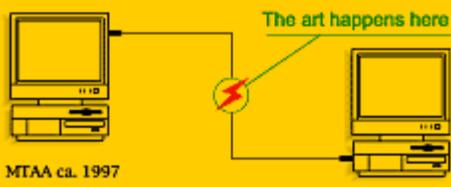


Simple Net Art Diagram



The original Net Art Diagram, showing the space "in-between" where net-art happens and where thier interest resides.

Since 1996 Mark River and Tim Whidden have been making net-art and more recently networked objects under the name MTAA. Although I had read them on the Rhizome discussion list and seen

their work online, it wasn't until I bumped into their *Endnode* installation at Eyebeam 2003 that their tangibility struck me. That's not to say that their net-art updates didn't ever feel real, they do maintain some measure of heft via the history they are presenting in a new digital environment. It was just that the third dimension added that fresh layer and opened up a Pandora's box for them to explore. I was lucky enough to talk to them inside the set of their *Tehching Hsieh Update*, the next historical remake where the artist plan to automate Tehching's year long endurance performance via video clips, programmed scripts, and a web browser to ingeniously turn the viewer into the one who substantiates the work.

Can you explain to us what your current work process involves?

MARK: We've a strategy where we do updates of 60's & 70's process performance art using current computer technologies to automate it.

TIM: For example we did a piece called *onKawaraUpdate* where we built this webpage that displayed the current date and if you moused around you would see news items for that day. On Kawara, when he did his *Date Paintings*, he would cut clippings of that date and include them with the painting. So our update is basically taking his process and automating it with modern technology.

Does it just pull headlines from online sources like the *New York Times*?

TIM: It pulls only about the first paragraph of each article. So it's completely automatic.

MARK: It was perfect, we were thinking that we would be lazy and we would really use modern technology to automate these laborious performances. We thought we'll

build it for [Rhizome](#)'s splash page, we'll turn it on, and we'll let it run forever.
TIM: But Rhizome eventually reconfigured their servers and killed it. It ran automatically for about a year and a half then died. Our options were: do we rebuild it and get it running again or do we just call it the end of the piece?



“...the experimentation phase in Net-Art [has] ended. But we're still trying to figure that out. We've just started to experiment in making objects that would run on networks.”

Was it an accident?

TIM: It was an accident and after that we decided that we would have to be truthful to it; It stopped running and the piece is over. The clock ran out on it.

So you decided not to "update" your own piece?

TIM: Right.

What kind of programming was involved in the piece?

TIM: It was written in [Perl](#). [Alex Galloway](#) programmed part of it and I programmed another part of it. With Perl, basically, it's more or less easy to look at a bunch of text and use regular expressions to find the text you want in there just by using patterns and how the text is laid out. So that's what he did. Still, it was very hard to get news items from other websites. Perl was used to "scrape" other website to try and figure out where the text was in the code that you wanted. The problem was that if they recoded their website our *onKawaraUpdate* wouldn't work and we'd have to reprogram it. Now that there's a lot of [XML](#) on the web it would be a lot easier for us to do an *onKawaraUpdate* version 2. Back then there were no websites that had their news in XML, now almost every site has it.

Now you can grab what you need and it would be less of a shot in the dark?

TIM: Yeah, with XML, information is a lot easier to grab and re-use. Where with HTML it was harder because it wasn't meant for that, it was used for document layouts.

UPDATING THE ART WORLD ONE ARTIST AT A TIME...



THE ORIGINALS:

1, 2. [Date Paintings, On Kawara](#), began 1965. Since 1965 Japanese born artist On Kawara made a painting with the date along with a box for each painting in which the day's clippings were placed. Since 1965 he has made well over 2000 date paintings.

3. [Seedbed Vito Acconci](#), 1972. For three days a week during January 1972, Vito stuffed himself under the ramp invisible to gallery visitors. Through a speaker in the gallery Vito verbalized

THE UPDATES:

[onKawaraUpdate](#) (two above). Originally programmed on Rhizome.org's splash page. MTAA's version of On Kawara's date paintings would present the date, the daily digital news clippings is visible when you mouse over the date. The program was written in Perl allowed for the "scraping" of news websites for content and returning them to this splash page. In 2002, Rhizome reconfigured their servers and the *onKawaraUpdate* failed to work properly any more. They've not decide whether to do *onKawaraUpdate* 2. Perhaps in the future an On Kawara news web spider will take up it's job?

[vitoAcconciUpdate](#) of [Seedbed](#)(bottom left). This webpages presents slices of the the artist in small frames. Purposeful ambiguity leaves the rest up to the imagination of the viewer. Unlike Vito Acconci's original *Seedbed*, a convenient "Moan off" and "Moan On" link let you control whether the page moans in a completely un sexy voice. At work, use head phones if you insist on the later link.

his fantasies about the visitors overhead as they walked on the ramp. Sonnabend Gallery, Soho, NYC

4. One Year Performance 1978-1979 (A.k.a. Cage Piece), Tehching Hsieh, NYC. For the duration of one year Tehching stayed in his studio without any contact to the outside world except for the visits from his assistant to bring him his food and remove his waste.



techingHseihUpdate, (in progress, bottom right) Recreating a similar space that Tehching Hsieh spent a year in, MTAA plan to shoot short clips of actions as well as a 24hr day in the studio cube which will then be programmed to display for the viewer what appears to be a year long endurance piece. Only the viewer who spends a whole year on the computer watching the piece will ever know if in fact the program will last for a year. * Side note: While on another piece, Tehching's year long outside piece was broken by an arrest by cops, can MTAA's update withstand down time on thier servers, and pray that the code holds for one whole year?



With all these changes in technologies how does anyone keep up?

MARK: Both technology and Net-Art have really changed in the last 2-3 years - I think Cory Archangel mentioned it in his [interview](#)- where he felt the experimentation phase in Net-Art had ended. But we're still trying to figure that out. We've just started to experiment in making objects that would run on networks. For example we did a residence at [Eyebeam](#) where we built a large networked plywood tree that was 14 feet tall. That was our first jump into making objects on networks. We're always thinking that we're interested in network communication, but how do you make a physical and engaging object from this? So for the last year we're thinking about that approach again and building structures.

So these seem to be the core or your approaches: you have your networked objects and then you have these artist updates.

The *techingHseihUpdate* piece that we are working on now is a commission for [Turbulence](#). Originally [Tehching Hsieh's piece](#) was about living in a studio for a year without anything. What we are going to do to automate this performance is that we are gonna video tape short actions as well as 24 hrs of us being in the cell. Then we'll program server scripts that call up actions like brush teeth, comb hair, lay down, eat food -just like normal functions that you would have everyday, but instead of being in the studio for a year the program will simulate that. When you go to the website it will look at your local time to see whether it is daytime or nighttime and then call up video clips that would relate to your local time. It will also have the function of keep track of how long you've physically been watching the piece. So instead of us, the artist, performing for a year, the way you can really experience the piece [as a real update to the original piece] is that if you can actually watch it for a year. That would complete the piece. That's why we will have it records the time you've spent on watching the piece.

That's interesting because the piece will now be a measure of the viewer's endurance. The original artist was willing to devote a long period of time to that performance, the question now is: Will the audience have the patience to do the same with your update?

TIM: Yeah so the main conceptual "update" is that we are moving the burden of the spending a year of time from us to the viewer.

