sets himself the daunting task of asking people to slow down; to stop clicking onto the next thing; to be transmitting or downloading-receiving information. Often, we are doing both at the same time. Yet, Takeo

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blur the distinction between information/disinformation, journalism/aesthetics and local/global. But, as the totality of this information, how do we form our sense of the present?” More and more, Internet media of data. Of his work

24/7 “space of flows” (Manuel Castells), demanding that we are required to constantly question the authenticity of human experience as ‘captured’ by professional/citizen journalists and transmitted to us via ever-expanding digital networks. This is the context for Michael Takeo Magruder's news media artworks, which confront the accuracy, profusion and instantaneousness of news in the Internet Age.

Occasionally, Takeo leaves the news feeds in flux, allowing them to be of the ‘now’ – but people, places and events are compressed and combined, so that we cannot discern individual threads within the cacophony of data. Of his work Continuum… (2007), Takeo states: “Given that no individual can absorb and process the totality of this information, how do we form our sense of the present?” More and more, Internet media blur the distinction between information and entertainment, and even between ethics and local/global. But, as Peter Lunenfeld writes, “the slashes turn out to be permeable membranes rather than leakproof barriers.” If you are not ‘here’ or ‘there’, you are somewhere in the liminal space of digital networks, uploading-transmitting or downloading-receiving information. Often, we are doing both at the same time. Yet, Takeo

Related to Takeo's question of ‘truth’ is: how can the artist change the way we perceive the lives (and suffering) of others, when the only way we experience them at all is telematically? Of photography, Susan Sontag famously wrote, “images have been reproached as suffering at a distance, as if there were any other way of watching. But watching up close – without mediation of an image – is still just watching.” More and more of us have the technology to watch, in real-time, and from great distances. Has this “presence at a distance” made us more compassionate? More engaged? More able to respond? And, can we relate that the journalist cannot?” It is as if his entire news media oeuvre represents a singular response to Paul Virilio’s lament about the first ‘television’ war (Persian Gulf, 1991): “image compression, which allows information to be stored, has promoted the compression of history and finally the disappearance of the event.” (co-dec (2003)) – whose title refers to the processes of encoding and decoding digital data streams – the image sequences are so condensed that we are left with only vague traces of form and brilliant colour. Here, we must question what information is missing, and be aware of the danger of leaving out, of skewing history in favour of the loudest, most disseminated voices.

Events taking place elsewhere become ‘real’ by being photo- or video-graphed, even more so when they are transmitted in real-time. While ‘reality’ is Takeo’s ground zero, he abstracts machine-generated simulacra by, for instance, removing all but one colour of the RGB spectrum – giving the effect of animated colour field paintings; or collaging texts in multiple languages into a single image – so that the text becomes an image, or texturizing visuals with text – where a raster-like cross-stitch pattern transforms the ubiquitous ‘flat’ screen into a dense, tactile surface, as in Reflection (hope and reconciliation) (2008). In artworks such as the abstraction/ series (2001), the boundary between text and image is virtually erased, allowing the viewer to experience language as visual form, out of which meaning can either be extracted or imposed. Here text functions as image, but in other works, like Transcription (2006), the flickering characters are more akin to machine-code, and as such, the majority of us view the oscillating lines as some kind of unintelligible, foreign language which we will never be able to decipher. We are simultaneously given time to watch and prevented from seeing clearly. The multiple channels of data partially obscure one another, vie for our attention and force us to extract our own meanings from the data fog.
real material damage but for the spectacular effect of it.” (Slavoj Žižek) The task of conveying ‘reality’ in today’s hyper-mediated world is almost impossible; yet this is Takeo’s intent. Although Takeo uses text and sound in many of his pieces, his works primarily stress the heavy emphasis our culture places on visual display. In 1995, Peter Wollen wrote that this excess (Guy Debord’s “society of the spectacle”) has “the effect of concealing the truth of the society that produces it, providing the viewer with an unending stream of images that might best be understood ... as reflecting any trace of the symbolic, denuding the scene to a world in which we can see everything but understand nothing — allowing us viewer-victims, in Debord’s phrase, only ‘a random choice of ephemera’.”

Photographic and video images are both objective (they are recorded by machines) and subjective (they are always taken from particular points of view). Thus, they are both copies/transcriptions of the ‘real’ and interpretations of it; for seeing is not only a physical function of the eye, but also the brain, where past and present converge to create distinctly individual perceptions.

Takeo’s use of language — which is mostly meant to be seen rather than read — also serves to remind us that it is but one visible layer of a multi-layered text: the others remain unseen and are deciphered by the machine: these are the program language(s) and their most abstracted representation: binary code. Thus, for Takeo, all textual layers (natural language, code, and digits) are, for the most part, opaque: the opposite of what the “information Age” purports to be.

Encoded, digitized information is inscribed every time it is accessed. That is, the machine performs a set of instructions, in effect bringing them to life. This information is fleeting (not indelible), a mere trace of its original inscription, yet it is lodged in machine memory for years to come. It is past, present and future, freed from the supposedly immediate conditions of time and space, re-producing ‘signs’ of past events as “available, presentable and reactualizable memory.” (Lyotard)

Persistence and ubiquity have come to represent collective memory, regardless of ‘truth’ or context. For Takeo, news stories and their headlines serve different functions than captions; the latter hold more journalistic weight, since they traditionally state facts, such as names, places and dates. In Headlines... (2006) the only caption is today’s date. Unfortunately, captions often mirror institutional or personal biases, and image altering has become increasingly common because of the ubiquity and ease of use of software such as Adobe Photoshop. Takeo asks us to be vigilant about both our news sources and the ever-present image altering has become increasingly common because of the ubiquity and ease of use of software such as Adobe Photoshop. Takeo points to how “framing” occurs in the individual human choices (subjectivity) behind inscription and remembering. To select events to be remembered is to exclude others. Every view is a partial view. Every view is tinted (or tainted) by this subjectivity. Takeo employs only black and white, binary animations, and in one case, text in the ‘margins’ - to frame his images. He overlays his images/texts with meshes or grids, sometimes barely visible, other times very well defined, to remind us that the seemingly organic shapes are actually millions of square pixels laid side-by-side. Finally, his text often functions as texture; it is as though his images were hand-woven rather than digitally processed and machine rendered; his attention to detail, too, reflects his preoccupation with craft and structure.

In Takeo’s RGB-spectrum composition •Requiem• (2003), text is exiled to the borders. The images, in the centre, are “bricked”, red and black, and lament the inability of individuals to memorialize everything they ‘should’. The work’s framing captions reveal what the images do not: stories of violent and historic tragedies of our time. Conversely, in <event> (2004), the textual layer is integrated into the centre of the frame, acting as a type of structural mask that ironically (because we cannot read it) gives its cloudy visuals some clarity as we are allowed to select and apply different colour filters to the artwork’s underlying video stream.

We can also choose between multiple versions of |Fallujah.Iraq.31/03/2004| (2004-5). In one, we watch the event through a framed mesh. The looped sequence is divided into vertical panels; the image never changes. Another iteration has neither mesh nor frame. We hear the same voice. The sounds are disconcerting. We observe a series of video clips, glimpsed as if through a smoky haze. Texts, in various fonts and sizes, are gradually introduced (and are briefly readable) and overlaid, eventually obscuring the images. The blackness of the window, and the various shades of grey characters seem to give the image more definition and depth, yet, eventually neither is readable. The shifting, unnatural hues of the images — purple/red, yellow/green, aqua/blue — give them an unreal and synthetic aura. We are both aware of the ‘reality’ of what happened and the way that reportage colours how we view the narrative.

Our senses are constantly assaulted by media, both in public space and on the Internet: “sound and image, voice and text have become mere effects on the surface, or to put it better, the interface for the information (Virilio) Unlike cinema, these ‘real hues’ can seduce us into believing that what we are seeing is the ‘truth’.

The blackness of the screen/browser window also frames the image. Takeo points to how “framing” occurs in the individual human choices (subjectivity) behind inscription and remembering. To select events to be remembered is to exclude others. Every view is a partial view. Every view is tinted (or tainted) by this subjectivity. Takeo employs only black and white, binary animations, and in one case, text in the ‘margins’ - to frame his images. He overlays his images/texts with meshes or grids, sometimes barely visible, other times very well defined, to remind us that the seemingly organic shapes are actually millions of square pixels laid side-by-side. Finally, his text often functions as texture; it is as though his images were hand-woven rather than digitally processed and machine rendered; his attention to detail, too, reflects his preoccupation with craft and structure.