a gaming arcade maybe you an internet online art arcade, but have people come along and feed the slots

with their coins for the rights to play and interact, add their 5cents worth to the piece. If some marketing person can came up with some way of making it that addictive and that fun, then we can grow an audience, and then we can grow a way of saying there will be a new version every year of this work because it will come-out as a DVD and it will be permanently archived and re-archived, and updated there will always be an opportunity to look at the older version if one wants to. We need to get inventive enough to think out of the box if we are to ask artists to find a way to store it and market it.

7. Mazwi Vezi Have you curated Internet based art?

Neil Dundas: No not really, however my colleague Mark Storeman in Cape Town curated two state shows which involved two interactive works, I was involved in the Sure Williamson wanting to do an interactive piece but I had little or no knowledge and she really had to be her own boss in making it. But we've had only a handful in our gallery that I can recall the only interactive work that we have sold is Sue's. Some of the others have been be important; they have been borrowed in exhibitions, museums, but not sold, so that commercial underlying problem still remains.

8. Mazwi Vezi: How do you deal with maintenance and support? Is the artist required to provide after sale maintenance and support?

Neil Dundas: We are about to complete an installation of the work by Minnette Vari from Nedbank in Sandton. The work is in one of the lift lobbing in one of the new Nedbank Head Quarters building. This is in a series of screens that are mounted inside a cabinet; so its presented very formally as a king of bow front end, wooden cabinet, with a very beautiful glossy finish on it and round pot-holes, but behind each of those is the VDU screen. And she has made a randomized

program, so it will only be interactive in that might sense someone coming in and it might speed up, change and send re-randomized images that are circulated through those potholes I think there are 9 screens, but its fully archived, saved work of digital video making. It uses fine art archived data.

So Nedbank had to commit to something that for them was a major step in terms on new media, to get a bank to even consider work like this, so they had to put a dedicated temperature control, air-conditioned, humidity control room with has got all the solid state player, memory cards and houses the computer that runs the randomized programme,. And they've had to sign a contract to agree to maintain, so we've had to put into the purchase price that Minnette will remain involved in that and that we have a service company who is able to do that but its also has to be acceptable that even a solid state player will have a fine art life. So it might be that in six to eight year that may be replace those. And by then the new technology might be more advanced and have to place every three years. But they have to agree to do that, now being the bank and having the institutional budget they are prepared to but even museums probably will not because their budgets are so limited. And they can't be guaranteed of getting money from the state next year as big as this year. The Pretoria art museum for example is funded by the city, and the council of Tswana and they has chosen to keep the museum alive and the staff running, but have not given any acquisition budget or anything to ass in like performance, so they is no budget to pay for artists etc.

Minnette has had to guarantee that she will remain involved that she is happy to sign and say we still keeping the work running the way it's supposed to. There are problems with that eventually in that people do get old. A Nedbank's collection was started about 46 years ago in the next 46 years things are going to change a great deal in terms of the techno base of the works they've bought and how its maintained and the costs are going to escalate not go down.

People at museum collections are very afraid of being branded in 20, 30 years time…ooh they did this foolishly without thinking about the future, this is supposed to be preserved in some public trust or held for the public of the future but in a 100 years it won't be able to be shown, so those are all issues, so I suppose some means of understanding how digitisation can be archived in the way that can be constantly be reinvented and updated comes down to being the main basic point that will help drive a kind of collection, public money, institutional interest and finally the public education that will help in keeping the art alive.

Interview with Antoinette Murdoch, Chief Curator, Interviewed at the Johannesburg Arts Gallery, Johannesburg, Gauteng, 01 October 2010

1. Mazwi Vezi: Is there enough public interest in Internet Art?

Antoinette Murdoch: currently there are not any artists that I can think of within the last several months of all the shows that I've seen in Joburg there wasn't digital art. Its definitely not a big thing, we are not confronted with it all the time, even video work there isn't a lot of it out there in south Africa. Possibly because artists themselves are scared of creating it because they know that there is no market for it, or possibly that we are still intimidated by it, but most certainly JAG has always moved with the times we have some of the most progressive works like the Nathaniel Stern work which is software based, and sound piece by James Web which has all those restricting and challenges. So we have always pride ourselves in that we've kept up with what the trends were. We had a committee meeting yesterday and a question was asked, what you all seen lately that we should possibly look at purchasing. Nothing that was discussed was digital art, and I'm talking about the wide variety of people sitting in that committee representing the contemporary genre and nobody mentioned anything about digital art.

2. Mazwi Vezi: How is the gallery dealing with preservation and longevity of on-line and networked artworks?

Antoinette Murdoch: That is not unusual to any art form because an oil painting is not stable in itself, it changes; any medium changes within itself. The only problem that we sit with now is that an oil painting life span is x number of year, and contemporary day printing photography has a shorter life span, now digital art has even more shorter life span, but its not a new phenomena or unique to new media.

4. Mazwi Vezi: Despite industry initiatives in preserving Internet Art why is the collection of Internet Art slowing down? (North America)

Antoinette Murdoch: Funding, maybe the problem. What is the price range for it? Nathaniel Stern piece was purchased with the Apple Mac computer that it was on. The apple Mac as it is at the storage with the software. I haven't exhibited it in the year and a half I've been here this but it's not my call always, its different curators come in, there hasn't been anybody saying I want to exhibit that Nathaniel piece per se'. The gallery might have bought a piece 10 years ago and it has not been in a show simple because it was never part of the genre that there was an exhibition about that and it wasn't a piece that was called on, but if we as a collecting committee do a good job then the pieces that we collect should be, every now and then coming out of the, but like I say that restriction I don't think its limited just to digital work, but I can honestly say that I have a little bit of an anxiety attack if I think about having to take that piece out and exhibiting it because although the artist have written everything that we require to know,

5. Mazwi Vezi: Looking at latest Internet Art projects curated, has the artists strategies changed now that the Internet is more stable? What are the challenges with new Internet Art strategies, if changed?

Antoinette Murdoch:

6. Mazwi Vezi: How are online or network artworks in your collections or under your supervision documented?

Antoinette Murdoch: We have done projects where people from different countries use blogs to share outcomes of public programme, using the Internet as the medium.

7. Mazwi Vezi: Seeing that JAG has not showcased Internet Art, has JAG used the Internet as a medium in other exhibitions?

Antoinette Murdoch: JAG has not bought Internet art before, that's as far as I know, we would have to confirm with the registrar of the gallery. However we have used it as a medium in the gallery for projects such as the *one square mile* project; where it was an outreach project in the park that involved a lot of young people. Everyday they were asked to go directly online and upload their experiences. People were encouraged to make use of this method of communication with other countries where the project was also taking place. But we found it very restrictive and in that specific case it was because it was jot a very user friend site. People tried to use it but it wasn't user friendly.

This is not the only project that the gallery has done. Since I've been in the gallery with the gallery this is the only one I can recall however before I got here there was definitely a internet based project/stations set-up in the foyer. The biggest set-back was the fact that it was not user friendly especially on the level it

was pitched; the youth. Because we are situated in the Joburg Park and the kind of youth we have in this gallery is not digitally savvy enough to navigate their way through the piece.

The problems that we experience in general with any kind of technical work that requires any kind of technology, I can imagine the same kind of problems will apply for Internet artwork is that; it goes off line, it's not always working, there are power cuts, and there are so many restrictions. I can understand why museums stay clear of it. I'm humbly admitting that I'm, not the biggest fan of any technological work because it is so complicated to set up and to keep.

So this works lend itself where one cannot view the artwork in two year time because of software incompatibilities.

Interview with Joasia Krysa, Chief Curator, Interviewed through e-mail communication 05 November 2010

1. Mazwi Vezi: Is there enough public interest in Internet Art?

Joasia Krysa: There is still a lot of attention to Internet Art even though the practice was most prominent in the late 90's and early 2000. It was when artists started experimenting with the medium when some of the most interesting work was created (for example by artists such as Jodi, Alexei Shulgin, etc). Today, the attention to Internet Art is through the wider field which can be broadly described as art –technology or Digital Art, and the practice itself is shaped by developments in technology (for instance the rise of social technologies) and new forms of communication. Internet Art, or more broadly Digital Art, entered public and private art institutions such as Whitney Museum of American Art (Artport portal), Tate Britain in London (for instance the exhibition 'Art Now: Art and Money Online' in 2001), etc and there are examples of commercial galleries (for

example Bitform Gallery in New York) and commercial art fairs (such as ARCO International Contemporary Art Fair in Madrid) exhibiting net art. Arco is an interesting example as for over the decade it has been exhibiting digital art (including Net Art) in their dedicated section 'Black Box' showing key artists the field such as Ubermorgen in 2009, Jodi in 2010, etc. There are also dedicated awards and prizes established to stimulate and promote the field – for example ARCO/Vocento 2.0 award (Madrid, Spain).

2. Mazwi Vezi: How is the gallery dealing with preservation and longevity of on-line and networked art works?

Joasia Krysa: I work as an independent curator and run an online curatorial agency and a research platform Kurator. This is different from a public art institution or a gallery where the issues of collection and preservation might be part of their remit. In my practice we host online works as simply links or documentation so the preservation is on the side of artists. However, with the rapidly changing technology, hardware and software, the issue of preservation is of a great importance and there are regular conferences and research in this area. For example there were lengthy discussions on this subject on for instance CRUMB discussion list.

3. Mazwi Vezi: Despite industry initiatives in preserving Internet Art why is the collection of Internet Art slowing down? (North America and Europe)

Joasia Krysa: I'm not specifically aware of this issue but if indeed the collection of Internet Art is slowing that might be to do with number of factors. For instance this might be not only to do with the issues of technology but also to do with cultural policies and economic concerns.

4. Mazwi Vezi: Looking at latest Internet Art projects curated, has the artists strategies changed now that the Internet is more stable? What are the challenges with new Internet Art strategies, if changed?

Joasia Krysa: The Internet is indeed more stable and more widely available, and there are advancements in technologies (such as already mentioned social technologies) that provide artists with new platforms and forms of experimentation. There is a lot interesting critical work that deals with emerging technologies; work that examines relationships between new platforms or tools and a wider social, political and economic context. The challenge is to remain critical and experimental now when 'anything goes' even more than ever.

5. Mazwi Vezi: How are online or network artworks in your collections or under your supervision documented?

Joasia Krysa: Normally, we would include a contextual information about the work and artist(s), the work itself or a link to an external page where the work is hosted, this is often – depending on the nature of the project - accompanied by visual material such as images, videos or sound files. We try to provide as much contextual information as possible.

6. Mazwi Vezi: How do you deal with maintenance and support? Is the artist required to provide after sale maintenance and support?

Joasia Krysa: Kurator does not deal with selling art works but commissioning and/or presenting. After the work has been exhibited the copyright remains with the artist(s) and hence also the responsibility for maintaining the work. I would imagine that in a commercial scenario this is stipulated in a contract outlining responsibility of the institution and the artist. For example, from my own experience of being involved in the ARCO/Vocento 2.0 prize, the awarded project

would be normally maintained by the artist for a period of a year and thereafter became the responsibility of the Vocento.

7. Mazwi Vezi: How are you dealing with artworks that concern themselves with anti-institutionalization and non-commercialization?

Joasia Krysa: In my curatorial practice I am particularly interested in critical works and Kurator encourages and promotes critical work and critical research. One could risk trivialism of saying that this is critical work that drives development of the field and offers the basis for an engaged dialogue and thinking.

E-mail Communication from Tegan Bristow received on 31.01.2011

Hope you are well. I have a very important question I need to ask you. I've been trying to get hold of you on your cell and office and am not getting any response. Sorry I was unavailable from Thursday but am back.

I need your advice with regards to adding commentary on the research paper. I'm busy with my comparative study, and as I was drafting my comparison and recommendation for SA that the 2009 Johannesburg arts fair that we attended speaks to some of the curatorial models and modes of presentation I've referred to in chapter 2. My questions is, am I allowed to reference my personal experience at the art fair? how I saw the audience engaging with exhibited artworks? challenges identified with the exhibition, specifically in relation to presenting net based art?
Yes but it has to be very specific observations - and you need to describe carefully your role there.

if yes, I would be very happy coz I have started drafting good point (I think)...the challenge is that all institutions in my study have never really had a successful exhibition for net based artworks and I think the 2009 art fair could a be a great place.
Good.

Second question, if I do add my experience and observations at the art fair how do I reference this?
You need to just state your role and in the context of the points you want to make it's a little like field research.
If am allowed to add this experience, can you please provide me with the following information.

Okay - you can ask me as the curator very specific questions as long as there is a transcript (- so yes you can ask me more if you need to).

I'm going to answer the following two questions together:
Who sponsored all the technology?

How did you secure funding? or did Artrope provide financial support? (
I'm not sure who you mean by Artrope?

A company called Core (Apple Mac suppliers in South Africa) lent us the iMacs for the exhibition period. It was considered advertising for Apple Mac products.

The project was labeled a "special project" for the Joburg Art Fair. But the support from The Joburg Art Fair organizers *Art Logic* was very rudimentary. *Art Logic* supported our Internet line and costs, there was wireless being broadcast for the press office so we piggy backed on that. Additionally *Art Logic* did not expect us to pay for stall space at the art fair and they also supplied us with furniture. The furniture was an extension of the book store stand designed specifically for the Joburg Art Fair in 2009 by Notion Architects.

As the project was partly research and was being organized through the Digital Arts Division of the Wits School of Arts (also the location for Upgrade Joburg). I was able to secure a small amount of money from the University as Ad Hoc Research funding - with this money I was able to pay for a designer to make up the organizing website for the project.

Who was responsible to setting up the computer including network connections?
Volunteers (staff and students) from the Digital Arts Division of the Wits School of Arts helped to install the computers and set them up for public viewing.

These could be one line responses as I do have most of the information since I was involved.

It looks like I will be able to send you a final draft copy by Monday 31.01.2011. I'm making great progress and think the report is looking a lot better.

Hope you have a good day and weekend ahead.

Okay look forward to reading a final draft - so get it to me when you know you are ready.

Thanks,
Tegan