



SANTA FE:

New Partners and New Media

With SITE offering a new collaboration, and the emergence of “Currents,” Santa Fe embraces conceptual art and new media

By Michael Abatemarco

If you can imagine being inside a painting by American Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein, moving through a world of patterns and colors and slowly shifting planes, you might approximate the feeling you get when watching German artist Gerhard Mantz high definition video *Irreducible Aspect*. Mantz’s hypnotic video, in which checkerboard patterns and planes of solid color appear to change position in relation to one another, is like the interior of an architectural space whose walls are always moving and whose structure can, thus never be truly defined. Mantz’s video installation is one of many examples of the new media work that will be inundating Santa Fe this summer as part of “Currents 2012,” an annual international festival of new media.

FROM TOP:

“Big Bio,” 2011, **Eileen Reynolds**, SINGLE CHANNEL VIDEO STILL

PHOTO: COURTESY PARALLEL STUDIOS

“No Place Like UTOPIA,” 2009, **Matthew Kluber**

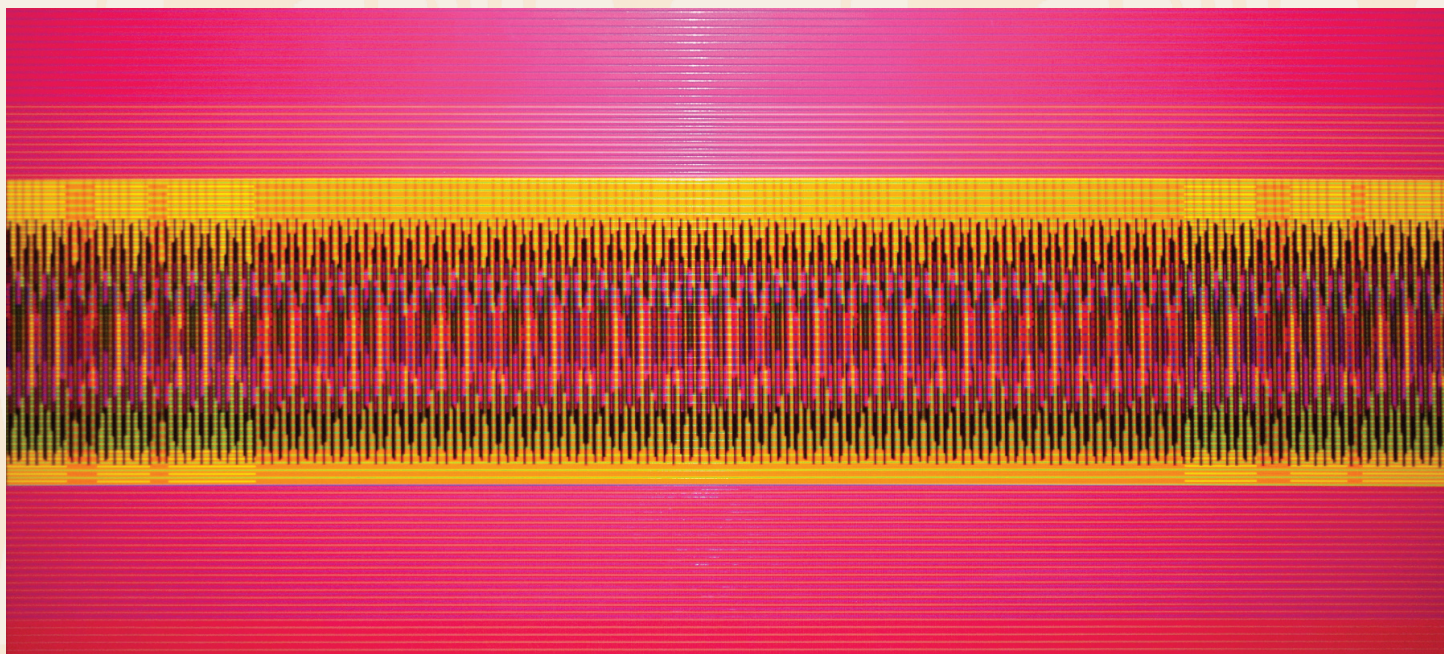
ALKYD ON ALUMINUM, CUSTOM SOFTWARE, COMPUTER, DIGITAL PROJECTION

44" X 96" PHOTO: COURTESY ZANE BENNETT CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY

Right on its heels, SITE Santa Fe opens “More Real? Art in the Age of Truthiness,” a collaboration with the Minneapolis Institute of Art, an international exhibit of multi-media works.

While SITE Santa Fe’s international biennial has been a staple of the art scene in Santa Fe since the institution first opened its doors in 1995, this summer brings with it a new focus for SITE, one that is no less ambitious than the previous events on which it has built its reputation. For SITE’s collaboration with MIA on “More Real?” the institute has shifted gears. With “More Real?” and “Currents 2012” leading the way, Santa Fe again asserts itself as a vital center for contemporary art. Both the new media festival and the SITE exhibition bring recognized and emerging artists to Santa Fe while maintaining the community-based spirit that separates Santa Fe from its counterparts in larger art centers.

SITE’s partnership with the Minneapolis Institute of Art reflects a new reality in the competitive art world: one where outreach and collaborations





"PHANTOM TRUCK," 2007
Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle
 INSTALLATION VIEW AT DOCUMENTA 12
 ON VIEW AT SITE SANTA FE
 PHOTO: BARBARA SAX/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

between institutions nets them greater public awareness and exciting possibilities. For Elizabeth Armstrong, MIA's Curator of Contemporary Art, "More Real?" represents an opportunity to bring a different kind of show to her museum. "The early vision of it was that it was going to have a lot of new commissions, challenging work, large-scale installations—all things that were very new for her institution," says SITE Santa Fe's Phillips Director and Chief Curator Irene Hofmann. "Elizabeth approached me as a partner who could really help with all the details of working with living artists. That's something she knows very well but she's in an institution for whom this was all quite new."

SITE's experience with contemporary artists, by contrast, has been its backbone. But the chance to mount a full-scale traveling show is unfamiliar territory for SITE, unlike larger encyclopedic museums like MIA, so the partnership is mutually beneficial. "We have experience with new commissions, with technology and with putting together exhibitions with this number of artists," says Hoffman. "More Real?" includes work by Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei, Vik Muniz, Thomas Demand, Leandro Erlich, Cao Fei, John Gerrard, Pierre Huyghe, An-My Le, Joel Lederer, Sharon Lockhart, Feng Mengbo, Raqs Media Collective, Seung Woo Back, Eve Sussman, David Wilson, and others. Ai Weiwei, a vocal critic of the Chinese Government, is currently under a form of house arrest in Beijing.

"More Real?" gets the second half of its title, "Art in the Age of Truthiness" from a term coined by comedian Stephen Colbert and refers to things that seem true but are not necessarily true. Colbert used the term in reference to the decisions given by the US government to invade Iraq in 2003—reasons widely seen now as misleading. One piece in the exhibition, Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle's *Phantom Truck*, relates specifically to misinformation regarding Iraq's alleged plan to

build weapons of mass destruction with oblique references to former Secretary of State Colin Powell's address to the United Nations in 2003—a speech that made the case for war. Manglano-Ovalle's installation is among the larger works in "More Real?" It's an immersive experience relying on low lighting conditions and the eye's natural ability to adjust to the light to create a slow reveal. The truck, transported to SITE from an exhibition overseas, is assembled on site by a team of preparators and references the movement of materials for the making of weapons, a smoking gun in the Iraq war that was never found.

Other installations include chromogenic prints by Thomas Demand that appear to capture the interior of state rooms in the White House but, on careful inspection, prove to be not what they seem. Demand's carefully constructed ruse is accomplished by building sets out of paper. "More Real?" is all about appearances. In that, it's a highly conceptual exhibition that seems eager, but not too eager, to give up its secrets, requiring a certain amount of critical analysis and discernment on the part of the visitor to be successful. Leandro Erlich's *Stuck Elevator*, for instance, looks like an elevator stuck between floors. Erlich's deception is accomplished with mirrors. The illusion is so successful that it seems like a real, working elevator descending to, or ascending from, a lower floor on the premises but one need only look at the building from the outside to see that SITE only has one floor.

While "More Real?" seems to represent a move away from the international biennial, it is a chance for SITE to focus on a new model for international shows. SITE has always maintained an exhibit schedule in-between biennials, and while many of them—including the recent "Time-Lapse" mounted earlier this year—have garnered critical success, they have also received less attention than the biennials outside of Santa Fe. As a multi-venue project, debuting at SITE, the institution hopes to reach a larger audience. "This is on a scale that matches most recent SITE biennials on half the budget," says Hoffman.

“New Mexico has a history of art and science,” says Ragano. “‘Currents’ represents these coming together. Many of the video artists have backgrounds as scientists or as programmers.”

“To be able to do a show that’s not a biennial that has this kind of weight and importance is part of our bigger plan because people don’t really know us other than as a biennial venue and that is a really big concern. So defining our exhibition program at a higher level all year round is a main priority.”

“More Real? Art in the Age of Truthiness” opens at SITE on July 8, where it will remain on view through January; the show then travels to the Minneapolis Institute of Art in March 2013.

Opening night for “More Real?” coincides with the closing weekend of “Currents 2012,” the international exhibit of new media that opens June 22 and runs through July 8. No less of an ambitious undertaking, the annual new media festival is a labor of love by its organizers at Parallel Studios, Frank Ragano and Mariannah Amster. With no staff other than temporary hires and volunteers to help mount the exhibit mere days before it opens to the public, Ragano and Amster manage the Herculean task of coordinating a large-scale, multi-venue fair that is community based, and far-reaching in scope.

“NOTIONAL FIELD,” 2011

Annica Cupetelli AND Cristobal Mendoza

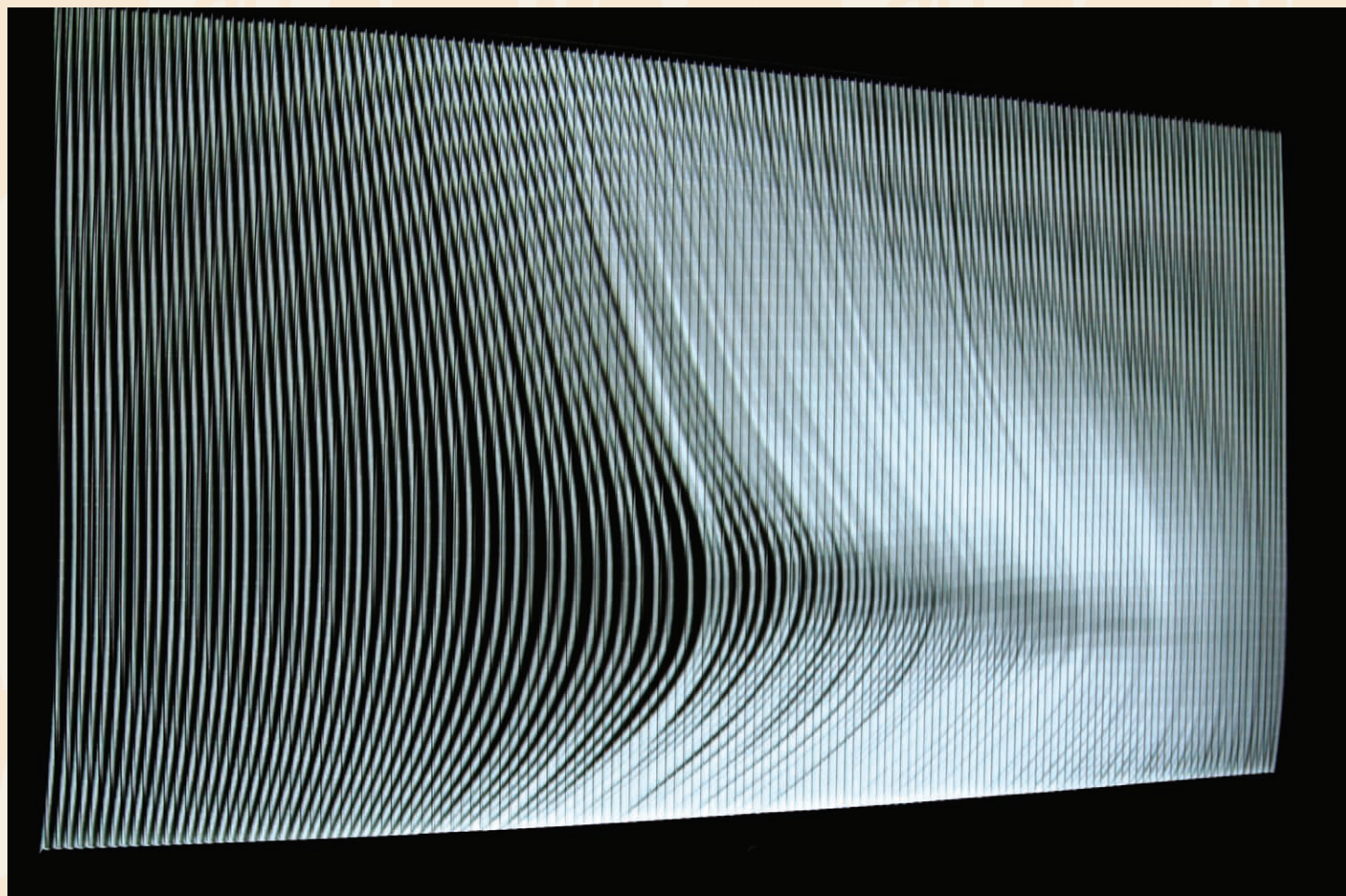
INTERACTIVE INSTALLATION STILL

PHOTO: COURTESY PARALLEL STUDIOS

“That community involvement is important to us,” says Amster. “We’re very community oriented.”

Ragano and Amster see video, a main component of “Currents,” represented in multi- and single-channel work, as a bridge medium. Not only is it being embraced more and more by galleries such as Zane Bennett, where video installation artist Matthew Kluber is showing his *No Place Like Utopia* (2009)—essentially living paintings on which digital projections transforms the typical gallery experience into something more dynamic—but it is also a major component of social media, now an everyday part of our lives. Zane Bennett, in conjunction with “Currents,” is hosting a panel discussion on June 24 on the topic of social media and art. Participants include design strategist and researcher An Xiao Mina, gallerist Sandy Zane; exhibitor and social media advocate Kianga Ellis; and Vince Kadlubek of Meow Wolf, a collective of artists and musicians who mount full-scale installations and performances in Santa Fe.

Among the most significant landscapes in which new media plays a key role, two are central to the state’s identity: that of art and that of science. “New Mexico has a history of art and science,” says Ragano. “‘Currents’ represents these coming together. Many of the video artists have backgrounds as scientists or as programmers.”





"Pool," 2011
Fernanda D'Agostino
 INSTALLATION STILL
 PHOTO: COURTESY PARALLEL STUDIOS

The list of participating artists in this growing festival is staggering. At El Museo Cultural de Santa Fe, where a majority of activities is taking place, visitors can see installations by Santa Fe's own Susanna Carlisle and Bruce Hamilton, Madeleine Coit, and Flame Schon, as well as international artists representing Germany, Australia, Singapore, and Great Britain among others. Included in the lineup, British artist Sophie Clements presents *There, After* (2011) and her single channel video *Turn the Tide* (2005), essentially a music video for hip hop band Dizraeli that incorporates inventive visuals. What appears to be a projection of the band on a sheet of office paper remains visible to the viewer, as the stack grows larger then shorter in a stop motion effect. Clements used 5639 sheets of paper in its production. Other participating venues include the Santa Fe University of Art and Design and the Center for Contemporary Arts Santa Fe (CCA) where video artists Cristobal Mendoza and Annica Cuppetelli will be exhibiting, as well as Albuquerque multi-media artist Mary Tsiongas. CCA also hosts a series of experimental documentaries, curated by Paul Marcus in conjunction with Currents. The documentary program includes work by Michele Guieu, Andy Birtwistle, and Brennan Conaway whose film "Trajectory" depicts a needle-in-a-haystack search for a bullet fired at the horizon with no defined target. "Trajectory" is one of 13 films presented at CCA between July 1-3.

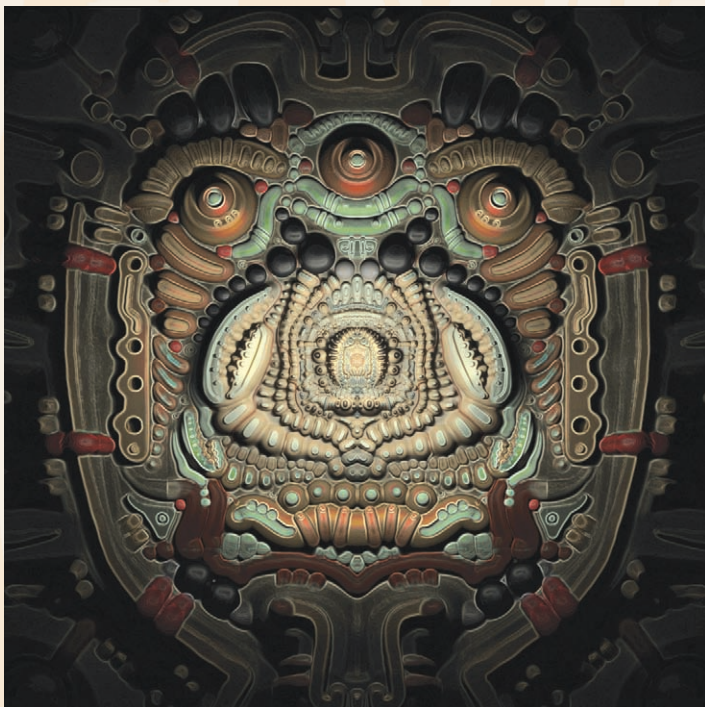
As if the events at El Museo and CCA were not enough, a presentation at the Institute of American Indian Arts Digital Dome—the world's first fully articulated dome—features seven projects by 10 artists, including Scott Andrew's *Splashing the Void*, a three-channel video installation normally arranged as free-standing screens between which a visitor enters to be immersed in the experience of traveling through an inter-dimensional portal. The Digital Dome's conical interior offers the perfect environment for such work. Also at the Dome, Massachusetts-based artist Ben Ridgway presents his *Continuum Infinitum*, a kaleidoscopic, mandala-like digital animation, played as a continuous loop. Like the worlds created by artist and set designer H.R. Giger, Ridgway's trance-inducing experimental animation seems inspired equally by the industrial and organic. At the center of Ridgway's animation is a still point from which fine details emanate. Imagine watching the "star gate" sequence of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* while inside a dome, thereby plunging you fully into the experience, and you get some idea.

Meanwhile, back at El Museo, an ongoing project involving around 30 videos made by students from six area schools offers visitors a chance to see how new media has been embraced in the art curriculums in New Mexico. The project is in keeping with "Currents'" community-based programming. Throughout the run of "Currents," there will be multi-media performances by composer Chris Jonas in collaboration with TILT, a New York City brass quartet, and soundscape artist Surabhi Saraf, to name a few. For a full list of participating artists, venues, performers, and a schedule of events visit www.currentsnewmedia.org.

For Ragano and Amster, the greatest challenges to mounting an exhibit the size and scope of "Currents" are the logistics. Parallel Studios' outreach to museums, colleges, and galleries involves securing the loan of a great number of projectors, flat panel screens, and iMacs, not to mention the volunteers needed to put it all together, including audio/visual technicians with the skills to make it professional. In addition to the technical needs are the space requirements. For the participating venues, it's a time commitment and it's a credit to Amster and Ragano's drive and enthusiasm, that they are able to pull it off, year after year. "We'd like to see Santa Fe become a center for new media," said Ragano. Amster added, "We work seven days a week year round. We don't have days off."

Those for whom the taste of new media offered by "Currents" is not enough have an opportunity to experience more this fall when ISEA2012, the 18th International Symposium on Electronic Art, opens in Albuquerque in late September.

While summer is still in full swing, Art Santa Fe promises to continue the international flair. "The City Different's" homegrown art fair, now in its 12th year, continues to be a venue for contemporary galleries from all over the world, even as far as Afghanistan, to present their artists to an American audience. Like "Currents," Art Santa Fe, which opens mid-July has evolved into an annual event in recent years, suggesting that Santa Fe, like its larger urban cousins on both coasts, is a place for viewing more than just landscapes, more than the boots and saddles that characterize so much of Western art. "Currents 2012" and SITE, in particular, mark this small destination city as a place for the cutting edge, the intellectually challenging, and the new.



"CONTINUUM INFINITUM," 2012

Ben Ridgway, 3D DIGITAL ANIMATION

ON VIEW AT THE IAIA DIGITAL DOME DURING CURRENT 2012

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

"STUCK ELEVATOR," 2011

Leandro Erlich

MIXED MEDIA, METAL STRUCTURE, WOOD, STAINLESS STEEL, MIRRORS, BUTTON PANEL, AIRBRUSH PAINTING

109½" x 68¼" x 66½" EDITION OF 5 WITH 2 APs

ON VIEW AT SITE SANTA FE

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COURTESY: SEAN KELLY GALLERY, NEW YORK

