EVERYTHING ALL AT ONCE NOW
(AND THEN SOME)

SCOT COTTERELL
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Précis One: Information, technology and the loss of meaning.

Victor Manuel Medrano-Bonilla

On the 21st of April 1844, Samuel Morse, the inventor of the telegraph and the system of communication which bears his name, successfully sent his inaugural message from Washington D.C. to a railway station in Baltimore, Maryland. This new means of communication was based on a system in which messages were transmitted via the process of allocating a coded sequence of dots and dashes to each letter of the alphabet and to each number creating a network of communication in which specific information and its subsequent meaning could be transmitted to a larger audience and public. This new technology had an unforeseen effect not only on the flow of information, but on the speed this information was received and its concurrent role in shaping the emerging global economy with its ability to be able to transfer both information and currency. This rather simple mode of communication can be seen as one of the many technological innovations which laid the foundations for the incessant flow of information that pervades and consumes our current everyday existence.

Paradoxically this same abundance of communication has formed an environment not dissimilar to that described, In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities by the renowned French polemic provocateur Jean Baudrillard that we inhabit a ‘universe where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning’. This contradiction has arisen as a result of the actions taken by corporate bodies, social networks and other structures responsible for the production of information and its subsequent meaning. By choosing to exhaust their resources in the act of staging, not only of communication but also by the staging of meaning itself, they have created an environment wherein a simulacrum of information has been constructed.
For Baudrillard, this has exacerbated the staging of communication which has led to the dissolution of the social since...‘information dissolves meaning and the social into a sort of nebulous state leading not all to a surfeit of innovation but to the very contrary, to total entropy’. This contemporary state of social and subsequently cultural entropy is mirrored by French curator Nicholas Bourriaud’s analysis of the current global environment in which he posits that the art of postproduction, an art form that utilises pre-existing materials or cultural objects for the creation of their work rather than raw materials, attempts to respond to the proliferating chaos created by international market forces and the information age. Within this maelstrom one's existence is continually being relegated to that of a compliant consumer. For Bourriaud, contemporary artists via the process of their art practice, give form not to objects, which would fall ‘into the trap of reification, but as mediums of experience: by striving to shatter the logic of the spectacle, art restores the world to us as an experience to be lived’. Inhabiting this cultural landscape, Scot Cotterell actively engages in his contemporary art practice with the detritus produced by mass media and corporate bodies responsible for the production of information and consumer accoutrements, and as acknowledged by the artist (art practice) is ‘about excess, excess energy, ego, waste, products, images, concepts – It is fecund with these things. It is also about clicks, pops, stutters, corrupted files, incomplete downloads, dusty old mixers and the relationship between a metal string and a magnet. A speaker and a sound. An input and an output’. Accordingly, Cotterell’s body of work references a coda of signified information that moves back and forth between contemporary technology, which includes the up to date minute systems of new media, and those of retro methodology.

*Victor Manuel Medrano-Bonilla is an emerging independent curator and PhD candidate at the University of Western Australia.*
Scot Cotterell in conversation with Andrew Harper

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A: What is a spectacle?

S:– I'm not entirely sure, I want to say something 'big', but a spectacle can be small, like a little dance, or a tantrum at a dinner with close friends. I suppose it connotes for me some event that unfolds, that has some ocular or experiential delight/shock/effect – exhibitions I guess are built in this model that allows to some extent the 'making spectacular' of events – the 'neutral' environment, white, lights, all that shit. I do know its kind of everywhere, in differing degrees, a lot of what we make and consume culturally is built around the spectacle. You know it when you see it. I feel pretty surrounded by it.

A: Is your work about the spectacle? In the sense of De Bord. I just read this again there’s something in this that resonates with your appropriation of culture and the re-contextualising of culture that is perhaps residue.

S:- in the way he talks about the spectacle as this layer over everything that constantly re-iterates itself, his 'goals are nothing, development is everything' is really appealing to consider in relation to cultural growths and economics. Maybe the works are like frozen little fragments of the spectacular, a single frame of it, a strobe of it. The modern/archaic thing – both at once and everything in between.

You've said before that you think my work is like making one big thing, not separate works, i've thought about this and I guess I'm aware of an artists output as a thing, as a linear stream in some ways, as a record of documents, as an unfolding thing – I like the idea that you can work back
into this archive that is the body of work you are making; you can refer back, leap forward, pull in new elements, entirely change direction – it matters little if anyone is watching that transition, and more that its occurring. In a very simple way, I'm re-using this stuff, possibly extending it, or reifying it somehow, using it as a sign. I get the detournement of the SI and the motivation, I think i'm more of a romantic conceptualist.

**A: Are you interested in the remains of contemporary culture? Does what a culture discards say anything about that culture?**

S:- I think yes, that what a culture discards definitely *says something* about it, I think the slippage occurs in the reading of this information, the encoding, the deciphering. I think maybe now we both retain and discard cultural artefacts in a very rapid fashion – i'm thinking millions of tumblr users continually, cyclically reposting from an immense pile of cultural material, and secret e-waste towns in 3rd world areas where the air is more smoke and the water more lead – these things exist in the same quadrant in some ways. I'm not sure what this says about culture - firstly maybe the organism behaves differently under observation, or our methods of deciphering messages from this refuse are insufficient, or maybe those efforts are flawed and there is no 'useful' information in cultural refuse and our fascination with it as material is purely shallow, redundant from a research perspective, useless data; either way i am interested in the remains, partly informed by the fragility of this *not knowing*.

**A: What is a rock star anyway?**

S:- A happenstance, a temporality hovering on a lot of fine points, seems incredibly precarious, a persona, a cult of personality, the right point along the timeline between the mass and the personal for each individual fan, a reproduced image, a series of records, some myths, an economic transaction.
A: *String Buildings* – Alastair Galbraith would mount a wire across a room, taut and cover his hands with rosin to play the wire. The room became a unique instrument, this sound only possible here and now.

S:- I don’t know that work, but it sounds beautiful, that simplicity though is rarely something I think I do. The kind of messiness/loose edges of the language I am using sometimes concerns me – That work IS resonance, both physically and conceptually, that's cool for me to consider – I’m not sure i've done that well yet in my work or that I will. I admire that restraint, but am unsure about it in my own work.

A: How important are individual objects and images as opposed to the juxtapositions that emerge as comment? Where does your work exist? In the interplay of object and the dynamic emergence of an idea?

S:- I think they become really important at a number of points in the making of a work, initially at the observation phase – aesthetically, culturally, materially, etc; it is the objects and images in the world I respond to, even with works about something more nebulous like a particular subculture of something, it is quite often the visual and 3d artefacts the accumulate around the subculture that is an initial 'hook' for me into using it. They are important in that half of what I make in studio or gallery are drawings, paintings, sculptures – they come together with videos, sounds, spatial structures into some kind of environment. I’m not sure where it exists – in between a relationship with the studio and with the gallery, with the live and the static, the found and made, the genuine and the copy – in transition around all these nodes.

A: Do you buy objects or find them or both? Is a financial transaction replicated in the transference of this object to that one?
Is one work greater than the sum of it's parts? Why are Mick Jagger's solo albums so dire?

S: Both – I find, buy, keep, discard, and shift things a lot – its a record collection – I did an unresolved work called arc/hive which was a box of paper 'records' from the studio, a scanner, a desktop mac, and an office shredder – a big poster above with four steps 1.choose 2. scan 3. save 4. shred. The word archive broken up with a slash to make two more organic and dynamic words, 'arc', 'hive' – the scanned collection goes live via a website.

One is definitely greater than the sum of its parts – single things can and do have incredible weight though, and multiplication is an overused tactic in art making.

I don't know MJ's dire solo albums – but I guess because Mick Jagger is not the Rolling Stones - that's the risk when you subtract an element from a cultural phenomena, the whole thing may just collapse in on itself. The pathos and romance of this though, is very interesting to me.

A: Is culture a malleable thing that we manipulate or does it construct us? Is your work about that or is it a representation of other constructs? Does it have to be about anything? What does it matter what I see? Do I become part of your work when I gaze at it and activate through my engagement? Is it not until then that it becomes a work?

S:- I think its a push-pull thing here / a deliquescent liquid fungal galaxy thing – I mean all these different methodologies and systems to propose the exact relationship between us and it. I figure things are produced, and we produce, or at least are capable of the production of things, the accrual of meaning or value to these things once they are made is another thing entirely. These things/our actions may or may not affect 'culture' at large – I think it must be malleable in some form, even just
in a 'you are what you do' kind of reality.

A: I am recalling Beef. It was funny, amongst other things. It took the language of hip hop culture and a moment that was mediated by the internet and added a layer and a layer again. I was so removed. I was not those disembodied heads, and I was entertained by the posturing. I considered my Own posturing. Yours. The arrogance of those men and these men.

S:- You find a lot of my work funny, I think you know my dry sense of humour and so are able to extract more easily, I kind of hope it is more embedded for other viewers, a bit less apparent (the humour). They are not jokes so much as riddles and possibly sometimes fables. I guess with Beef, there was a very conscious attempt on my part to really amplify and 'ramp-up' the referential excess or complexity of the content relationships in that work. Also being sarcastic about space. Having Ice T and Soulja Boi's video replies play out in perpetuity, facing each other in that space was about male relationships, overthrow, generational displacement, Goya's 'saturn devouring his sons', the kind of gaping horror of that picture, but extended out by this p.o.v posturing, pixelated and posted. Putting it in the gallery storeroom, in the shed-like, semi-ordered tool space activates some kind of faux-industrial backstage thing – that you transition into from the gallery. Because of the way it unfolded and occupied a lot of space, it was a big posture also.

The subtlety hidden in there, for me, was this bringing together across time of the provocation of one rapper and the response of the other into a cycle with one another, this really fringe global media fragment manifesting in a very specific and local way in a gallery storeroom in Hobart, that funneling.

A: One thing I'd say about finding your work funny - and I really do- is partly that I know you, yes, but also
because your work can, at times point to the absurdity of culture, amongst other things. Your juxtapositions reveal a truth that can be bleak, and it says more about me that i chose to laugh at the revelation. Good comedians make people laugh; great comedians open people's eyes. It's funny because it's true.

S:- I think its great that what comes out is this 'pointing to' the absurdity of culture. I definitely see that absurd side of things myself in the world, not cynically, but in a bemused way. Baldessarri is a big 'pointer out of things' and even though the work can be dry, forced or mechanical in a way i've always liked his one-step twisting of things. Heres a photograph I took painted by someone else, its called 'a painting by blah blah blah' (that person's name). There's no denial – this is an artwork, it was made for a reason, you are looking at it, you are in a place conducive to the experience of art looking at this artwork that was made for this purpose, this artwork is an idea made manifest deliberately, this is an artwork'

A: I am starting, because i kept thinking, to consider your physical practice to be a bit like the creation of constellations that become the tools of navigation, and that all is an attempt to find a way to ... what? There's a question...

S:-The present I think. To find some notion of now. Definitely all the loop work is about this. As is the constant many projects. To be there, then and now. Not a posterity or an immortality or a mythology, something more base than that, a presence is the best word I have. This could be a stage presence, a phantasmagoric presence, the presence of a distant planet, the presence of noise in a signal.

If they are constellations for navigation, then they are navigating me to the here and now of things.

A:Beef is such a great work. It happens after very well (as in it stays with me), but it brings out how much
your personal palette is about your reading of things, of stuff - how the content is delivered, where it is delivered, how meticulous that could be - and indeed that funneling. that's a good word for it.

S:- That's always the unsure part of it, the reading, as its like a test of subjectivity/objectivity each time you decide 'this equals that' for each element of a piece. Is my reading flawed, relevant, of value, biased, impossibly bound-up in the highly particular place and time I occupy in this vast system – The work is not trying to prove or disprove this though – its like a test with no results.

A: If what you are doing is not one immense work (and that's me imposing on you), then it's a very in-depth investigation of residue. You can use technology but you make drawings and scrounge copiers and those things art institutions eject as they grab for space. Your ability to store those things is dependent on you having a space, and if you ever lose the space, you may have to eject the things and their voyage will continue, each collection broken into different parts, re-contextualised by whoever applies their will to it next in whatever circumstances.

S:- Collection is definitely a large part of what I do – and I guess in this 'one immense work' vs 'investigation of residue' dichotomy – it really is a bit of both, sometimes happening along parallel lines, sometimes intersecting. Collection and ordering are really innate parts of me, and they come from my family – Grandad was a garbage collector in the 40's, his wife a very pragmatic Australian re-user of things, and there's an underlying industrial skill-set there amongst the men in my family – mechanics, fitters, welders, architects, builders. The space thing is tricky, as it becomes problematic to store quantities of media – slides, films, consoles, devices, instruments - at some stage this stuff will need to be discarded. I recently acquired a massive cache of 35mm slides from the arts and humanities department of utas – and I remember thinking at the time; this could be your entire archive, you
could stop 'looking' now, and just deal with this enormous array of ethnographic, biological, cultural documentation. At once excited and incredibly oppressed by the breadth of that collection – and the myriad possibilities for how to process it. The studio tends towards maximalism, which frustrates me a lot at times – how to translate that chaos into something else – into singular artefacts – I’ve been looking at lesser known Russian conceptualist Mladen Stilinovic recently as his touch is so light, its barely there but carries the dread of hyper-media through it despite its initial apparent simplicity.

A: I like the destruction of the paper archive. I wish you had taken the shredded paper and made something from it. Heh.

S:- That was the initial idea, I was going to use the paper to make a brick the exact dimensions of the hard-drive used to store all the scanned images. It closed the work down too much though in that the transformation of the paper to the brick/ data to hard-drive wrapped the whole thing up a bit too neatly – as an open, unfinished work it has the ability to be re-done elsewhere, exist for longer – I’ve done this with a few other works notably the record ones (1024k Ram) – which has just had its fourth and final iteration: the framing of the original chrome stampers used in the record pressing process, effectively closing the work off, selling the 'origin points' as works so that they leave my possession. The Arc/hive is still there. This approach: using my collected studio archive directly in the making process may be a way to deal with the urge to collect in a more symbiotic/direct way.

Andrew Harper is a hybrid artist and writer, with an interest in the hacking of form, collage as practice and the creation of occult ritual as social comment and healing. Andrew makes performance works, writes about art and culture, and experiments with sound. Andrew is currently undertaking post graduate studies and working out how to make a wickerman.
Glitch Art: Scot Cotterell & Designed Imperfections
Olivia Kathigitis

Today, submerged in such a highly technical generation, a glitch is an interruption. Halting the flow of information, images and relaxation. Could it be that it is simply a silence in a pixelated view, breaking your concentration on a fake reality? Tearing a hole in this seclusion and dependence you have made for yourself?

Everything has inherent faults, something/s that it cannot do – pigs cant fly, CD’s aren’t microwavable and this technological world of ours does not run smoothly. A spike or change in the electrical current leads to a glitch. A compressed film or image is left pixelated or unreadable. Systems fail designing imperfections, and artists are watching this. Artists have recognised the abstract and surreal qualities of these malfunctions and have created a digital abstract movement. The same qualities that painters used in the 20th century to distort the subject in view – only the medium has changed – instead of a canvas it’s a computer and in place of a brush it's a program. As quite a romantic view, artists are forcing their audience to step back from their devices and out of their distorted reality.

Scot Cotterell is a glitch professional. Producing technosthesia and synesthesia through his video works. Nurturing mechanical misinterpretation. Cotterell compresses his videos to remove the ‘story’ and reinterpret the media. By interrupting the flow – the narrative content is lost and the interpretive is gained. Reflecting upon cultural phenomena and critically addressing our relationship with technology. Contemporary art is becoming more and more concerned with our heavy involvement and reliance on the flow of information we are fed. Absorbing everything as the truth. Rumours infecting numbers of individuals before corrected; like celebrity deaths and Wikipedia entries. Cotterell joins this idea, commenting on how our instincts fail with technology.
Technology is unreliable and yet we put so much faith into it.

'Everything all at once now (and then some)' [...] proposes to push this ‘thing’ a little further, to make it a more self-referential loop, less dependent on external references, or their readability to the audience.” Cotterell states this as, “An enigmatic thing, without the easily findable 'key' to unravel it. “

“I am interested in the look of these things, in their ocular effect but its not as interesting to me as the embedded, hidden, latent, formal relationships that happen. The qualities bought out by the distortion.”

Within his sound works, Cotterell feeds off ‘anti-noise’ and distortion. Feeding wrong ends and cables to machines and producing calculated interruptions in repetition. It is the unexpected result of manufacturers. Audiences listen to the output, forced into this mechanical loop. Enveloped within technology. Playing live, Cotterell feeds his audience visuals allowing him to become invisible. In No Input (2008-13), the music is supported with a live camera filming his hand movements; inviting his viewers on stage and enforcing the relationship between people and technology. The backing image vaguely highlights the faults of machinery. The camera is not able to catch up to reality – real time is not yet achieved. It is the delay that follows the music. One step behind.

The impatience for media and information has progressed the evolution of technology. Some of the original 'New Media Glitch Art' is now preserved or unreadable. Film, Beta/ VHS, web browsers and projections rely on certain technologies which are now obsolete. Glitch Art is one of the few movements which puts a timeline on the work produced. Like the restoration of a painting, there are teams preserving work from ten years ago that cannot compete or exist with the technology that is present today.
New Media and Glitch Art are fleeting movements. The work will constantly be produced, but the pieces will fade. Artists fetishise and aestheticise these organically occurring bugs dwelling in the digital landscape. We recognise glitches in the first place because they exist when they shouldn’t or they don’t make sense when they should. Glitch artists produce a playful poetry – articulating this odd relationship we have with machines. Looping and compressing, they understand this second language. Translating the malfunctions into an understandable dialogue. Our instincts fail with smooth technology and are heightened through the faulty.

Olivia Kathigitis was born in Adelaide, Australia in 1992. She currently is the Arts Coordinator and Gallery Director of the Format Collective Gallery in Adelaide. Olivia is an established curator and emerging artist having received the Peter Walker Encouragement Prize in 2013. Having curated numerous exhibitions within Adelaide ARI’s and UniSA, Olivia has written commissioned essays for an array of established artists.
Scot Cotterell was born in Victoria, Australia in 1979, and holds and MFA from the University of Tasmania School of Art. Scot is a nationally renowned young inter-disciplinary artist known for his works concerned with the experience of mediated environments. His work uses mixtures of sound, video, images and objects in gallery and live contexts to create experiences that reflect upon cultural phenomena. Scot has chaired Hobart’s influential Artist-Run Space Inflight, sat on the boards of Contemporary Art Services Tasmania, The Plimsoll Gallery Committee, and the advisory panel for We Are Here International Artist-Run Initiative Symposium. Scot has been state representative for the ElectroFringe festival and has written commissioned essays and reviews for Cyclic Defrost, Devonport Regional Gallery and Wyndham Regional Gallery. Scot has curated exhibitions and releases for CAST Gallery, Boiler Room: National Improvisation Laboratory and The Academy Gallery UTAS, and co-curated exhibitions at BUS Gallery, The Plimsoll Gallery and Inflight ARI. Scot was nominated for the Qantas Foundation Contemporary Arts Award and The Alice Springs Art Prize and awarded the Shotgun 2010 commission by Detached Cultural Foundation and CAST, a Sound Travellers national touring grant, and several state and national funding opportunities through the Australia Council for the Arts and Arts Tasmania including projects in the Netherlands, Germany and Spain. Scot has also received the Jim Bacon Foundation Honours Scholarship, and Australian Post-Graduate Award Scholarship and a Gordon Darling Foundation professional development grant. Cotterell’s work has been performed and exhibited nationally and internationally.
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