

ISSUES IN INTEGRATIVE STUDIES
No. 17, pp 55-72 (1999)

INTERMEDIATION: Arts' Contribution to General Integrative Theory

by
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Abstract: Intermediation approaches integration via medium, as does interdisciplinarity via field/content, while both involve concerns of method/ology. "Media" are distinguished by the perceptual acts required for their constitution (cf McLuhan, 1964) - by the relationship to the body which they institute. Intermediation integrates, without eliminating, multiple perceptual acts and bodily relationships. Thus hypertext tends not to be an inter-medium, because its output is usually in one medium (video or print), while classrooms are almost always inter-media of print, spatio/temporal design, performance, and imagery (Carp, 1991). Artists, designers, and anthropologists of material culture have most thoroughly and consistently investigated intermediation. Artists and designers adopt intermediation as a communicative strategy; anthropologists posit intermediation as a site for cultural resistance, post-colonial creativity and non-Eurocentric wisdoms.

In 1964 Marshall McLuhan announced that "the medium is the message" and ushered in the age of information before most of us even noticed the coming electronic revolution. Clarifying this oracular aphorism in the second edition to *Understanding Media*, McLuhan admonished us to "study media as bringing about new perceptual habits" (p. viii). "[T]he media," he remarked, because they are "extensions of our senses institute new ratios, not only among our private senses, but among themselves, when they interact among themselves" (p. 61). McLuhan's assertion that the relationship of the senses to one another (sense ratios) is not invariant, but plastic, is validated by recent work in the anthropology of sensation, which shows that different cultures experience the world in different sense ratios, and that the "same" culture undergoes transformations of sense ratios over time. (See, e.g., Howes, ed., 1991; Classen, 1993; Seremetakis, ed., 1996; Stoller, 1997.)

McLuhan contended that a new medium creates an environment that surrounds and contexts the previously dominant medium that it supplants; this old medium becomes the “content” of the new medium. Thus speech became the content of writing, while writing became the content of film and film became the content of television. With the introduction of the electronic revolution, which in 1964 included only telephones, telegraph, radio, television and large-scale computers, but which now includes “personal” computers, computer networks, and virtual realities, McLuhan claimed that “. . . a totally new environment has been created. The ‘content’ of this new environment is the old mechanized environment of the industrial age” (p. ix).

McLuhan identified the “old mechanized environment” with fragmentation, specialization and individualism, and the new electronic environment with interdependence, connectivity and involvement (p. 220).¹ One could interpret the emergence of the Association of Integrative Studies twenty years ago and the increasing importance of integrative and interdisciplinary work since then as results of the electronic revolution McLuhan heralded.

Yet the theory and practice of integrative intellectual activity has remained largely naive of McLuhan’s insights regarding the significance of media themselves. The one arena in which serious investigation into media has occurred, not surprisingly, is the arts, in which a variety of hybrid forms have emerged along with an even larger variety of ongoing hybridizing experiments. Along with these forms there has been a substantial amount of theory generated as well.

On the whole, integrative intellectual activity remains an *ad hoc* enterprise, lacking convincing theoretical articulations as to its nature, procedures, methods, data and significance. One purpose of the Association for Integrative Studies is to further the development of theoretical discourse which can adequately found and critique interdisciplinary activity. I want to suggest that intentionally connecting distinct media is at least as important to integrative work as linking disparate disciplines or methods, and that we can turn to the arts for important insights into this process, which I call *intermediation*.

There are at least three issues that deserve our attention:

1. the general transformation of communication, thought and the body wrought by the electronic revolution;
2. the specific character of various media and their relationships to the body;
3. intermediation itself and its relationship to interdisciplinarity, polymethodism and integration as intellectual objectives.

1. The general transformation of communication, thought and the body wrought by the electronic revolution

One need not accept McLuhan's prophetic and bombastic statements uncritically to appreciate the radical insight expressed in his overall philosophy of media history. What McLuhan understood with unerring accuracy was that a medium requires certain physical and psychological acts in its use, acts which prior to the introduction of the medium had been occasional and peripheral but which, after the medium's ascendancy, become frequent and central.

For example, speech is inherently social, requiring at least aural presence and incorporating the possibility of interchange. Reading/writing, on the other hand, is implicitly solitary and unidirectional, a fact that slowly emerged as communicators became literate themselves, rather than hiring scribes to take dictation on one end and recite on the other.² Eventually, the rise of writing as the predominant medium in the west led to the creation of the "private" person, "separate individuals equal before a written code of law" (p. 86). This mode of experience enabled us to analyze the world and our economic processes, to separate their elements, and to rearrange them in linear sequences. Mechanism was inherent in alphabetic writing (first emerging in Gutenberg's press), and private individualism was inherent in mechanical industry which "found vehement assertion of private outlook the natural mode of expression" (p. 21).³

Moreover, there are different forms of writing. McLuhan believed it was crucial that the west developed alphabetic rather than ideographic writing, for in phonetic alphabets, "semantically meaningless letters are used to correspond to semantically meaningless sounds" creating a "sudden breach between . . . auditory and . . . visual experience" (p. 86). This has two profound effects. First, because of the social nature of speech, speakers and listeners respond to a wide range of information, including tone and gesture; even when one speaks one responds to one's own tonal and somatic manifestations. On the other hand, writing is more separate and specialist, with little opportunity for reaction. Thus literate "society develops the tremendous power of acting in any matter with considerable detachment from . . . feelings or emotional involvement . . ." (p. 82-83). Second, because of the discrete and linear character of phonetically written language, we came to experience the world itself as discrete and linear. McLuhan remarks:

. . . consciousness is regarded as the mark of a rational being, yet there is nothing lineal or sequential about the total field of awareness that

exists in any moment of consciousness. Consciousness is not a verbal process. Yet during all our centuries of phonetic literacy we have favored the chain of inference as the mark of logic and reason. Chinese writing, in contrast, invests each ideogram with a total intuition of being and reason that allows only a small role to visual sequence as a mark of mental effort and organization. In Western literate society it is still plausible and acceptable to say that something “follows” from something, as if there were some cause at work that makes such a sequence. . . [despite Hume’s demonstration] that there is no causality indicated in any sequence, natural or logical (p. 87).

Although McLuhan made a number of predictions, many of which have proved accurate, no one could anticipate the many effects of a new medium, which insinuate their way into the cultural matrix over centuries or millennia. We are, after all, beginning the second century after the introduction of the telegraph, which ushered in the opening phases of the electric revolution. However, to the extent that media are messages, and that Integrative Study is concerned with messages, we must be concerned with the significance of media. To the extent that electronic media define the new information environment, we must be conscious of and reflective about their meaning (not just their use). McLuhan never tired of reminding us that we can only moderate or direct the impacts of media if we are aware of them. As we will see below, intermediation is one method of simultaneously becoming aware of media while moderating and directing their impacts. There are three directions in which these investigations need to be carried out, directions I can only mention here.

The first is an understanding of the ways in which, and the extent to which, the impulse to integration is itself an artifact of electronic media. McLuhan believed that “the aspiration of our time for wholeness, empathy and depth of awareness is a natural adjunct of electric technology” (p. 21). Insight into this dynamic does not vitiate the importance or power of integrative study, but it does provide a critique of its sources and limitations.

The second is an appreciation of the extent to which the Academy, its structures of knowledge, its disciplinary histories, and the personality types who emerge within it, are artifacts of writing/reading. Such insight is necessary to prepare us for the transformations required for the emergence of intelligent wisdom in the electronic age, transformations foreshadowed in the notion of integrative, in contrast to analytical, studies. Among other things these first two will lead to new investigations into our cultural history as it is

encountered from our new context, for example, those being carried out by Tom Conley (*The Graphic Unconscious*, 1992) and Rosalind Krauss (*The Optical Unconscious*, 1993).

The third is an understanding of the differential impact of new media depending on the culture into which they are introduced and of the differential impact of cultures on the development of new media (p. 27). As noted above, a new medium creates an environment that provides a new context for already existing media, transforming their meaning and effect. Similarly, the existing culture creates a both context and content for a new medium, determining its meaning and effect in that culture. Cultures which have not passed through comprehensive literacy enter the electronic age quite differently than our own.

There is some evidence that indigenous cultures have consciously and successfully warded off transplanted media on behalf of their own cultural survival. Lawrence Sullivan has suggested that a number of contemporary cultures have intentionally resisted literacy in favor of other primary media on behalf of a specific critique, not only of literacy itself, but of the psychosocial complex to which it gives rise (1988, esp. pp. 672 - 682). Bill Gammage points to evidence that Australian aborigines have retained hunting gathering culture as a reasoned preference over agrarian or urban alternatives, having in some instances tried the alternatives and found them wanting (1992).

Some contemporary cultures outside the Euro-American mainstream, (and some ethnic and class subcultures within it) are intentionally attempting to retain their own cultural integrity, and are sensitized to the transforming impacts from Euro-America. They may be substantially more conscious of media effects than the dominant culture, and be better able to “confront and to understand electric technology” (p. 40). In any case, each medium finds its meaning in relation to the culture(s) within which it appears (see e.g., p. 40, 58-59), and in relation to other existing and emerging media (p. 39).⁴

2. The specific character of various media and their relationships to the body.

Intermediation requires that media remain distinct even while achieving a relational unity within a communicative context. For this to take place it is useful to understand what makes a medium unique. In large part, it is the physical acts required to grasp the medium that constitute its primary character. Such an analysis can be quite broad, sorting media into categories, or can be specifically applied to each medium. An example of the first is McLuhan's distinction between “hot” media, which require little involvement for their

understanding, and “cool” media, which necessitate involvement and participation. For example, writing/reading is a “hot” medium which fosters distance and non-involvement, while electronic media, especially those relying on television for final delivery, are “cool”, requiring a complex involvement for deciphering the image or message.

Here I want to provide a brief sketch of the distinctions among some of the major media with which we are familiar.⁵ Painting, for example, requires acts of visual focusing and discrimination. The activity resembles imagination as it occurs internally. In fact, recent research indicates that, in terms of brain chemistry, visual perception and visual imagination are identical (Blakelee, 1992) All of a painting is, in principle, available for sight at every moment. A painting can be said to present “idea” - our image of the world. Painting is a relatively “cool” medium, although in Woelflin’s dichotomy of linear vs painterly, the linear is warmer, the painterly cooler. Impressionism is cooler than its predecessors.⁶

Sculpture is predominantly kinaesthetic, rather than visual, presenting a body which I experience over against my body, rather than an image for visual inspection. In this sense, sculpture is inherently social, even when experienced privately, for the sculpture is an analogue for my body, the bodies of others, and the embodiment of the world. Unlike painting, sculpture necessarily announces its hiddenness, as well as its revelation. The movement of my body around the sculpture, and the constant appearance of new aspects coupled with the disappearance of others is inherent. Therefore sculpture is reasonably “cool” - my involvement, my physical movement, is inherent to its experience. Sculpture can be said to present “encounter” - our being-with-others in the world.⁷

Architecture, although kinaesthetic like sculpture, is environmental rather than objective, generating an experience of being comprehended rather than of comprehension. In English we call where we are now a “room” - it makes room, has room, gives room for us and our activities. Thus architecture manifests the opening of being to our existence in it, in the primordial experience of shelter and in the active experience of making or taking place. Sculpture presents itself to our frontality, facing us as we face it, making us aware of its “hiddenness” on the “other” side, and also of our own “back”. Architecture at once exposes and comforts us; it presents itself to the totality of our bodies, being at once behind as well as in front of us. While sculpture encourages us to move around it, architecture motivates us to turn around within it.

Sculpture and architecture both imply time because they can never be present all at once, but neither medium specifically uses time as a medium, in

the way that music, dance, theater, film and video shape time. Each of these media has a specific perceptual structure that determines its apprehension. There is not time (or space) in this article to detail them each. A quick comparison of film and video will have to suffice. Film is a quintessentially hot medium - all of the visual information is supplied at each moment and the spectator is passively receptive. Film borrows part of its social structure from theater, with its curious mixture of privacy and sociality in its viewing structure. Film presents images, like painting, but structures them with a temporality resembling that of music, affecting the experience of internal time consciousness. Because of the large size of the screen, film also involves peripheral vision and absorbs the viewer in an analogue to the "field" experience of landscape, rather than the "window" convention of classic painting. Television, in contrast, is smaller than the body; one looks into the television, while the film projects out at the viewer. Television is cool, the flashing electrons leave a great deal of empty space which the viewer must fill in. Television is also social, entering the private social space of the home; it may be shared with family and others in a room that is often lit, filled with commentary and conversation, contrasting with the dark, silent, public space of film.

The video spaces of computers, networks, and virtual realities have their own perceptual characteristics which require phenomenological investigation. Now, however, I must move on to an inquiry into intermediation proper.

3. Intermediation itself and its relationship to inter-disciplinarity, polymethodism and integration as intellectual objectives.

There is no thought apart from the body of the thought, whether that body be spoken, written, painted, sculpted, enacted, or what have you. Thought's body matters; it matters what the predominant embodiment of thought is at a moment in cultural history (as McLuhan has shown) and it matters what material embodies any given thought. In fact, as any artist could tell us, the "thought" and its "body" can be separated only artificially. Transforming the meaning of a poem to a painting, or a painting to an essay, or a sculpture to a film, involves a transformation of meaning as well as of medium. Different media encounter our bodies differently, require different perceptual acts to grasp them, and make us aware (or unaware) of our own embodiment in different ways. Combinations of media enable us to experience the fact of mediation and the specific implications of the individual media making up the combination. "The crossings or hybridizations of the media," he wrote, "release great new force and energy as by fission or fusion" (p. 57). McLuhan

believed that “artists in various fields are always the first to discover how to enable one medium to use or to release the power of another” (p. 62)

McLuhan often meditated on the curious numbness that media cause with respect to themselves (see e.g. p. 52 - 56). Hybridizing media, or intermediation, has the power to renew our awareness of the media themselves, and the meanings they carry within them (p. 63). It is a form of Brechtian alienation technique, in which the participant in the mediated event is forced to experience her active involvement in the event, and to acknowledge the specific character of that involvement. However, as artist/theorist Patrick Clancy⁸ insists, the media must retain their distinct separateness, their characters as separate media. When they are blended or integrated fully into a single new medium, the alienation effect vanishes. The introduction of “talkies” provided a moment rich in awareness of both visual and audial film. Their blending into, simply, “movies” has created a single medium with multiple sensory modes. Renewed numbness has been the result.

McLuhan viewed artists as society’s “early warning systems” (p. xi). He commented:

The effects of technology do not occur at the level of opinions or concepts, but alter sense ratios or patterns of perception steadily and without any resistance. The serious artist is the only person able to encounter technology with impunity, just because he (sic) is an expert aware of the changes in sense perception (p. 33).⁹

He saw in art “exact information of how to rearrange one’s psyche in order to anticipate the next blow” from technologies (p. 71).

Where can one turn today to experience and investigate intermediation? First and foremost, one should turn one’s attention, with the eye of an artist, to the classroom/course nexus in which we work. If a course is viewed as a single, extended, time-based form, the classroom/course is revealed as a complex performative environment encompassing a wide variety of media - live performance, text, sound/music, imagery, and, increasingly, television, television/computer interface, and interactive technology.¹⁰ It says much for media-induced numbness that as teachers we are unaware of the medium/messages we use/send unconsciously, semester by semester, as we teach our “disciplines” or even our “interdisciplines.” We should work to make our courses reflect on, as well as in, a variety of media.

In the “art world,” one can find intermediation in a variety of contexts. However, one must look for it. By its nature, intermediation is unlikely to

appear on television, or to inhabit large cultural institutions such as museums, especially in their permanent collections.

In the remaining space, I will briefly sketch examples from four contemporary artists. I will not provide images of the works. Because we live in a culture where “seeing is believing,” we are all too likely to accept the spurious presence of a photograph as being a valid representation of the thing depicted, whether it be a slide of Michelangelo’s *David*, a newsphoto in the paper, a story on CNN, or a family snapshot of oneself. But the image in the photograph is not the thing that was photographed: original context has been removed, a new context of the photo frame has been added, other manipulations may have taken place.¹¹ Indeed, one confusion of the age of reproductive media is that between an image and what is imaged (as if a photograph of an artwork resembled it more deeply than a photograph of a person resembles that person). Iconolotry is an unconscious habit of our age. Intermediative works are available for direct experience in your community; I encourage you to seek them out and measure the ideas set forth in this article “live and in person.”

In 1978 Robert Morris wrote a provocative article in *Art In America*, called “The Present Tense of Space,” in which he articulated an intermediation between traditional sculpture and architecture. Traditional sculpture, he says, opposes an “independent object” over against a “constituted subjectivity.”¹² Both are abstractions built up out of prior experiences this new sculpture aims to expose and articulate. This sculpture is extended in space, made up of multiple objects and spaces in complex interrelationship, requires the individual to enter it (rather than oppose it), and has no “correct” or privileged views around it. As with a course, judgement must be constantly suspended, the work cannot be (ever) instantaneously perceived, and temporality is inherent within it.¹³ Morris’ article provides a number of examples, listed in an Endnote to this essay. The materials involved range from sheetrock to video cassettes.¹⁴ One example of such a sculptural space, not completed until four years after Morris’ article, is Maya Lin’s Vietnam Memorial Monument, which adds the element of textuality to its spatio-temporal-objectivity.¹⁵

This unassuming monument incorporates many of the elements discussed above. It is not an object but a place, one that demands involvement and participation. “The point,” says Lin, “is to see yourself reflected in the names” (Beardsley, p. 134). Stepping out of the tradition of upright, phallic object-sculptures as war memorials, Lin has given us a space with what she calls “a female sensibility. I didn’t set out to conquer the earth, or overpower it, the

way Western man usually does" (Beardsley, p. 135).

The "wall" requires kinaesthetic involvement: one must move oneself along it, uniting somatic with external perception. It is also a performative space, one encounters one's fellows there, reflected as oneself in the names inscribed on the wall. Loved ones of the dead come to leave flowers or to take rubbings of the names, members of the nation come to remember the war, the dead, the times. One's perception moves rapidly from one's own body moving in space, to one's image reflected in the mirrored surface covered with the names of the dead, to the text of the names itself, to the encompassing space (including great monuments of our national history), to the wall as an artifact, to one's fellow citizens. As the space is complex, so is the time: one experiences the temporality of the current moment, the extended time of the synthetic experience of being at the wall (approach, entry, passage, departure) and of the memorialized past. One is at once with the living people sharing the space at that moment and with the dead in whose names all those present are reflected.¹⁶ One is made aware of the media of body, society, wall, text, space.

Lorna Simpson's work takes place in a more modest context, making itself available in ordinary gallery and museum spaces. It is no less radical, for all that. These pieces, with a brittle surface content of race and gender, also contain deep reflections on (inter)mediation. Although she has worked with environmental spaces, her most familiar and most frequent work is first photographic, then sculptural: larger than life-sized free-standing panels with photographic images of human beings or fragments of human beings (mostly African American women), inscribed with words. They are at once images, artifacts and texts. The texts are not, *à la* Derrida, outside the frame, but take up their role "within" the image (or is the image within the text)? For women and colonized peoples, photography (and its correlate, the male gaze) have signified the inability to be private and the absence of self-defined subjectivity. They have been "subject to" the interpretive gaze, and denied self-definition. Over against the common belief that photography, especially documentary photography, reveals "the truth", Simpson's work engages in a "discursive dialogue" with this empirical format. In effect, she reverses the process: the images seem to embrace the instrumental reality of photography, but the texts contradict and confuse our first visions, working counter to our intuitions, forcing us to "become actively engaged in a reciprocal process of questioning, decoding, and reconstructing images and language . . ." (Wright & Hartman, 1992, p. 24). The "viewer" becomes also a "reader" who is also a person with a body, made aware of the social construction of my own body

and those of others, and of the complicity of images and texts in this social construction of socially differentiated and valued bodies. The objectivity of the three-dimensional screens, the imagery of the photographed bodies and the textuality of the language force one's attention to revolve repeatedly from one to the other, without rest or resolution.

Finally, I will make brief mention of Patrick Clancy's unrepresentable "365/360" - a more than decade-old work in progress incorporating performance, live and recorded audio and video, storytelling and text, dance and gesture. It is never the same. In one incarnation it appears as a performance, in another as a book, in yet another as stamped text embossed in lead and displayed over charred wood under photographic imagery. Bits and pieces from one incarnation appear in others. "365/360" has important surface contents, and Clancy is a well-published and thoughtful philosopher, but in its depths the work meditates on mediation itself, especially about hybrid (not hyper) mediation. As one encounters the work, in any one instance and more powerfully in more than one instance, one finds oneself brought back to one's own experience of the media in which the contents are provided, of the difference of the "same" content in different media, of the "identity" of different content in the same media, and of one's own constructive acts of meaning in the face of each medium, and of them all.

Each of these artists works to create what McLuhan called "anti-environment." As folks wisdom has it, fish never notice the water, because it is omnipresent, and therefore invisible, since there is nothing in contrast with it. Likewise, individual meanings (contents) are always surrounded by an omnipresent (and therefore invisible) context which gives significance to all "texts." An "anti-environment" allows us to become aware of our context. Because of the significance of environmental media in shaping our experience, down to our personality structures, "Art as anti-environment becomes more than ever a means of training perception and judgement" (ix).

For now, these few examples of intermediation and intermeditation theory in the arts will have to suffice to articulate the challenge to the theory and practice of integrative study. Simply put, intellection is never disembodied, and intellect's body matters. Not only does the body of work affect its meaning; it may affect its very existence. McLuhan wrote:

If we persist in a conventional approach to these developments our traditional culture will be swept aside as scholasticism was in the sixteenth century. Had the Schoolmen with their complex oral culture understood the Gutenberg technology, they could have created a new synthesis of writ

ten and oral education, instead of bowing out of the picture and allowing the merely visual page to take over the educational enterprise (p. 76).

The result was an impoverishment of culture not unlike the one presaged by the onset of the electronic era. Paradoxically, the radical nature of the arts provides them with conservative, as well as transformative value:

While the arts as radar feedback provide a dynamic and changing corporate image, their purpose may be not to enable us to change but rather to maintain an even course toward permanent goals, even amidst the most disrupting innovations (xi) .

Once integrative thinkers become aware of thought's bodies, and their significance, they are confronted with the necessity of intermediation in the domain of medium as a counterpart to the possibility of interdisciplinarity in the domain of content.

The challenges to integrative study are:

1. To acknowledge and encounter the meaningfulness of media per se;
2. To self-consciously explore the classroom as an arena of intermediation;
3. To intelligently and rigorously investigate new knowledge and transformations of knowledge available in non-traditional media and media combinations in the academy, not only in the arts and humanities, and in the social, biological and physical sciences, but also in new arenas of intellection that may appear as a result of media experiments¹⁷ ;
4. To validate intermediated thought for the evaluation of scholars for tenure and promotion.

In all of these enterprises there are important precedents to be found in the InterArts. Intermediation can be among the arts most important contributions to general theories of integrative thought.

Endnotes:

1. Ironically, he remarks that the fragmented individual results in a homogenized world in contrast both to oral societies, "differentiated . . . by their unique emotional mixes" (p. 59) and to the emerging electronic world which is too new to characterize.
2. The fact that speech does not manifest full presence, as Derrida and others have recently demonstrated, does not vitiate the real differences between speaking/hearing and writing/reading. The attempt to subsume all communication under the

rubric of writing/text is as universalizing as the older theories of communication the deconstructionists seek to overthrow.

One could, in fact, provide an interpretation showing that our new evaluations of both writing/reading and speaking/listening have been made possible only by the new electronic environment in which they both now stand.

3. It took the printing press to unleash the full linear and privative power of alphabetic reading/ writing. In the middle ages, most reading took place in groups, in which monks took turns reading out loud to one another. Even when they read in solitude, monks generally sounded out the words aloud. Silent reading is an artifact of the printing press.

4. "No medium has its meaning or existence alone, but only in constant interplay with other media" (p. 39).

5. These categories have, of course, been hopelessly scrambled in the contemporary arts. People who call themselves "painters" make objects, while "sculptors" create environments that surround their viewers, creating embracing contexts not unlike temporary architecture. I am reminded of a story (perhaps apocryphal) of an interview with John Steinbeck shortly after he was awarded the Pulitzer prize.

When Steinbeck was asked how he felt being a famous author, he replied that he didn't know what an author did, so he was uneasy taking on that appellation. He thought of himself as a writer, because he knew what a writer did -put words on paper. Phenomenologically, the distinctions between image, object/body analogy, and constructed context remain experientially clear. The fact that people who are socially defined as painters (people who put pigment on a surface with a tool) also like to make things (act like sculptors) doesn't change painting into sculpture.

Artists whose identity formations took place primarily under the influence of mechanical separation think of themselves as defined by medium, a tendency carried to its extreme in Greenberg's purist formalism. If one "is" a painter, when one makes objects one can only think of oneself as "a painter making sculpture." And, of course, one can make objects in order to learn something to apply to painting, just as one can experiment in physics to learn something about chemistry. But painting is simply an activity, not an essential quality of inborn identity. Just as one can cook in the morning, labor in the afternoon, and write in the evening, before listening to a concert, without changing identities from cook, to laborer, and so forth, so one may paint for a year and sculpt for a month without changing identities. Shows with titles such as "sculptures of painters" refer to the social identity of the artists, who are more known for their paintings, but not to their character as workers when they made objects. They may have "been" painters, but they made sculpture.

What seems to be happening is that the fairly rigid separation of artists into media specialists (here a painter, there a sculptor) that has characterized high Euro-American art for the last two hundred or so years is breaking down in favor of a more expansive notion of the artist. McLuhan's model actually predicts this sort of confusion of media separations and blending of media attractions under the impact of the tendency for electronic media to generate relational and connective, rather

than linear and separative, experience.

6. My main intention here is to exemplify a broad categorization of media. Although there is some value in the hot/cool distinction, it requires substantial nuancing (of a kind McLuhan sometimes does and sometimes does not provide) to be useful.

7. Many sculptures today would avoid this characterization. They are moving toward the sort of hybridization with architecture discussed by Morris below. Nonetheless, the artifacts of the sculptural tradition dominate most of our experience of sculpture, and the transformation of sculpture in the direction of mixed media environments may be a consequence of the electronic revolution. See note 5, above.

8. A member of Fluxus in the early 1960's and now Chair of a hybrid media program at Kansas City Art Institute.

9. He did leave considerable room, though, in his definition of an artist as: “. . . the man (sic) in any field, scientific or humanistic, who grasps the implications of his actions and of new knowledge in his (sic) own time. He (sic) is the man (sic) of integral awareness” (p. 71).

10. For a discussion of the artistic opportunities available in the classroom, see Carp, 1991.

11. This points up the hopeless task of teaching art history from slides. One sees not works of art, but images of works of art, and becomes helplessly confused between image and artifact, and between the significance of various media, including the slide medium

It also raises a larger philosophical issue, involving the relation between image and imaged, which is being evaded by all participants in the current philosophical debate. We might turn to our Muslim or Jewish colleagues for a deeper understanding of iconology.

12. In the course of this provocative essay, he uncovers the hidden relationship between museum and gallery spaces and objectivity. These rooms are “enclosed areas designed for the frontal confrontation of objects. The confrontation of the independent object doesn't involve space. The relationship of such objects to the room nearly always has had to do with its axial alignment to the confines of the walls. Thus the holistic object is a positive form within the negative, but equally holistic space of the room. . . . Claims for the independent object were actually claims for a hidden relation: that of the object to the three-dimensional rectilinear frame of the room. It might be said that such a space both preceded and generated the so-called independent object (p. 76).

13. In Morris' words: “the coexistence of the work and viewer's space, the multiple views, the beginning of an attack on the structure provided by the gestalt, the uses of distances and continuous deep spaces, the explorations of new relations to nature, the importance of time and the assumptions of the subjective aspects of perception . . .”

14. Alice Aycock *The Beginnings of a Complex . . .*, 1977; Richard Serra, *Spin Out (For Robert Smithson)*, 1973; Vito Acconci, *The Object of it All*, 1977; Robert Irwin, *Untitled*, 1973; Robert Smithson, *mirror displacement*, 1969. These works are environmental installations, some in museums and some at other sites.

15. These artists do not believe they are working *de novo*, without antecedents in the past of the tradition. Morris, for example, cites certain works by Michaelangelo and Rodin, as precedents within the Euro-American high art trajectory (p. 72 - 73). Similarly precedents could be found for Lin, Simpson and Clancy's work. The issue is the extent to which what was once minimally significant is becoming more pronounced in the new media context.

16. 14 Morris remarks on the role of mirrors in the development of these new spaces. "Mirror spaces are present but unenterable, coexistent only visually with real space, the very term "reflection" being descriptive of both this kind of illusionistic space and mental operations. Mirror space might stand as a material metaphor for mental space which is in turn the "me's" metaphor for the space of the world. With mirror works the "I" and the "me" come face to face (p. 81).

17. Paul Feyerabend (1987) has written an exquisite refutation of the notion that, as he puts it "scientific objects *and they alone* are real" (p. 126).

In general, he shows:

1. that assertions of reality depend on a cultural context which makes them plausible;
2. that techniques of knowledge depend on a cultural context which makes them both plausible and possible;
3. that validation of techniques of knowledge and assertions of reality depends on political realities (or, in Foucault's famous neologism: we are always dealing with power/knowledge);
4. the distinction between "historical" traditions and "theoretical" traditions is invalid, but represents either a misunderstanding of itself on the part of theoretical thought or an ideological attempt on behalf of theoretical thought to validate itself at the expense of all other modes;
5. nevertheless, living as we do in our actual cultural and historical context, we are nonetheless bound by and in relationship to natural laws, much as the ancient Greeks were bound by the gods.

Scientific and technological enterprises really do allow us to manipulate the world in a variety of ways, and to accurately predict certain events and processes. Where we get into trouble is when we assert that these (and only these) are important manipulations and predictions, or that manipulation and prediction are

the only tests of the validity of knowledge. In fact, the social and cultural factors required to create both institutions of science and persons interested in conducting science undoubtedly exclude other ways of understanding and living in relation to the world.

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