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INFORMATION: MOVING FORWARD WITH NEW MEDIA THROUGH EXPERIMENTS  
IN DIGITAL AND VIDEO ART

by

BENJAMIN JAMES WORLEY

Under the Direction of Cheryl Goldsleger

ABSTRACT

My art is an experimental exploration of new media using images and sounds, combined with technology to communicate messages both random and intentional. This thesis will document a contemporary method of creating art with computers, which results in disorganized images from the unique point of view of a dyslexic artist.

This study will explain how art is randomized information and explain the didactic processes of my art. The concept of the work is to present old media in a new context and show how information is accumulated into a new understanding. Historically, my art builds on the Dadaist movement.

Humor, excess, and performance are essential in my art because they connect to the audience. My library of videos comes from a society saturated with images, sound, and an avalanche of information. I have used art to process and create approximately 40,000 pieces that

will be used in this work.

INDEX WORDS: Information, Video art, Fine art thesis, Benjamin James Worley, New media, Dyslexia, Georgia State University, Digital art, Bean Summer

INFORMATION: MOVING FORWARD WITH NEW MEDIA THROUGH EXPERIMENTS  
IN DIGITAL AND VIDEO ART

by

BENJAMIN JAMES WORLEY

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts  
in the College of Arts and Sciences  
Georgia State University

2009



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Benjamin James Worley  
2009

INFORMATION: MOVING FORWARD WITH NEW MEDIA THROUGH EXPERIMENTS  
IN DIGITAL AND VIDEO ART

by

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Georgia State University  
May 2009

## DEDICATION

Dedicated to anyone that has dyslexia and still tries to write a thesis paper.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## CHAPTER 1.

### INTRODUCTION

I am dyslexic and it can be very challenging. To comprehend a book I have to repeatedly read and re-read the words within the text. Sometimes, information I receive becomes distorted and it's as though I am remixing the text. My mind just slightly bends the truth. I pick up general ideas and themes, but my mind can add subtle differences as well. Throughout my experiences in school, when called on to read out loud, even when it was my own writing, it was easier for me to improvise thoughts from my own head, not words that became scrambled when I read them. Thus the other students were entertained by my tales, which leapt directly from my brain and were colored with fantastic oddities. My versions of stories were more entertaining and, more importantly, saved me from humiliation. This started the development of my multiple artistic identities.

Mixed with years of struggle and ideas, this thesis is an exploration of that distorted perception of information. I also look at a few specific artists and movements to explain what influence these external sources have had on my process. This paper includes research into artists and art movements that have influenced my work and concludes with an analysis of my process of art creation.

Without computers it would be difficult for someone with severe dyslexia to even comprehend writing a thesis. Tools such as spell check, e-mail, on-the-go editing, and many conversations with friends and colleagues have made it possible for me to write. Lev Manovich (2001), a writer whose subjects in his many books and essays has helped shape peoples' ideas on New Media as a tool for artists, states:

The practice of putting together a media object from already existing commercially distributed media elements existed with old media, but new media technology further

standardized it and made it much easier to perform... Pulling elements from databases and libraries becomes the default; creating them from scratch becomes the exception.  
(Manovich, p. 130)

The computer has empowered the artist to create with unprecedented speed in a manner previously not possible. Artists have the ability to access information, images, sounds, and video at high rates of speed. We can acquire information on a full spectrum of subject matter, and then produce new work in extreme volumes. This thesis project was inspired from the influence of technology in art, and how new media changes the way we process and view information. It will also show how my own experimentations with new media have been driven by my personal limitations, and how I use technology to communicate and to convey social and political messages about masculinity versus femininity, sexual politics, capitalism, and economics with threads of liberal bias that is part of the work.

I have been inspired by working with many musicians and artists during creative and improvisational events where we would make spontaneous music and remix videos live. I have had a lot of opportunities to publicly display my art. In some ways I feel that my art is entertainment as much as it is a remix of information. I use humor and images from popular culture to connect with the audience. Though there are subversive thought-provoking messages in the work, on another level I just want people to be entertained. I am drawn to the source materials I use, mainly old books and VHS tapes for the abstract beauty of color and texture they add to the videos and prints I create.

My work has grown from excessive experimentation in video art technology combined with a variety of creative source material using pages from books, images from the Internet, found movies, and discarded objects. The images I have found in books have intrigued and inspired me to make installation art, projections, performances at galleries and nightclubs around



the country. Using digital imaging techniques, I have made over fifty experimental films with these intermixed images that I have appropriated. I have also created two art books with this information collection. This thesis and its corresponding exhibition attempt to capture the essence of my work into one film, a book, and a series of prints to be displayed at my thesis show and on the Web. I can reach a wider audience by presenting essentially the same works in multiple channels that show the abstract beauty of texture and color created from my mash ups and remixes.

The images I appropriated come from many sources including found VHS tapes, encyclopedias, advertisements, film, television and the internet. Each one carries a meaning providing content for my art and the motivations for this thesis. This study is titled “information” in reference to the images and sounds I have used to create art in order to come to an understanding of the world.

I have found that working and performing with “new” types of media such as digital video, sound, and using computer software has helped me reach a worldwide audience. No art form is more cannibalistic in the way that film and video work is to me. I am able to consume and digest the world and then regurgitate much of that world with new media practices. Unless the viewers have taken a monastic vow never to watch television or movies, read magazines and books, or engage in recreation on computers, the images should have meaning.

When I was born, I began to copy everything around me. I would copy my father’s voice, movements, and expressions. I would copy my mother’s laugh, tone of voice, and would try to imitate her smile. I would think that most humans do this as they grow and learn. Lluís Guíu (2007) writes on plagiarism:

When I share music over a peer-to-peer network and somebody listens to it, I’m sharing information. And also when this text is published and somebody reads it. However, there

is more primal sense to the term “information” – genetic information, the genes. What a living organism makes a copy of itself, the new copy carries with it instructions that will enable it to grow and achieve its own identity. . . we can explore the origins of “information sharing” from a perspective that is very different from the one where we are used to (Costa and Mendibil, p. 7).

My personal artistic perspective is to copy and make old media my own. In my life experiences, I perfected certain production habits to accomplish this task. This thesis will explore how I have used my unique forms of information sharing as a form of art. When I pick up a book the impulse emerges for me to take pictures of every object and then recreate the book. When I look at other people’s art I wonder how I can re-create this or alter that and then present it from my own artistic perspective. In the chaos of my mind, the changes take place instantly. In this thesis I plan to develop a coherent artistic perspective on how I alter and share information. Art is my form of information sharing.

While I am making my videos I see the world through a specific personal lens. I believe that it is my artistic perspective that makes my videos conceptualize the world around me. I appropriate popular imagery, movies, films and mix that with older forms of entertainment like encyclopedias, old VHS films, and out of date technology. New visual environments are what I am creating, which I use to entertain my audience. I have developed the skill to make art and perform with it. I am a video jockey, a visual artist spinning images and creating live artwork on a screen.

The essence of what I intend to express is naturally distorted and filtered by my own personal biases and abilities. The images I make express my medium in its different forms not only by the limitations of the found source material, but also in my personal choices. I am showing viewers how I interpret the world specifically from my standpoint as a person with severe dyslexia. My visual or video art, sound art, print, and performance art are ever-changing. I

take into account the specific audience when I create art. If I make a video for a nightclub, or a video for gallery, or print work for a gallery there are three different levels of commitment that I have for each of these creations. They also share a lot in common with each other and there is a connectedness I feel to all the work itself.

I have developed systems to exhibit, show, perform, and produce a great amount of work quickly, even overnight. I have also amassed an ever-growing collection of sound, images, and video. I'm a collector, a dumpster diver, a trash man, and I am constantly building my own visual library. This library is made up of thousands of images from old textbooks, encyclopedias, and things I find on the Internet. Also, in this library I have collected thousands of hours of videos, web and You Tube films, and other data. I take these photographs and videos, then reconfigure and layer them to create multiple variations that I consider to be part of my art.



Figure 1.1 Letter A-overlay 0196 2007

The images chosen are both randomly selected and personally chosen. I line them up and I spend nights and days altering and layering them and as I do, the photographs begin to deconstruct, become pixilated, and turn into abstractions. I add filters to the videos then mix

them on top of each other sometimes several layers deep. My approach to making work sometimes changes but usually has been very consistent.

My methods for creating art have developed over time. In a sense, the process matured as the art progressed. As I developed my skills as an artist, I began to seek greater amounts of dialogue with the images and videos I was appropriating. An early example of this process was to show a depiction of Mona Lisa's hands mixed with experimental video techniques. Then, I expanded on this idea by projecting digital motion picture footage while simultaneously inserting single still images. I believe new content is generated from this process, see the example below in Figure 1.2.

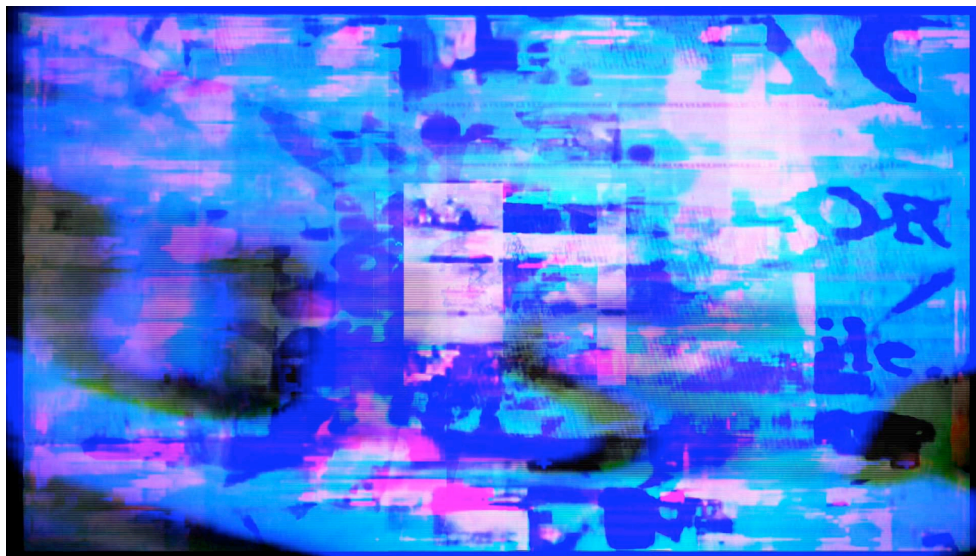


Figure 1.2 I Finally Acted Edit 2 Image 125 2009

Each image has specific meanings to me personally, but it is possible that the viewer might derive their own meaning from the strange juxtapositions. I am creating art using technology, and I am letting the images speak in a new way. Are electronic books and computers slowly phasing out the traditional book? If the answer is yes, then I feel my work captures the essence of that passing by using the same technology that is sending them to their

demise. I am strongly against the demise of the printed text. Yet, the work I have made reflects the fading of the old images on paper to the new image and text shown on a computer monitor. Is this good or bad? I do not know the answer to this question; I am only providing a perspective on this occurrence. The content of my work is this perspective.

My process with this work involved experimentation with video, using motion clips and some digital still images, GIF, JPGS and computer editing software to create a video about basic concepts of movement and space. To this video I have added a massive amount of images that I re-appropriated and produced from found videos and old used books, see Figure 1.3 below. I have shown these videos all over the city and within the installation using the new technology of digital projection. Conceptually, the work was created with many purposes, one of the main ones being of presenting old media in a new context, information accumulated into a new understanding or knowledge. This idea builds on Marshall McLuhan's (1964) seminal essay, *The Medium is the Message*. He wrote:

The electric light is pure information. It is a medium without a message, as it were, unless it is used to spell out some verbal ad or name. This fact, characteristic of all media, means that the "content" of any medium is always another medium. The content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the telegraph. (Wardrip and Montfort, 2003, p. 203)

Following McLuhan's idea, the content of my work is remixed video and stills, the content of that is appropriated images, the content of those images are textures, depth, and contrast and composition. I digitally process these content sources by mixing and abstracting to the point of oversaturation, trying to achieve the "electric light" type of pure information. I understand this is a challenging path to take on.



1.3 Final Image Thesis Image Information Move Big 048 2009

The physical volume and prolific nature of my work parallels the narratives that suggest excesses are manifested in culture and society because of technology. Furthermore, the subject matter for this installation represents a multi-dimensional sketchbook, allowing the viewer the opportunity to enter into my world of expression and understanding knowledge. Conceptually, the process is the most meaningful part of my work and the manifestation of that work will become apparent. Yet, I want the true conceptual understanding of the art to present itself to the audience most upon viewing the final presentation of the work in the gallery space, as best seen in figure 1.4 below.

As I said earlier, I have dyslexia, and it makes writing and reading a challenge. Art is an area I have excelled in from an early age. My second grade art teacher, Mrs. Thompson, encouraged me to pursue my creative outlets. I appreciate this immensely, because it seems to me, the educational system is built for one kind of student, then the rest are labeled "disabled." I feel that "disability" is the wrong word to use to describe Dyslexia, because the condition enables me to see the world from an unusual perspective. Dyslexia gives me an alternative way of processing the world and when it comes to my art,

dyslexia helps me create work naturally. It gives me the ability to see and the drive to share from my alternative visual world, see figure 1.4 for an example. Against the odds, and with the help of technology and the support of many, I have overcome everything about dyslexia that can be considered a disability, and changed them into strengths.



Figure 1.4 Letter A-overlay 0196 2007

## CHAPTER 2.

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND INFLUENCES

The development of this graduate thesis began with research into the subject of video art, and later video installation art. I have many influences on my art process, form, and structure. I will touch on some here and show how they influenced me as an artist. I'll start with the writings of Frank Popper. In *Art of the Electronic Age*, Frank Popper examines the fundamentals of all electronic art forms and discusses specifically how video art rose from artist critique to commercial television. Television art, in the reuse of older commercial video is highly significant to my development. A majority of what I know visually has come from my own participation with commercial television. My understanding of sex, love, relationships, food, and culture is in some way connected to commercial television. Popular television and movies had influence over my social cognizance. My art both exposes and embraces a culture oversaturated with information.

Frank Popper categorized one aspect of video art as “video sculptures” which used cameras, monitors, and audio recordings (Popper, 1993, p. 54). His descriptions helped me to formulate ideas on how video art installations are created. The research into different styles and features used by video artists inspired me to not limit my own designs. According to Popper, the “first” video artists are Nam Jun Paik and Wolf Vostell. They exhibited in 1963. Two separate branches of video art were formed, one using video as a simple recording device, and the other using video for more complex experimentation. My art tends to gravitate to using both branches simultaneously, though clearly the advent of digital technology has opened many new doors from which the video artists can explore. The group of artists that used video as a simple recording device or to tape actions includes Vito Acconci, Gilbert and George, and Gina Pane



(Popper, 1993, p. 54). These artists usually set up performance pieces that were videotaped and played back in real time. Other artists like Nam June Paik used video for more complex experimentation. He was able to make black-and-white tapes by “modifying the disposition of the electronic components inside the video camera” (Popper, 1993, p. 54). Paik’s video art is very different in that it was formed from the manipulation of the camera to create the image, instead of using the camera in a more natural way to capture an image. Paik’s engagement with John Cage and other Fluxus artists like Yoko Ono were very influential to the development of video art in its early stages. With my own early work, I was experimenting with the visual output, but also manipulating the camera itself.

This area of video sculpture and installation art has been developing steadily since the birth of the media. Popper noted this form of video art is striking because artists “not only create new images in their art but also devise completely novel situations in order to view them” (Popper, 1993, p. 55). The video artist is not limited to a traditional way of making a stage in which to view the work. Belgian artist Marie-Jo Lafontaine makes video installations with many sources and multiple screens with both time-lag and slow-motion effects. Her work pushes the physical limits of extreme human situations, a dimension of art just now being explored with the advent of video installation (Popper, 1993, p.55). Video installation gives an artist the tools to make complex multidimensional artwork that has many images and also to create new unlimited environments. The video becomes a window into the artist’s mind, which the viewer can use to gain greater understanding or knowledge. Video artists have developed many ways to overcome the confined nature of viewing and to create successfully a new viewing environment. These developments are crucial to giving me the visual freedom to connect with my own audience.

Artists such as Keith Sonnier use many screens in their work, and others like Anthony McCall analyzed the basic projection process of the video (Popper, 1993, p.56). Artists are able to create new ways of viewing film also by changing the physical representation of narrative within a film. Digital editing tools empower the artist to be able to create a multiplicity of meanings in one film.

## CHAPTER 3.

### TIME IN VIDEO ART

Frank Popper used cinema with which to compare and contrast video art because cinema provides the roots for video art (Popper, 1993, p. 56). The major difference from cinema to video art is the space in which the viewer interacts with the projection field of the video in a gallery viewing area, compared to the projection space for a cinema (Popper, 1993, p. 56). Typically a viewer only spends a few seconds looking at a video loop in Gallery, while in cinema or television a viewer is engaged for a longer period of time. Both can be seen as types of entertainment, though in the gallery space, the hope for some artists is that it both visually entertains and intellectually stimulates. An important aspect of the video installation is the time and space dimension needed in contrast to that of modern cinema (Popper, 1993, p. 56). The main fundamental difference between the media of video art and that of popular film, even at the most experimental level, is in both medias' treatment of the time factor (Popper, 1993, p. 56). In an essay in *Making Time: Time as Material in Contemporary Video & Film*, Peter Wollen establishes ideas about the origins of video art as a medium in relation to time, and how in video art the treatment of time is very important (Cappellazzo, 2000, p. 7). Wollen's essay described the primitive style of filming in order to relate to how it has changed video art involved in the "Making Time" exhibition. Time used by video artists is directly related to the first films ever made. Time is essential to how I break down and create the work. Not only the sequence of events that have been shot in the past, but the way that I edit each minute, each sequence, and each film from beginning, middle and end. Unlike painting or drawing, I can always go back and bring in past video work and add on new video work. The element of time is of the utmost importance to my work, and a great challenge. Sometimes you have to make many paintings

before you have a masterpiece. Likewise, I become too attached to one single edit of video work. Though unlike a singular painting or sculpture in the traditional sense, video moves through time. This brings a whole new expectation upon the viewer; this is why time is a crucial element to consider when making video art.

Much of my early footage was of mundane ordinary objects, much like the work of another early video artist, Andy Warhol. Warhol's films used the camera on relatively still subjects, such as the Empire State Building or a sleeping figure for long segments of time. I used graphic editing programs on the computer to make the mundane and ordinary appear special as Warhol did by his use of time. Since time is an important aspect for the process of production, and again following Warhol's examples, I also experimented with capturing a single tree on film, but for shorter periods than he captured a building in his film *Empire* (1964). The preliminary footage I shot of the tree was for only an hour. I then spent time editing the footage so that it was compressed into shorter and shorter amounts of time. As a result of compressing the footage, I could capture the essence of a tree in motion. I was also able to create juxtapositions with this singular image of a tree and the multiplicity of other images that I was adding to the video.

During the late nineteenth century, the Lumiere brothers filmed the seminal release, *Workers Leaving the Factory*, using the primitive style of filming which showed a simple action happening in a set sequence of time (Cappellazzo, 2000, p. 7). They filmed the gates opening for the start of the film, the workers leaving for the middle of the film, and then the gates closing for the end of the film. Peter Wollen wrote that many video artists have returned to this primitive style, filming a simple action and having little or no other content, but relate more to depicting time (Cappellazzo, 2000, p. 7). Because these early films were made before the advent of editing and sound, time had to be a central focus, and many video artists have returned to this format or

kept it central to their process. In my own work, I do not seek to have a beginning, middle or end. I just focus on the visual aspect of the work. I feel my art films develop organically through experimental process.

Andy Warhol's videos, *Sleep* (1963) and *Empire* (1964), are examples of how a video artist uses the element of time to film an event, and to make the event into art (Cappellazzo, 2000, p. 9) *Sleep* is a minimal film Andy Warhol shot of John Giorno sleeping through a night. Warhol used video art as a tool to emphasize time, or to make the mundane and banal special. Through filming one person sleeping, the action becomes art. Also, in Warhol's lengthy film *Empire* (1964), a camera is used to film the Empire State Building for over eight hours. The length of the film forces the viewer to examine the building, an immovable object, without any action for an extended amount of time (Cappellazzo, 2000, p. 9). Warhol considered the length of the film reel before starting his project. If he had fifty minutes of footage, he would shoot that fifty minutes and then slow down the film during projection to produce the illusion of more time (Cappellazzo, 2000, p. 9). For a video artist, like Warhol, the media makes the possibilities of expression endless, and the methodologies can conform to different styles and schools of creation. The process of experimentation with many different images within shortened periods of time is significant to me, as it was for Warhol with one single image.

I show an assortment of different objects in transition instead of a singular object, because I want my work to represent multi-layered ways in which so many outlets of information impacted my art. To express this concept, I paid more attention to the overall time that was used to present the footage rather than having long segments of time. Understanding the importance of time for video art broadened my thinking, and encouraged me to experiment freely with the concept to produce video art in excess.

## CHAPTER 4.

## STYLE IN VIDEO ART

The style for my work does not come from reading or research but from viewing videos and exploring visual content on the Web. Looking at contemporary video artists and collectives has expanded my work. I have studied “Negativland,” a group of musicians and video artists famous for satirically appropriating videos and music of popular culture, and AnimalCharm, a video collective that famously took old VHS cassette tapes and created interesting remixes much in the same way I created my own. I have appropriated their work within my own, and have spent time viewing and remixing much of the same video footage. Visually, I was creating work on a separate parallel to theirs before I was even familiar with their work. The video group AnimalCharm and Negativland influenced me to expand my own work tenfold. Excessive use of footage is a central element in their work and is also essential to my own.

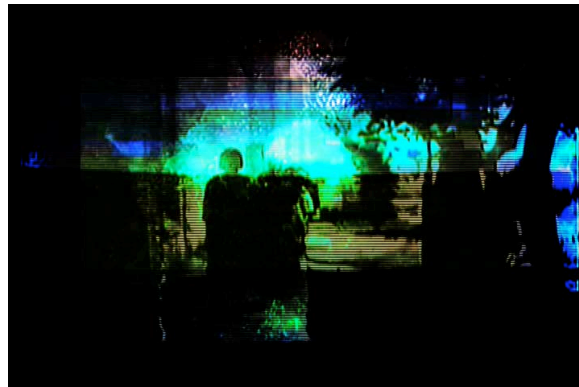


Figure 4.1 I finally Acted 3-2691 2009

Two other more contemporary art groups or video art collectives central to my style and development are Paper Rad and TV Carnage. I use their footage within my own films and also viewed their films and remixes throughout the making of my project. All of these artists combine animation and found footage and editing to create visually stunning work that overloads the screen with a multiplicity of images. TV Carnage DVDs come with a “barf bag” and warnings about the overload of images.

Paper Rad, from Providence Rhode Island, is a music programming art collective consisting of Benjamin Jones, Jacob Ciocci and Jessica Ciocci. Sarah Valdez described an installation Paper Rad as, “ Dada-esque nonsense...flash between rainbow-colored clouds, psychedelic graphics, floating mushrooms, fireball flicker patterns and “rave scapes” (Valdez, September 2005, p. 146).

Photomontage is a “composite photographic image made either by pasting together individual prints or parts of prints, by successively exposing individual images onto a single paper, or by exposing the component images simultaneously through superimposed negatives (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2009). Most of the images were from different sources, like newspapers and magazines. Raoul Hausmann was one of the first Dada artists to use photomontage. Photomontage totally eliminated the need to paint or draw; all the materials needed to create a work could be appropriated.

My art, open-source art, and contemporary video art is inherently tied to the advent of photomontage as well as collage and combine painting. In Marco Livingston’s (1990) book, *Pop Art a Continuous History*, he talks about the development of combine painting as it related to Dada art and the Pop artist Robert Rauschenberg.

He states:

For the Dadaist Kurt Schwitters, whose work is commonly acknowledged as the most immediate model for Rauschenberg’s use of collage, the medium was a way of retrieving ephemeral fragments and collected in the streets and of celebrating their forlorn and essentially abstract beauty of color and texture. Rauschenberg was clearly aware of these precedents in the twentieth-century art. Yet his selection of material was generally based not on formal matters but on modern urban qualities of the images, and his methods were far more aggressive than those employed by the Europeans (Livingstone, 1990, p. 22).

I can see direct connections to Rauschenberg’s selections and my own, in our selection of and accommodation of many images to create single pieces of work. Livingstone (1990) wrote that



Rauschenberg, “sought to accommodate the confusion of sensations and imagery characteristic of modern street life and the incessant production of the mass media,” (p. 23) though in my experience as an artist working with dyslexia, confusion comes naturally.

The style of photomontage and combine painting is characterized by excess and information overload, similar to my own as shown in Figure 4.2 below. My style is a continuation of the experimental technique of photomontage created by the Dada artists, and builds on aesthetics present in combine painting.

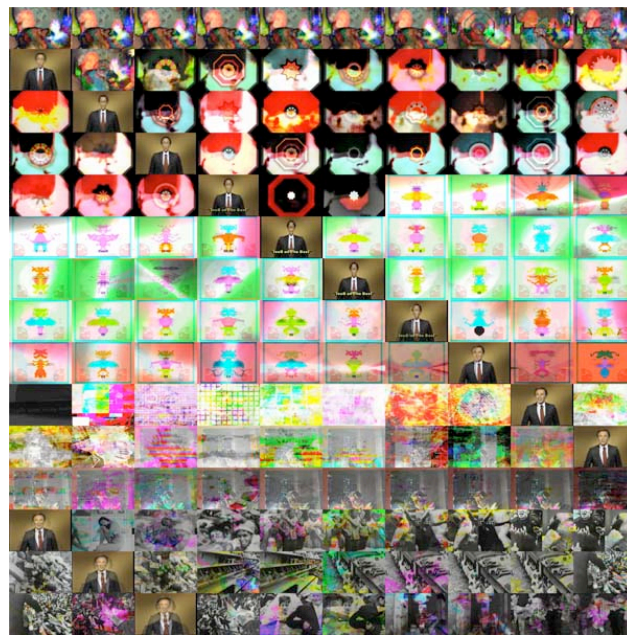


Figure 4.2 Information Film Montage-004 2009

Using photomontage, Dadaists combined individual photos together to create a new subject or visual image often to protest war and social elements that they believed influenced the causes for World War I. Most of the content used came directly from popular culture. Because of this, the work could be used to cause viewers to associate an item or image from their everyday lives with something purposely placed by the artist to shock or offend. An example of this can be found in Hanna Höch’s piece, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last*

*Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany* (1919). In the piece, she uses photos of popular women entertainers juxtaposed with images clearly related to parts of a machine. By placing these images together, Höch used her artwork to critique society's treatment of women, and as a tool to criticize the current political situation.

Dadaists and Surrealists believed that “the value of art was located more in the act of making it than in the work produced” (Rubin, 1968, p. 15). This can be seen especially in the ideas of Marcel Duchamp. The artistic value of much of his work relies heavily upon selection and chance as opposed to a final product. One of his pieces, *3 Standard Stoppages*, was made when he dropped three threads from one meter above a canvas. He then varnished them into the places they had randomly landed. This work suggest randomness as well as Duchamp's idionatic derive to create a personal rule of thumb. Surrealists Francis Picabia and Andre Breton produced a collaborative work in which Picabia penciled a series of drawings which Breton erased as Picabia went along (Rubin, 1968, p. 15). This collaboration focuses on erasing the content over and over until unique and interesting juxtapositions occur. I use these same ideas in my work through constant experimentation and re-editing of images.

The artistic practices of pre-industrial cultures were aimed at creating something from scratch. The Dadaism and Surrealism movements challenged this process with the advent of techniques such as collage and montage which relied upon the use of pre-existing material, though the main operation of this form of art is based on creation from scratch, as exemplified by painting and drawing of this period. (Manovich, 2001, p. 126) New Media art, unlike these earlier forms, was initially based upon “modification of an already existing signal” (Manovich, 2001, p. 126). My own video work is modification of VHS and repurposed older media. This

idea is a gross over simplification of hundreds of years of art, but in context its a simple way of understanding the basic elements of my own process.

The term “New Media art” was adopted in 1994 and refers to works made using digital technology such as interactive multimedia installations, virtual reality environments and Web based open source art (Tribe and Jana, 2006, p. 6). By using new forms of technology, such as the Internet and CD-Roms, artists and information distributors broke away from the more traditional outlets, such as television and the newspaper, for distributing content. According to Lev Manovich (2001), “the popular understanding of new media identifies it with the use of a computer for distribution and exhibition rather than production.” (p. 19).

Though New Media art implies an emphasis on “new,” its “conceptual and aesthetic roots extend back to the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the Dada movement emerged in several European cities (Tribe and Jana, 2006, p. 7). While Dadaism and Surrealism arose in reaction to industrialization and warfare, New Media art came out of an experience in reaction to “the information technology revolution and the digitization of cultural forms” (Tribe and Jana, 2006, p. 8). New Media art reflects the development of technology and its resulting globalization and the effect these things have on a society.

One important similarity between New Media art and it’s predecessors of Surrealism and Dadaism lies in what defines art. As in Dada art, the value of New Media art relies more upon process than product. Tribe points out that the user of a branching interactive program becomes its co-author. By choosing a unique path through the elements of a work, she supposedly creates a new work. Just as randomness and chance played an important part in Duchamp’s *3 Standard Stoppages*, so it does in many New Media art works. John F. Simon, Jr.’s piece, *Every Icon* (1996), “includes a Java applet (a small programme that runs in a Web browser) that is

programmed, over the course of many trillions of years, to run through every possible image that can be formed within a 32 x 32 grid” (Tribe and Jana , 2006, p. 9). In this way, the final product is not entirely controlled by the artist. The artist “becomes a technician turning a knob here, pressing a switch— an accessory to the machine.” (Manovich, 2001, p. 126).

Appropriation is a technique that is so common in New Media art “that it is almost taken for granted” (Tribe and Jana, 2006, p. 13). New media technologies such as the Internet and other networks that provide file-sharing services allow artists to access a wide array of media, including found images, sounds and texts. The abundance of material along with the “ubiquitous ‘copy’ and ‘paste’ features of computer software, further erodes the notion” that art is something that has to be created from scratch (Tribe and Jana, 2006, p. 13). Most new media objects are created on a computer and are assembled from ready-made parts and plug-ins from software.

Michael Mendiberg is a New Media artist that takes the concept of appropriation to an extreme level. In the late seventies, Sherrie Levine became infamous for appropriating Walker Evans’ depression photographs. She simply found an art text of Walker Evans’ photographs and re-shot them and presented them as her own. Mandiberg scanned images from a book with Sherrie Levine’s work on this subject and called it AftersherrieLevine.com. He then gave the viewer instructions on how to print and frame the work and he charged nothing for the pieces (Tribe and Jana, 2006, p. 13). The focus of the work is to take existing culture modes of learning or expression and manipulate them. Appropriation and manipulation in the art process is integral to my video art, as well.

Computers and software systems can be seen as limiters to individual creative freedom, because all New Media artists have access to the same software components,. In order to ensure

variety, the artist must rely on conceptual ideas and the process involved in creating a piece to make their work innovative.

No form of modern art can exist in a vacuum. Every new movement is in some way dependant upon what came before it. Each new arrival in the art world, therefore, is a critique or commentary on what preceded it. Just in the way that Dada and Surrealism challenged the ideas and techniques of “pure painting,” and attempted to redefine “art,” New Media art has incorporated past art movements, in part to further their causes while paradoxically reacting against them. By examining these movements closely, one is able to recognize the similarities and differences between New Media art and Dada and Surrealism. The technology and methods are new, but the ideas, such as appropriation and photomontage, as well as the imagery, are borrowed from an earlier time. My videos build on these historical art concepts.

An early example of experimental style in cinema is “Un Chien Andalou” created by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí in 1929. In one infamous scene it presented an image of a girl’s eye being cut by a razor blade. Dalí writes in *A Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, “Our film ruined in a single evening ten years of pseudo-intellectual post-war advance-guardism” (Dalí , 1973, p. 212). In a sense, this film changed the art of motion pictures into video art work. Dalí also claims, “That foul thing which is figuratively called abstract art fell at our feet, wounded to the death, never to rise again” (Dalí, 1973, p. 212). Buñuel and Dalí created the film in order to shock the audience with its unusual and strange configuration of images, which was a new way of creating cinema. According to Buñuel as he describes the film, “Our only rule was very simple: no idea or image that might lend itself to a rational explanation of any kind would be accepted” (Dalí, 1973, p. 212). The images and scenes were formed with no links or dialogue that could connect them to each other and it is this specific randomness and disorder that directly relates to how I

view the world, and make art.

The methodology underlying the film is evident in the strange props used to produce the film. Dalí asked for, “a nude model wearing a live sea-urchin under each arm”; makeup for Bacheff, the main actor, in which he “would have no mouth and also arrangement to replace his mouth with hairs would look like armpit hair; four dead donkeys placed on grand pianos, a cut-off hand, a cow’s eye, and three nests of ants” (Dalí, 1973, p. 213). The thoughtful selection of props by Dalí shows that great care went into the work. While shooting the scenes, Dalí took great care to “cut out the eyes and teeth of the donkeys and pour hot glue over their faces to create horrible imagery”. (Dalí, 1973, p. 213). Imagery is an important aspect that video artists still use to create structure for the work.

I created many different videos throughout the years that were just visual experiments; they were not grounded in any one message or story. No explanation can ever justify my art as it is created, but rather through the process of creation, it is justified.

The process of experimentation with many different images within shortened periods of time is as important to me, as it was for Warhol with one single image. In my video art, I show an assortment of different objects in transition instead of a single object, because I want my work to represent multi-layered ways in which so many outlets of information impacted my art.

Ultimately the viewer brings her or his own meaning to the space in which to view the work. Someone else might view the work differently in the context of the order and nature of the materials used in creating the work. No one interpretation is correct or incorrect. The significance I find in creation will be different from the interest others find in the final presentation of the installation.

## CHAPTER 5.

### ART PROCESS

I have set out to explore several new processes in art through the creation of multiple pieces: digital prints, video projections, two books, and a show, all of which push the boundaries of New Media. My installation represents innovation in New Media and the discovery process involved with its creation.

This project began as experimentation in video art. In the preliminary stages of the video, I did not know what I was about to create. Through research and the creative process, I began to understand what was required to produce video art. As I started to learn more about the media, I began to discover the strengths and limitations of digital video. One of the strengths is the ease with which one can manipulate the object being filmed. Another strength of the digital video is the lucid color intensity of the final film projection and the straightforwardness with which one can transfer the film from a video to a computer, and vice versa. One downfall is how simple it is for the film to be lost if the digital editing software freezes.

I began this process by experimenting with capturing motion on video and working with video digitized from old VHS tapes found at thrift stores. This work gave me the opportunity to experiment with a number of different ideas, and also helped to establish a creative atmosphere in which I could develop concepts for my final thesis show.

The first videos were all filmed on digital videocassettes, using a variety of camcorders. The images were collected with the idea that I needed a large amount of footage so that I would be able to convey a number of thoughts, because initially, experimentation was more important than concept, a development steamrolled into the overall excess of images used within the final production. This is a process that has been and will be very important to my work.

This process began when the images were uploaded from the camcorders, appropriated from old media and digitized, or pulled from my growing digital image collection. The images



were edited and saved using the Macintosh program QuickTime on my Mac Book laptop computer, and then organized on hard drives. Extra or add-on specialty graphic manipulators helped to facilitate more experiments with the footage in a program called Final Cut Pro, an advanced digital video program.

The process is very cannibalistic; I was constantly digesting, reworking, and regurgitating much of my old work into new films. My selection of images and sound in this process are both personal and random. There are as much as 42 layers of visual content at some points in the films. I then create still images from the layers of film. I created a book of prints from the video available in my thesis show. I also developed a plan for making thirty videos in thirty days.

The 30/30 film project commenced on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of October, which was also my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. I spent each day playing with and editing a variety of films. The process also involved the action of taking all of the films that I have created, appropriated, or used in some way in the last seven years and then overlaying them on top of each other.

I then displayed these films on You Tube, and at Get This Gallery in Castleberry Hill and at a show at Beep Beep Gallery. I later created print work from the videos that will be on display at the thesis show at Get This Gallery on April 25th, 2009.

Day 1. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 1. 2008	
My memories of the 2nd Year. Day 2. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 2. 2008	
I learned to Be. Day 3. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 3. 2008	
I loved Colors. Day 4. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 4. 2008	
It was hard to move. Day 5. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 5. 2008	
I began to process. Day 6. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 6. 2008	
It was a the age of 7 that I first began to explore. Day 7. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 7. 2008	
I was living in Texas, I liked the sunsets. Day 8. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 8. 2008	
Sometimes I looked up in the sky on road trips. Day 9. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 9. 2008	
When I was 10, my mother got in a bad wreck. Day 10. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 10. 2008	
My brain will not die, or stop thinking. Day 11. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 11. 2008	
I was a long trip across the country. Day 12. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 12. 2008	
I started to make art all the time. Day 13. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 13. 2008	
Reflection 1. Day 14. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 14. 2008	
Reflection 2. Day 15. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 15. 2008	
notiation: Information has never scared people. Day 16. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 16. 2008	
Everything that lives, must die. Day 18. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 18. 2008	
Birth of the Internet. Day 19. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 19. 2008	
Everything Drinks. Day 20. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 20. 2008	
This is beloved sun in Him I am well Pleased. Day 21. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 21. 2008	
I am not saying anything. Day 22. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 22. 2008	
Emotional Bond with information. Day 23. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 23. 2008	
Introduction to Emotional Word Pictures. Day 24. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 24. 2008	
GOING FOR THE BEST! Day 25. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 25. 2008	
Intro-ruptions. Day 26. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 26. 2008	
This is an over emotional Word Picture. Day 27. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 27. 2008	
Get to the Point! Day 28. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 28. 2008	
X9000. Day 29. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 29. 2008	
Information Day 30. 30/30/30 on the 30th, Oct 30. 2008	

Worley, B. (2008). Thesis 30/30/30 Information Videos. Retrieved March 22, 2008 from <http://www.youtube.com/beansummer>

Figure 5.1 Image of Index of Films Used in 30/30 Film Installation.

The films I created have specific titles that reference my feelings at points in my life. The titles reference the content for each year of my life. See Figure 5.1 for the title list of all thirty pieces. There are many different layers of meanings; specific messages about masculinity versus femininity, discourses about sexual politics, and content in reference to my visual experiences growing up with dyslexia. As more layers get added, the piece becomes less clear for the viewer. This distortion parallels my dyslexic experience. The content becomes abstracted. The original information and the original intent of the content are masked in the process, but remain familiar. Russell Cook (2008) writes in BurnAway.org “Absolutely no stance is taken—Bean only provides us with a voracious and obsessive accumulation of our own electronic detritus, presenting the collection as an ever-shifting mirror where we may or may not recognize ourselves.”

I began to develop more diverse content as I edited each video on the computer. Digitally reproducing content is essential to this art experience. The act of digital reproduction is

as important as the content itself. This builds on Walter Benjamins' idea from *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936):

Around 1900 technical reproduction had reached a standard that not only permitted it to reproduce all transmitted works of art and thus to cause the most profound change in their impact upon the public; it also had captured a place of its own among the artistic processes. For the study of this standard nothing is more revealing than the nature of the repercussions that these two different manifestations – the reproduction of works of art and the art of the film – have had on art in its traditional form. (chap. 1)

My experiment in New Media takes his ideas a step further. As I acquired knowledge and skill with digital imaging, I began to focus on appropriating specific subject matter: seminar tapes about relationships, self-love, advice, and television programs. It seemed fitting that I named my first project with film *Excess*, because of the way I was producing the work through experimentation with excessive ideas and concepts.

As I progressed through my first major edit of the final film, I began to view the appropriated images and sound as information, visual symbols that carried messages rather than just an excess of experimentations. Thus, I changed the name of the project to *Information* because I used technology to manipulate the visual information and steered clear of telling a story. It is satisfying to minimize and reject narrative on the video. I wanted the viewer to experience the world from a dyslexics' point of view. I wanted to show the positive side of this view. I do not have disability, but instead an "ability" to have multiple views, and this has produced visual strength in my work.

I was trying to escape specific meaning. I wanted to be counterintuitive. I wanted this art to be about itself and not about the outside world. In working with different subjects, I would place images and sound in contradiction to each other to create a montage of footage that was

about nothing and everything at the same time. The footage was randomly placed within the film.

As I edited the film, more content began to develop through visual manipulation. Content was limited to whatever images I was grouping together during that day of work in Final Cut Pro. The graphic editing features were used to help bring out greater contrasts within the images and to distort the colors. Soon, I had developed a simple process that I would use throughout the compilation of the work in a final film titled *Information*.

I then began to edit all the 30 films into a final film. I selected and stored video clips then put them on the computer. The footage was filed numerically in the order it was uploaded. I also stored the clips in categories for quick reference. For example there are nature, storms, books, and children's categories.

I had over four hundred style image groups or categories that I developed over several years' compilations before I even started the project. Clips were stored on a scratchboard on the computer, where I would either add them or delete them from the final project. In this manipulation process, I looked for lighting, overlay, visual movement, and sound content. Most clips I used were less than a few minutes of footage.

I used different graphic editing features within the program Final Cut Pro layering the videos on top of each other, to blend other graphics on top of the images and to create trails and color mixes within the video.

Before the film can be saved to digital video, it must be rendered, that is, it must be processed into a digital file. I would render files overnight because I was working on so many

files. The layers of video and digital effects may take anywhere from five minutes to three hours to render. I would convert and save each video as a Quick Time file, then upload it to You Tube.

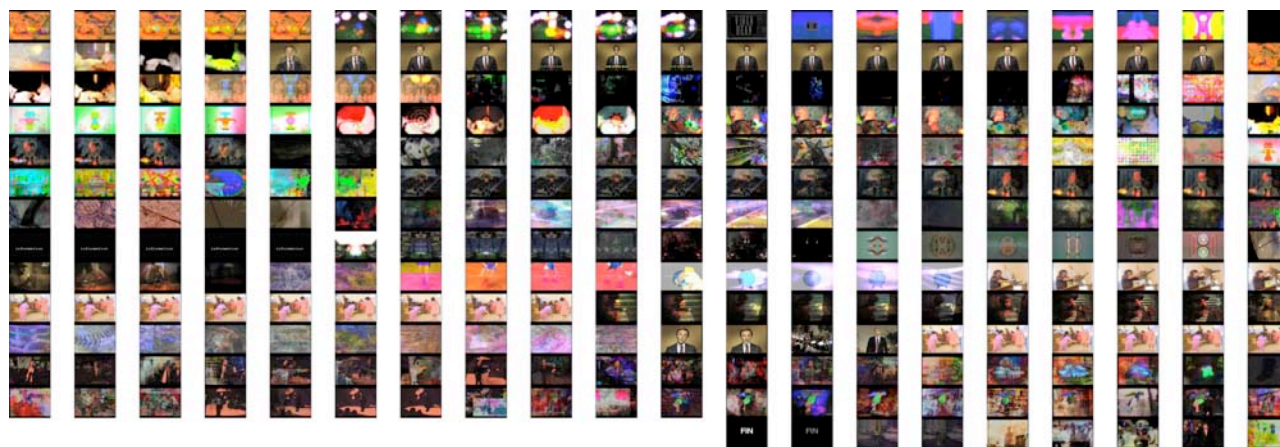


Figure 5.2 Information Full Film Mixup 09

The project matured with each new edit. Each step involved creating a new video still that was basic, yet more advanced, than the final film *Information*. The earlier footage used in each of the original thirty films had relatively little overall planning and the material presented within these videos was based on concepts of movement and growth. Images that were of similar substance were grouped with images of the same format. I would change and edit the film again and again, until I was able to find the fit that worked. Critiques, other art professors, friends, and personal ideas affected the final edits. An image from every part of the film is show in Figure 5.2 above.

I was able to find compilations of sound effects and music to use within the film, and I also added and subtracted excerpts from my own musical explorations in Toy Party Attack, my experimental performance group. Dialogue from other appropriated videos added audio content. In the final edit of the film *Information*, I used repetition in the form of audio and visual loops to deliver a message through the experience. The sound element carries the intent for installation,

and the video element grounded it in experimentation. When I added audio statements from the self help tapes like, “Going for the Best” and “Emotional Word Picture” to the video, it added tone and helped connect the audience to the piece. I then manipulated these statements to appear more abstracted with video effects and audio delays so that they were similar to my dyslexic experience. These statements reference the absurdity that is present in current movies, television, and commercials. It was also my way of adding humor to the work. This idea builds on Roland Penrose’s (1975) observation on Duchamp’s Readymades, “Their virtue lay, not in the skill required to produce them, but in the illogical surprise they created and in the fact they could be repeated indefinitely” (p. 108). This supports my idea of using humor to connect with the audience through absurdity. The idea of art that can be “repeated indefinitely” is in line with the use of digital reproduction in my art process.

Finally, I made a book with still images from the film *Information* to be used in the thesis show. The book includes over one hundred of the estimated 425,000 still images created from the film. I will also show a selection of large-scale prints of images taken from the final film. The final video will be transferred to Digital Video Disc to ensure the highest resolution and the best picture quality. This process is multilayered, excessive, prolific, and mixes old and new media through my specific dyslexic lens.

## CHAPTER 6.

### CONCLUSION

Computers and the advent of new technology have enabled me to produce art at an incredible rate. The excess of images is fundamental to my ever-growing strategies for producing art in a digital-age. My art is in constant development. The process outlined in this thesis will grow and develop into future productions and the content of this very complex work will also continue to evolve, as technology and media evolves.

The images in my forthcoming book, *Information*, symbolize ideas that are a part of my final conceptualization of a world in which the excess of information makes it more and more difficult to find meaning. I am also aware that a deliberate, abusive display of so many concepts, ideas, and images might lead the viewer to become lost. Still, even that sense of being lost is an appropriate message. It is challenging as an artist to live in a world filled with massive amounts of mechanically reproduced images. It is even more challenging as an artist with dyslexia to handle this sensory overload and communicate through art. I choose to make a massive amount of art, in a variety of media, for both political and artistic reasons. My art is motivated by many interests and by the conditions of societal excess.

I realize the creation of my art has developed through a unique process. The first source of this process came from the more experimental digital video footage that was produced over many years and culminated in my 30/30/30 project. Like all art, this process became more coherent as it matured, and the initial experimental stage influenced the final production. One of my goals was to try a lot of new things and push the limits of my art process. I have accomplished this by working diligently, absorbing others' processes, performing video art live, and paying attention to the process.

I have learned it is very difficult to bring clarity to the meaning of the work through writing. As an artist with dyslexia, I prefer to communicate through images, and let the work speak for itself. The work is best experienced in person. The prints created for my final thesis show are both visually diverse and experimental. The prints are the result of a multilayered process. This was my solution to a question I had pushed myself to answer. Is it possible to make digital still images that incorporate images used in the actual act of making the video and in the video? This thesis was in part an answer to that question. I believe I created a unique amount of work.

The thesis was designed to place emphasis on both the excessive artistic and excessive inventive use of electronic media and the re-examination of older images within this new media. I believe that the 30/30/30 project and a set of prints that represents the essence of my art process accomplish this goal. Was this successful in conveying many messages to the viewer? There is a specific interconnectedness that I feel underlies all the objects and images that I used, and the viewer can interpret this as messages. Also, the humor factor in the videos connects the viewer to messages in the work on another level. The underlying connection cannot always easily be explained, but I feel it does exist. And in the end, I want my artwork to entertain as much as deliver social and political messages. Writing this paper was an exercise in exploring the work in depth and to analyze the process of older works as well as my own, and I am motivated to develop this process further in the future, using this thesis as a foundation.



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