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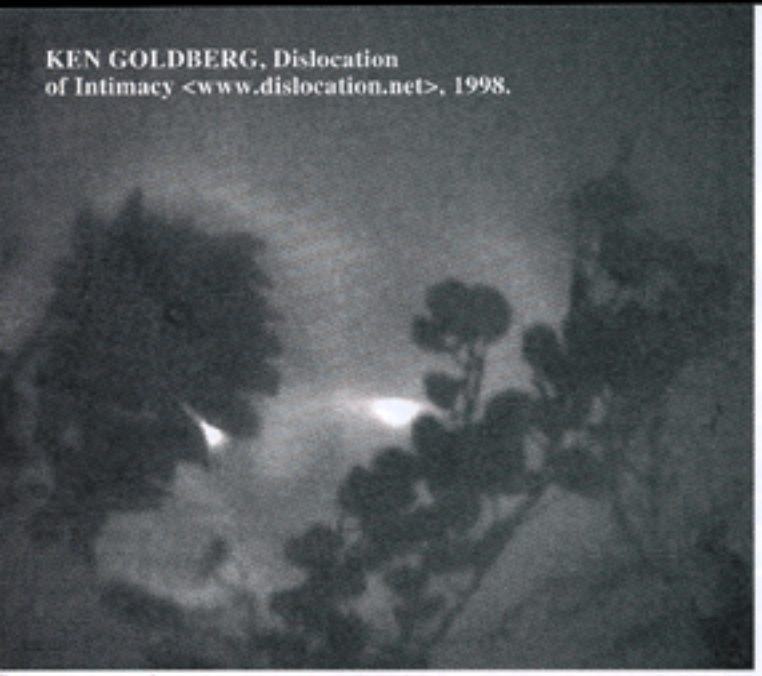
Flash Art



KEN GOLDBERG, Dislocation of Intimacy <www.dislocation.net>, 1998.

viduals will continue to question technology and understand our place within its world," says co-creator Eric Paulos.

Beginning with that Tokyo event, titled *Increasing the Latent Period in a System of Remote Destructability*, San Francisco's infamous machine performance art group Survival Research Laboratories have created telepistemological Turing Tests for the Web98 Conference in San Francisco and the opening of ZKM in Karlsruhe, Germany. The method behind the madness is always the same: enable anonymous users to operate extremely dangerous equipment with no sense of corporeal connection. Then stand back.

"Part of the fun for me is knowing that people online are wondering if what they're doing is fake, or if police are going to be knocking on their door any minute because things accidentally got out of hand," Pauline says.

According to old Wall Street lore, the lengths of womens' hemlines is affected by the Dow. The better the market, the more leg shown. So why not hardwire the connection? That's the idea behind Nancy Paterson's *Stock Market Skirt*, <www.bccc.com/nancy/skirt.html> the Toronto-based media artist's first work for the Web.

First shown this year at the Bell Centre for Creative Communications in Toronto, and also visible via a Webcam, a mannequin known as "Judy" sports a blue taffeta and black velvet party dress near several computer monitors displaying stock ticker information. A computer program automatically pulls stock prices from online quote pages and determines whether a hidden system of motor and pulleys should raise or lower the skirt. While most telerobotic works are controlled by individuals via the Web, the hemline on the *Stock Market Skirt* is affected by "post-human" digital data.

"Responding to a dynamic feed of pure data, *Stock Market Skirt* is interactive with the internet itself, the global flow of information," Paterson says. "It's interactive with culture, insofar as stock markets are a manifestation of the collective unconscious of a capitalist society."

Indeed, Paterson notes, users could affect the skirt by trading stock in whatever company her software is tracking at the moment.

"I describe Stock Market Skirt as a cyberfeminist fashion statement — my post-postmodern take on the convergence of technology, fashion and feminism," Paterson says. Indeed, convergence — of people, media, and ideas — seems to be at the heart of telepresence art.

David Pescovitz is a contributing editor to Wired *and* I.D. Magazine. *He has written about art, culture, and technology for the Los Angeles Times, and New York Times.*

A biotelematic interactive installation is a computer-based telecommunications piece in which a biological process is an integral part of the work.

Ornitorrinco Project (1986) <www.ekac.org/ornitorrincoM.html> through *Rara Avis* (1996) <www.ekac.org/raraavis.html>, a networked artifical macaw mounted inside a cage with other birds. A Web-connected video camera inside Kac's macaw provided viewers — both those in the gallery wearing a headmounted display and others online receiving live video feeds — a bird's eye view inside the aviary.

"In my art work I'm very interested in creating situations that convert the Web into an open social space, into a forum for dialogue and interaction," says Kac.

Dislocation of Intimacy
by Ken Goldberg and Bob Farzin
http://www.dislocation.net

Tucked away in a corner of a UC Berkeley robotics laboratory, a small light-proof box containing a mix of secret objects is wired to the Internet and awaiting an audience. This is the *Dislocation of Intimacy*, Goldberg's quintessential experiment in telepistemology.

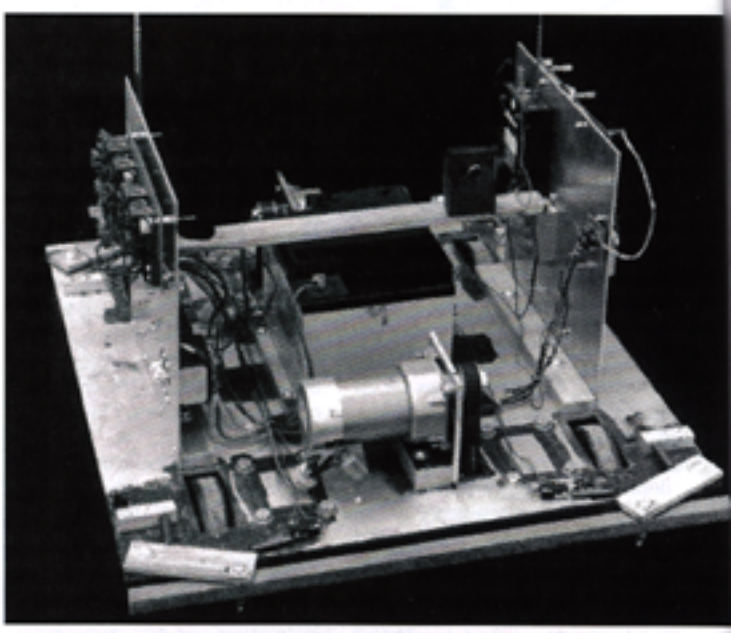
Via an elegant Web interface, online viewers select a combination of lights to turn on and off inside the box. Seconds after hitting the "Proceed" button, a digital snapshot of the silhouettes created by the objects under the user's chosen lighting condition appears on the Web site. The naturally grayscale images are surreal and mysterious, reminiscent of Rayograms or Moholy-Nagy's eerie optical experiments.

"Electric light is a pure communications medium precisely because it has no content," says Goldberg, paraphrasing a Marshall McLuhan quote. "In this case, the medium is the message."

Further Explorations in Lethal Experimentation by Mark Pauline and Eric Paulos of Survival Research Laboratories <www.srl.org/shows/zkm>

Inside Tokyos ICC gallery, a snapshot of armageddon is developing right before the eyes of dozens of spectators and live TV cameras. A glimmering track robot similar to the devices the police use to defuse bombs is scurrying along the floor of the gallery, controlled over the Web. It approaches a second stationary mechanical contraption — known as the button robot — and the track robot's mechanical arm extends to push one of the giant buttons on its partner in crime. Three metal arms on the button robot, outfitted with fresh squid, flail rapidly, but the audience's eyes quickly shift to a large video screen behind the robots. Pictured on the screen is the live image from a Webcam mounted on an air rocket launcher — armed with explosive-filled soda cans — outside a machine shop in San Francisco. Moments after the track robot at the ICC taps the trigger on the button robot, the air rocket launcher fires, obliterating a moving target in its sights. Crowds in San Francisco, and Tokyo, cheer in unison. For better or worse, that was the first day that lethal machinery was operated over the Internet.

"The hope is that with works that have a familiar technology interface but that manifest an unexpected (and hopefully provoking) real physical outcome, indi-



EDUARDO KAC, Ornitorrinco Project <www.ekac.org>, 1986.