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DESIGNING THE STORE-BOUGHT SPEC-BUILT DREAM

by

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ABSTRACT

Designing the Store-Bought Spec-Built Dream

by

William Hall

With the disintegration of analog technologies and media, the book struggles to maintain its validity as a form of communication. The architectures that create and maintain the book as a repository of history and knowledge have developed to the point that the book must transform its methods of construction of information that make it more adept at communicating ideas in an age of ephemeral digital information. This thesis seeks to find, understand and manipulate architectures of redundant visual informations in a manner that integrates space (architecture), media (communication), and culture.
Historically, the printed book's primary function was to be a repository for knowledge. As well, the form of the book, was such that the book was able to be transported and stored with relative ease. These two factors have maintained the form of the book since the days of Gutenberg, regardless of the evolution of communication and the people who do the communicating. With the ever changing methods of communicating information, the analog book struggles to be a valid form for the storage and distribution of information. The book is no longer the structure for organization. The book is an object in itself, not necessarily connected to the form of it's contents. Information exists now as an ephemerality that is stored virtually in digital domains and retrieved as well through digital methods that prohibit individuals from "owning" the information.[1] Without the need for analog or "real" spaces for information, the book is challenged to provide a new framework to once again be a cultural repository.

Other contemporary media including magazines, television, cinema and the internet are all based on ephemerical and more importantly disposable formats. These medias have seen in recent years astronomical popularity and sales that are great proof to not only the validity of these forms of information, but also to the depth of their cultural relevancy and usage. These medias have integrated themselves within the domains of communication rather than being a facet of the act of communication.[2] In other words, communication is nearly impossible and certainly suffers great detriment without the use of these more contemporary and ephemerical media.

The ephemeral media are part of a greater hidden structure of which massive
and intricate collusions are constantly evolving that establish relationships and further cultural meanings due to the relationship between individuals, the act of consumption and the perceived positioning of these medias in relation to the participants and the information that the medias carry. Information then is seen as a commodity that is traded at a rate that makes it indistinguishable from communication. Existence and daily activities have merged wholly with acts of consumption and advertising.[3]

Communication that is the transmittal of ephemeral informations has grown to exhibit and be composed a unique form. Because of the collapse of media into a fluid dynamic that allows informations to exist in one form that can be formatted from media to media, a visual redundancy develops that brings the information to a more intimate position with the person or form of media that is transmitting the information. Words, images, people, companies are now in such a form to have multiple and various meanings and potential usages within communication.[4] Meaning then is disassociated from the form of either the signifier or the signified. The images that make up the two dimensional representation of ideas, simultaneously lose and gain meaning to the point that they are meaningless until they are engaged in the act of communication, and then fall to static images once again.

When images of information become redundant they gain meaning based on the duration to which they are transmitted. The image itself is useless, meaningless, but when repeated to a certain and deliberate duration, the collection becomes charged not simply with meaning, but becomes a tool of communication that taps into cultural pathways of meaning that are beyond
traditional methods and means of description. These homogeneous surfaces are established, they become more than a series of images or backgrounds for more traditional textual means of transmitting information. The surface and the information are perceived and used as a single surface, all graphic and textual devices are without distinction and used as a part of a greater whole of communication.[5]

The contemporary situation [6] is such that the digital solution is always the best. The digital world will solve all ills. Information will collapse the world into a singular, seamless, peaceful, production machine. But where is the evidence of all the great, powerful technology? Is it personal computers, cellular telephones, the internet, email, laptops, pda’s, television, push media?[7] All this technology is evidence of something, but not a technological revolution.

Technology has provided us with the devices to easily produce data, store data and transmit data. We have even linked the technology together with fiber-optic lines and satellites. The dilemma is to expose the invisible structure that makes this digital universe [8]. Of course, it is invisible for a specific reason; this is not stuff we want or need to see.

Even with the overwhelming speed and mutability the personal computer and digital domain provide, there is still the alienation of the individual from the mechanism [9]. There is no relation between the interface of the computer and the human body itself. There is the keyboard which mimics the analog equivalent (the typewriter) which is proportioned to the human hands. But, the positioning of the keys is based on keeping the pace of typing slow enough not
to jam the mechanisms of the typewriter. Research shows that there are various and multiple solutions to the keyboard that allow individuals to type at a much greater speed and reliability than the current model. Then there is the mouse which again relates to the hand, but again is asking the user to navigate on a crude surface (mouse-pad) that helps the mouse to roll and mimic navigation on the monitor screen (which itself is a derivation/representation of the internal binary workings of the computer). So why doesn’t it change? Because humans are naturally skeptical and opposed to change. And, educational systems have been pedagogically structured based on studying from past historical models. That is, nothing new can evolve without first knowing the way it was done in the past. Therefore, people are taught to rely on history for a means to navigate the present and the future. That is to say, once a solution works, whether it works “the best” or not, the solution is accepted and adapted to various applications.[10]

Where is the value in current media structures? Has television, magazines, newspapers, books become outdated, useless? With these analog informations, the very process of discovering information, capturing information, translating information, printing information and then distributing information is slow beyond comprehension. Even entities like CNN are much too slow, and additionally, overly translated and represented to the point that information is lost in the quest for entertainment. And, when entertainment equals viewership, and viewership equals ratings, and ratings equals advertising dollars (the lifeblood of modern information transferral), networks have no choice other than to first entertain and secondly hope that in the process some factual information makes it through the multiple filters of reporter, camera, broadcasting, television,
finally to receptive individual.

This leads to two important areas of focus. One, architecture as a profession must become faster, more agile, and less reliant on esoteric pursuits like "design". Two, although there is great focus on the digitization of the world, human beings are incredibly nostalgic and afraid of change, and the binary opposition that has been established between analog and digital technologies is counter-productive and actually a collusion between digital and analog technologies is a reasonable and viable solution to vast technological evolution.[11] Architecture can be the device that bridges the gap between the digital and analog or more importantly orchestrates the combination and manipulation of the digital and analog.[12]

Architecture must consider and celebrate the spaces in-between. Consider the spaces between the store bought item and the environment it occupies [13]. Architecture should no longer concern itself with the design of our environment, rather, it would be more advantageous to focus on the manipulation of given variables [14]. For instance, rather that designing a house from scratch, it is more practical, and intelligent, to thoughtfully orchestrate the recombination of existing elements, whether they are ready-built, or designed by a third party that is naturally more adept than an architect could ever hope to be at a particular facet of the building process. Or, an architect could “design” the collaboration of economic energies between production and consumption. The architect could be responsible for making products more appealing to consumers, informing the consumer of advantageous uses of materials and labor, and helping corporations formulate brand identities and production and distribution schema
based on market research and free-form models of economic development and behavior. In essence, architects would use their expertise in visualization to give form to the invisible and describe optimization of systems.[15]

Clients have become increasingly more and more intelligent and savvy about design and architecture. Due to the nature of our consumer culture, all consumers are exponentially becoming more adept at navigating the consumptive landscape [16]. For example, advertising has lost its ability to convince or coerce consumers into purchasing products. Americans have had 50 years of television education, and before that nearly 100 years of experience with print advertising. It seems logical, even from a superficial and naive level, that consumers would naturally develop certain perceptual skills regarding the filtering of advertising messages and persuasion. Advertisers have found that they can no longer rely on trickery or deception to sell products. Rather, recent advertising has employed methods of including the consumer in the systems of information distribution. Advertisers have erased the traditional distinctions between producer and consumer, relying on a more horizontal stratification that unifies producer and consumer [17]. Through advertising, producers create a partnership with the consumer that presents the producer as someone who can provide the solution to a problem through the product or service that they provide. Products now don’t merely make life easier, or solve problems, they actually provide escape or alternative situations through the deployment of the product or service [18]. Advertisers and producers thereby form a bond with the consumer that is similar to familial or friendship relationships that build consumer confidence and brand loyalty.
Here we can see great potential in the relationship between producer (architect) and consumer (client). In the flat system, collaboration becomes the priority, overcoming the egocentric tendencies of the traditional architect. In a system similar to the XML hypertext language currently being developed by programmers, information is no longer embedded within the document [19]. A document is designed with tags that form hyperlinks to the information, which in many cases is constantly changing. In this scenario, information streams through the circuits of the world wide web, never truly inhabiting a place. Information is space.

The world is liquid information [20]. Labor and materials and capital are all understood, defined, based on information. Labor is not the person or machine creating a desired effect from a distributed force. Rather, labor is the information that constructs/defines the labor and it’s relationship to material and capital. In this system, instantaneously the three factors are linked and easily manipulated and tracked. Material is information. A material like steel is no longer a chemical compound. Instead it is the binary information that describes it’s existence; it’s dimensions, structural properties, manufacturer, storage site, shipping/distribution. Capital, in a contemporary sense, has always between described in it’s abstracted state; as information. Capital hardly ever physically exists, it is merely virtual, an essence. Computers ruthlessly transfer and store capital.

Structures such as corporations are no longer valid. They are inefficient and ancient means of coalescing material, labor and capital into a form. When the corporation is reduced to it’s figure head (i.e. CEO, president) the corporation
becomes a vicious, flexible, and meaningful entity. Much like XML, the positions that are filled by labor are merely "tags" within a corporate structure. Labor is inserted instantaneously via digital connections between labor and work, hereby always filling positions with experts, or those most skilled to produce a desired result. This fulfills two important desires. One, free the worker from the physically described environment (the office). Two, the worker is an individual, free. The worker freely produces information, the corporation taps into the information, the worker is instantaneously compensated for work. Much like telephone or internet service, the corporation pays for workers/work by the minute. Once the corporation has achieved desired results, transmission is disconnected.

In many ways, we have already become totally dependent on technology as a means to perceive or experience our world. The very act of seeing has been melded with the machine [21]. Vision is not limited to the architecture of the eye. From eyeglasses and contacts, to binoculars and telescopes, human vision is now virtually limitless. And, not only is it limitless in terms of distance, but also in terms of scale. We now have the ability to see that which is very far away (macroscopic), and that which is incredibly small (microscopic). Of course, these means of seeing have allowed us to undercover hidden structures that describe the basis of our existence. This has augmented the separation of body from space. Now we can be somewhere in the sense that we can perfectly see the features of a place and not actually have our body present in the physical place. Therefore, the cyborg-vision already exists to a great extent. The problem is, once we've seen, what's next?
Traditionally, our observations of the macroscopic and microscopic has been defined by an external objectivism. That is, one can visually perceive an environment but cannot exist within the environment. The subject can be objective about a system and not be a part of that system. He can only be external.

With the advent of dynamic computer progenated environments, or environments supplemented by computer technologies, the subject has the ability to be internally objective and furthermore posses the ability to manipulate the environment through a symbiotic relationship. The external objective scenario in which that which is viewed/perceived, can only be an object. In the internal objective scenario, that which is being perceived becomes a context rather than an object, and the context is infinitely mutable. This allows for multiple perspectives, multiple tasking, multiple variations.

As the boundaries of our world become progressive more defined by the boundaries of our interfaces, the world changes as the interface changes. The interface now is the dimension of the page of a book, or the limits of the Netscape browser screen. These are external objective, singular points of view. As the interface and the individual collapse upon one another, the physical device of the interface disappears and the subject is no longer exterior, but privilege to the interior objective. The computer screen, becomes the retina. [Already current technology has provided us with advances such as “heads-up” displays that project information onto a surface in front of a person (i.e. vital information from a car is projected onto the windshield), or information is projected onto the surface of a pair of normal eyeglasses.] As well, there can be
a fluctuation between interface-external, an interface-internal, essentially blurring barriers between traditional coordinates of space and time.

This leads to the images (2D) that make up this context based internal objective perspective. With the advent of the personal computer and desktop photo-manipulation software, the image is no longer a static system. By it's very structure, it is dynamic. Firstly, the way in which the information that composes the image is stored is itself, dynamic. The information is not stored as a block or package of information. The computer naturally scatters the information when it is stored to provide for a more efficient means of storage and retrieval for the computer. Second, the information is then recombined from it's scattered form to produce a set of information that is ordered such that it is recognizable as what we understand as the image. This "ordered" information is then in such a form that it again is infinitely transformable. It is composed of a finite number of pixels that each contain information for one of a few million colors. When these pixels are combined, we get an image. So with the power to infinitely recompose, reconfigure the information of each individual pixel, we are able to dramatically alter the image, and consequently our the environment that is composed of these images.

The subject does not have to manually manipulate the environment for response, the environment is linked to the physiological characteristics of the subject. For instance, the movement of the eye and the expansion and contraction of the pupil create changes in the environment without the subject manually manipulating the environment [22]. The very industrial-age model of work is challenged because no longer is it necessary for the body to create a
force in the Newtonian sense. Future projections suggest that through the implementation of micro-chips planted in the human brain, tasks can be accomplished simply by thinking of them.

As the world struggles to find an appropriate medium between the nostalgia of traditional analog technologies and more contemporary digital technologies, communication is caught in a state of flux. Digital communication mimics analog structures and analog methods struggle to adapt to the more fluid nature of information and communication. This thesis has attempts to provide a scenario in which the collusion of digital and analog can exist such that both formats are provided with mutually beneficial outcomes. The layering of information without the distinction between surface and the information that is supposedly of most importance is an initial naive step that attempts to expose the relationship between those who are doing the communicating, the faculties that they may or may not be forming alliances with, and the final spaces and individuals that are affected by the informations and there communication.
Notes

[1]
We are entering a world where there won't be one but two realities, just like we have two eyes or hear bass and treble tones, just like we now have stereoscopy and stereophony. There will be two realities: the actual and the virtual. Thus there is no simulation, but substitution. Reality has become symmetrical. The splitting of reality in two parts is a considerable event which goes far beyond simulation.


[2]
With the possible exception of sports and elections, technology suggests that TV and radio of the future will be delivered asynchronously. This will happen either on demand or using "broadcasting", a term coined in 1987 by Stewart Brand in his book about the Media Lab. Broadcasting is the radiation of a bit stream, most likely one with vast amounts of information pushed into the ether or down a fiber. At the receiving end, a computer catches the bits, examines them, and discards all but the few it thinks you want to consume later.(169)

The economic models of media today are based almost exclusively on "pushing' the information and entertainment out into the public. Tomorrow's will have as much or more to do with "pulling", where you and I reach into the network and check out something the way we do in a library or video-rental
store today. This can happen explicitly by asking or implicitly by an agent asking on your behalf.(170)

This is changing rapidly. The methodical movement of recorded music as pieces of plastic, like the slow human handling of most information in the form of books, magazines, newspapers, and videocassettes, is about to become the instantaneous and inexpensive transfer of electronic data that move at the speed of light. In this form, the information can become universally accessible. Thomas Jefferson advanced the concept of libraries and the right to check out a book free of charge. But this great forefather never considered the likelihood that 20 million people might access a digital library electronically and withdraw its contents at no cost.


[3]

After three thousand years of explosion, by means of fragmentary and mechanical technologies, the Western world is imploding. During the mechanical ages we had extended our bodies in space. Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned. Rapidly, we approach the final phase of the extensions of man - the technological simulation of consciousness, when the creative process of knowing will be collectively and corporately extended to the whole of human society, much as we have already extended our senses and our nerves by the various media. Whether the extension of consciousness, so long sought by advertisers for specific products, will be "a good thing" is a question that admits
of a wide solution. There is little possibility of answering such questions about the extensions of man without considering all of them together. Any extension, whether of skin, hand, or foot, affects the whole psychic and social complex.


[4]

6. Understood in its totality, the spectacle is both the outcome and the goal of the dominant mode of production. It is not something added to the real world—not a decorative element, so to speak. On the contrary, it is the very heart of society’s real unreality. In all its specific manifestations—news or propaganda, advertising or the actual consumption of entertainment—the spectacle epitomizes the prevailing model of social life. It is the omnipresent celebration of a choice already made in the sphere of production, and the consummate result of that choice. In form as in content the spectacle serves as total justification, for it governs almost all time spent outside the production process itself.

69. The image of the blissful unification of society through consumption suspends disbelief with regard to the reality of division only until the next disillusionment occurs in the sphere of actual consumption. As such it is ceremoniously presented as the unique and ultimate product. But, as with the fashionable adoption of seemingly rare aristocratic first names which turn out in the end to be borne by a whole generation, so the would-be singularity of an object can be offered to the eager hordes only if it has been mass-produced. The sole real status attaching to a mediocre object of this kind is to have been placed, however briefly, at the very center of social life and hailed as the
revelation of the goal of the production process. But even this spectacular prestige evaporates into vulgarity as soon as the object is taken home by a consumer-and hence by all consumers too. At this point its essential poverty, the natural outcome of the poverty of its production, stands revealed-too late. For by this time another product will have been assigned to supply the system with its justification, and will in turn be demanding its moment of acclaim.


[5]
Yet these two avenues of research need not be thought of as exclusive of one another: presumably, concern for the SPATIAL aspect of “navigation” and the SCULPTURAL aspect of “individual forms” will converge in a new approach to typography that fuses these two spheres of interest. Both directions suggest an expanded field for design. Readers and viewers are increasingly able and willing to navigate texts and negotiate challenging textual and visual environments, whether they are the physical spaces of exhibitions or the virtual environments of new media. Designers accustomed to dealing with the flat, pictorial paradigms of print are now dealing with the architectural, ergonomic, and cinematic paradigms of environmental, immersive media.


[6]
Media, by altering the environment, evoke in us unique ratios of sense perceptions. The extension of any one sense alters the way we think and act - the way we perceive the world. When these ratios change, men change.

[7]

1. Unlike the previous "revolutions" which divide up our history, the Information Revolution is having little visible effect on the landscape. Mountains of hype and oceans of noise fill our world, but relatively little stuff. The landscape should be littered with the media of transmitted information, yet this media is less substantial even than either the smoke or mirrors that serve so consistently as critical metaphors for its reality. There is no beef in cyberspace. Other than packaging and slogans, the information revolutions leaving very little evidence of its pervasiveness. What carapaces can be seen - the outsized CD box, the ATM, microwave relays and satellite dishes, the disk - have had no more substantial impact on our meat environment than EM radiation itself.

2. The information that floods everywhere has conquered space and time in a way never dreamed by the auto or airplane. Yet, while our cities, streets, and countrysides were completely transformed by the Transportation Revolution, this information revolution has transformed no-thing. The Information Revolution has created a hunger much greater than the Industrial Revolution's desperate craving for coal or oil, yet it requires no precious resources other than neurons, which it consumes indiscriminately, to satisfy its appetite. It has contributed to as wide an increase in understanding as the Scientific Revolution or Gutenberg's press, changing the way we live and do business - in fact, changing what we do as business and, increasingly, where we live - yet the physical world seems largely untouched.

[8]
The 21st century will see the end of three-dimension architecture. The end of Alberti. Perspective will no longer be able to represent it. Space, volume, and formal intentions will no longer dominate architecture, which will be deeper, more mysterious, more differentiated, more difficult to confine. Architecture’s attitudes will be less naive, less simplistic. Reasonings will be more complex, reasons more often hidden. Its new dimensions are interactive: time (speed), lights (intensities), materials (touch), signs (images). Architecture will rise against the power of dominant forms; it will position itself as a form of liberation. Nouvel, Jean. Architecture d’Aujourd’hui. December 1994. p.51

[9]
The first generation to grow up with television (those born in the 1950’s) is still imitating and idolizing the lifestyles depicted on TV. This generation is followed by one growing up with music videos, multimedia and virtual reality. The manipulation of sounds and images, the invention of artificial realities, and life inside man-made surroundings puts to question our “natural” rules of perception. And, as with every technological and cultural development in the last 2000 years, type and typography reflect this. If current trends are anything to go by, the look of typefaces is bound to change more by the year 2000 than it has in all the years since the fifteenth century. The next generation of readers might consider things acceptable and, indeed, highly legible, that we would
today consider ridiculous.


[10]

The nonmaterial aspects of culture can hardly be differentiated from its physical aspects—the layout of cities and landscapes, architecture, the design of clothing, furniture, and artifacts. All these shapes we impose upon our surroundings convey symbolic meanings and represent information of kind. They refract the current state of values and beliefs about the purpose of life, the value of human beings, the structure of our relations with one another. Media are designed to do all this more purposefully that the bridges we build and the clothes we wear.

Our culture is commercial because of the central place in it of material goods and their symbols. But the term "commercial culture" can be used in another sense, as well, when applied to the flow of ideas and expression that shapes nation character and outlook. By this narrower definition, contemporary American culture is commercial because, overwhelmingly, it is produced for sale to meet marketing requirements. In this respect it differs from the cultures of other places and times, in which expression has been valued either as an end in itself or because of its ability to please a patron. Commercial culture assigns no value or meaning to communications apart from their market value—that is, the price that someone is willing to pay for them. (66)


19
[11]
As Rheingold (1991) notes, the evolution of computer technology has been
toward putting greater and greater distance between the user and the
hardware, thereby reducing or eliminating access to physical cyberspace.
Instead, through the development of various interfaces, computers create a
perceptual cyberspace, which would include the visual space of the computer
monitor, graphic user interfaces, and tactile input devices such as the keyboard,
joystick, and mouse. At the same time, our ability to go beyond our perceptions,
particularly through computer-mediated verbal communication, results in a form
of conceptual cyberspace.
Strate, Lance and Jacobson, Ronald and Gibson, Stephanie. Surveying the
Electronic Landscape: An introduction to Communication and Cyberspace.
Hampton Press, New Jersey. 1996.

[12]
At the other far extreme, we find many systems ordered as a patchwork of
parallel operations, very much as in the neural network of a brain or in a colony
of ants. Action in these systems proceeds in a messy cascade of
interdependent events. Instead of the discrete ticks of cause and effect that run
a clock, a thousand clock springs try to simultaneously run a parallel system.
Since there is no chain of command, the particular action of any single spring
diffuses into the whole, making it easier for the sum of the whole to overwhelm
the parts of the whole. What emerges from the collective is not a series of
critical individual actions but a multitude of simultaneous actions whose
collective pattern is far more important. This is the swarm model.
Kelly, Kevin. Out of Control: The Rise of Neo-Biological Civilization. A William
[13]

Audile (acoustic) space and tactile (visual) space are in fact inseparable. But in the interfaces created by these senses, figure and ground are in dynamic equilibrium, each exerting pressure on the other across the interval separating them. The interface therefore, is resonant and not static. That pressure creates a condition of continual, potential transformation called chiasmus. Resonance is the mode of acoustic space; tactility is the space of the significant bounding line and of interval.

Electronic man, having found himself in an arena of simultaneous information also finds himself increasingly excluded from the older more traditional (visual) world in which space and reason seem to be uniform, connected, and stable. Instead, Western (visual and sequential) man now discovers himself habitually relating to information structures which are simultaneous, discontinuous, and dynamic. He has been plunged into a new form of knowing, far from his customary experience tied to the printed page. In the same way that the sense of hearing apprehends details from all directions at once, within a 360-degree sphere, as it were, in a manner similar to a magnetic or electrical field; so knowing itself is being recast and retrieved in acoustic form. As such, by the next century it will destroy all existing forms of school structures. "Back to basics" is the last bugle call of the diehards.

Perhaps, too, we should abandon a whole tradition that allows us to imagine that knowledge can exist only where the power relations are suspended and that knowledge can develop only outside its injunctions, it demands, and its interests. Perhaps we should abandon the belief that power makes people mad and that, by the same token, the renunciation of power is one of the conditions of knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. These “power-knowledge relations” are to be analyzed, therefore, not on the basis of a subject of knowledge who is or is not free in relation to the power system; but, on the contrary, the subject who knows, the objects to be known, and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of these fundamental implications of power-knowledge and their historical transformations. In short, it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge.


This term is not being used as a metaphor. These media events are not like viruses. They are viruses. Most of us are familiar with biological viruses like the ones that cause the flu, the common cold, and perhaps even AIDS. As they are
currently understood by the medical community, viruses are unlike bacteria or germs because they are not living things; they are simply protein shells containing genetic material. The attacking virus uses its protective and sticky protein casing to latch onto a healthy cell and then inject its own genetic code, essentially genes, inside. The virus code mixes and competes for control with the cell's own genes, and if victorious, it permanently alters the way the cell functions and reproduces. A particularly virulent strain will transform the host cell into a factory that replicates the virus.

Media viruses spread through the datasphere the same way biological ones spread through the body or a community. But instead of traveling along an organic circulatory system, a media virus travels through the networks of the mediaspace. the "protein shell" of a media virus might be an event, invention, technology, system of thought, musical riff, visual image, scientific theory, sex scandal, clothing style or even a pop hero- as long as it can catch our attention. Any one of these media virus shells will search out the receptive nooks and crannies in a popular culture and stick on anywhere it is noticed. Once attached, the virus injects its more hidden agendas into the datastream in the form of ideological code- not genes, but a conceptual equivalent we now call "memes". Like real genetic material, these memes infiltrate the way we do business, educate ourselves, interact with one another- even the way we perceive reality.


[16]
Computers are not books. Computers are not televisions. A clickable book is a
book without suspense. A clickable film is a boring film. There is no point in translating. Hypertext is dead. Hypertext, a poor excuse for mistaken nostalgia or just a toy for nerds. Who reads on a computer screen? If one fights excess with sobriety, every simple act seems improbably grotesque. We need to re-invent everything over and over again. No one will know us. There is no defense against the baroque. The human of the future is a playing one. He or she will not be satisfied with the bad toys. He or she will not be satisfied with mere information. Information is not a goal, it is a means. Information overload is not a problem, it is a consequence. Information does not want to be free. Information wants to be forgotten. The human of the future wants to be entertained. (Life’s so short. Don’t bore us to death.) Navigation through hyperspace should be as natural as navigation through real space. Only better. Faster. Our senses bloom in hyperspace. Not to exist. The human of the future will travel through data. The faster you travel the more you see. The faster you see the more you travel. The individual is dead. Reality is fiction. Simulations real. The vehicle of future is the networked computer. Not hypertext but hyperspace. The metaphor wants to be free. Information will not be read or seen but experienced in simulated environments. The book is not dead. The book just is not a computer. The past is not dead. It is doubled, and doubled again. There are no doors. (Only windows.) The body is a container. The individual is a network. Space is in the mind. A heart breaks and turns into a thousand hearts. Separation. Classification. Fragmentation. Fluidity. There is no universal center. The music of the future is visual, the pictures of the future tangible. The words of the future dance to the rhythm of a thousand heart beats.

From the postmodern perspective, as the pace, extension, and complexity of modern societies accelerate, identity becomes more and more unstable, more and more fragile. Within this situation, the discourses of postmodernity problematize the very notion of identity, claiming that it is a myth and an illusion. One reads both in modern theorists like the Frankfurt School, and in Baudrillard and other postmodern theorists that the autonomous, self-constituting subject that was the achievement of modern individuals, of a culture of individualism, is fragmenting and disappearing, due to social processes which produce the leveling of individuality in a rationalized, bureaucratized and consumerized mass society and media culture. Post-structuralists in turn have launched an attack on the very notions of the subject and identity, claiming that subjective identity is itself a myth, a construct of language and society, an overdetermined illusion that one is really a substantial subject, that one really has a fixed identity.


In plain English, Bosak means that XML describes content, and the logical structure of how that content should fit together, but not how it looks in a browser. Web site designers can use any tags they want, such as <author> to describe data about a writer, or <mystery> to mark a genre. This will lend hopelessly overburdened search engines a hand. Common shared sets of these industry specific tags will be housed in repositories called “namespaces.”
Further, and perhaps most appealing to consumers, the XML architecture promises to allow Web documents to effortlessly trade data back and forth with those on other sites. Earlier this month, Firefly and Vignette Corp. announced a new protocol called Information And Content Exchange (ICE).

In a nutshell, ICE will let a web site grab product and pricing information from other, disparate XML-supporting Web sites, such as airlines or bookstores. Picture virtual Web superstores that might “stock” and price out books from both, say, Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble, and you’ve go the idea - no more tedious surfing from one site to the next to find the best deal. ICE will be formally proposed to a standards body in the next few months.


[19]
The fashionable, faux futurism predicts that this time will be different, that this time new media technology will guarantee the individual the upper hand over the advertiser. Maybe; maybe not. More likely, we’ll see these new media renegotiate the power relationships between individuals and advertisers. Yesterday, we changed the channel; today we hit the remote; tomorrow, we’ll reprogram our agents/filters. We’ll interact with advertising where once we only watched; we’ll seek out advertising where once we avoided it. Advertising will not go away; it will be rejuvenated.

Schrage, Michael. “Is Advertising Finally Dead?” Wired 2.02

http://www.wired.com/wired/2.02/features/advertising.html
[20]

Historical economic models, i.e. supply/demand, labor/materiel/capital have proven to not only be outdated but ineffectual at describing dynamic (not necessarily random) systems. Economic success in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s will be best diagrammed and detailed by an intuitive market sensuality. Primal cunning and aggression, in addition to deliberate and thoughtful (critical) collaboration with market desires will produce maximum benefits.

Of course, intuition and luck have been the success of all companies and individuals throughout post-industrial revolution history. The difference is now that corporations and individuals who insist on progressing forward by looking backward, to borrow from Marshall McLuhan, will face disappointment and a quick and painful debt/death.

Even systems of capital, primarily money, are beginning to lose their inherent power. Information is now the primary denomination of capital, and consequently, power.

[21]

...prototypes have become vital tools for creating the images of companies.

Prototypes have a strange life cycle: they are very, very new, then suddenly they are very, very old. From novelty they pass quickly to a morning-after-the-party staleness. It takes a decent interval before they can be re-appreciated with the perspective of time. Too often, they are destroyed before that happens. The lucky ones end up in museums as alternative realities, ideals cut short by
practicalities, chance, or under capitalization, dreams now chipped, dinged, and generally cruddy-historical could-have-beens. In the context of the museum, the winners are sometimes hard to pick from the losers.

There is something else strange about these prototypes. As Gwen Bell of Boston Computer Museum notes, there is a tendency to package new technologies in the containers of the old: transistors in tubes that look like their forebears- new wine in old bottles. But the package, not the content, the form, not the function, is sometimes the most important part of the modern prototype.

Patton, Phil. “Dreamware” Wired 2.04
http://www.wired.com/wired/2.04/features/dreamware.html

[22]
In it’s place, a new medium is arising, surging across the web in preferred, many-to-many way; anything flows from anyone to anyone - from anywhere to anywhere - anytime. In other words, a true network like the telephone system, rather than a radiating system like radio or TV. This new medium doesn’t wait for clicks. It doesn’t need computers. It means personalized experiences not bound by a page - think of a how-to origami video channel or a 3-D furry muckers VR space. It means information that cascades, not just through a PC, but across all forms of communication devices - headlines sent to a pager, or a traffic map popping up on a cellular phone. And it means content that will not hesitate to find you - wether you’ve clicked on something recently or not.

Bibliography


EJ. CREW

Men's Stonewashed Cotton PPL.

Boxer, 3-pk

Color: 8

Sizes: 30-34

$10.
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J. CREW
3

We now return you to your regularly scheduled program.
t.v. are missing.
you're
If you’re watching tv, you’re not missing everything.
J. Crew
take the clothes. We'll leave
Queen humans all to you and bene-

in a new code.

Here's where it's at when calls for a spruce look, and yet no trace of formality, any hint of the old...
in a new mode