

EDIT
UNDO

EDIT/UNDO

Leo Fitzmaurice, Damon Zucconi,
Alastair Levy, Paul Flannery

SHOW DATES

16/01 – 14/02/15

THANKS

Space In Between would like to thank the artists Leo Fitzmaurice, Damon Zucconi, Paul Flannery and Alastair Levy, and writer and curator Ellen Mara De Wachter for her invaluable contribution to this publication.

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Edit/Undo

This publication – produced on the occasion of a group exhibition of the same name – features the work of four artists: Leo Fitzmaurice, Damon Zucconi, Paul Flannery and Alastair Levy. Bringing together the work of these artists for the first time, **Edit/Undo** explores the activities of observation, intervention and archiving. The exhibition features works that stand as relics of performative processes and as symbols to shift the way that we think about the unspectacular and the mundane. Each of the artists involved has a shared curiosity in the nature of quotidian ephemera and the possibilities arising from their transformation. The title – **Edit/Undo** – is a command used across all software from Microsoft Office to Photoshop, and alludes to the gestures of alteration intrinsic to all of the work presented. This publication includes an essay entitled **Some Past State**, written by Ellen Mara De Wachter following conversations with each of the artists involved.

Hannah Hooks & Laura McFarlane

Some Past State

Where, in time, do you sit? On second thought maybe I should put that question in a more directional way for you. If time were a line, where would you be, on the line of time? And come to think of it, which way would that line travel? What if you could walk that line in more than one direction, maybe imagine away the world as it is or conjure up an unlikely scenario further down the line? An IBM research report compiled in 1976 described a command a computer user might make in the event a programme crashed. It would be a command that 'somehow preserved, and helped restore, the world just prior to the abnormal termination'ⁱ. The world just prior.

Two artists, born more than two decades apart on distant continents, duplicate squares. Each artist lines up the two matching shapes and rotates one of them to introduce a 90-degree difference between them. He then folds the overhanging corners of one square to create a new depth, space, visual play.

The First artist watches his son play computer games and notes the seepage of imagery and data from online worlds into everyday material and behaviour. He sketches his work for an exhibition on a computer, making a mathematical rendering of the gallery and quickly going through the many options and variables of his idea. He eventually settles on a plan for the 90 degree rotation, before performing the same manoeuvre in the exhibition space itself. He visualises the floor as a plane, virtually disconnects it from its surrounding walls and rotates it. He paints the grey floor's dislocated corners as triangles folded up the wall, and drops the white walls into the 'empty' spaces left behind. His intervention reveals the artificiality of the white cube, on a visual level as on an ideological one: the ultimate **trompe l'imagination** environment.

The Second artist fills the same space with ringtones from the latest version of ios, the operating system that

powers Apple products. He applies a Doppler shift to each of the ring tones, changing its frequency to mimic the effect produced in the sound of a car as it drives past a fixed listening point on a motorway. From a steady listening position and without actual movement, each tone sounds warped as though through an oneiric lens focusing the effects of time un-lived, fantasy unimagined or distance untraveled. The work is a time capsule of sorts, preserving – and distorting – a popular component of the acoustic landscape from a loosely fixed 'now'. These ringtones surround us unnoticed or hold specific, perhaps even fetishistic, meaning. They provoke an emotional or physical response to long-hoped-for attentions, unwelcome news or uncomfortable silences. They are triggers for emotion, nostalgia and memory, at once drearily generic and pointedly subjective.

A Third artist toys with an old computer programme, launched three decades ago and delivered, then, burned into a plastic diskette with a predicted half-life of over 500 years. Now, he uses a version of the same software he has downloaded from a cloud. He idly drags his cursor across the screen, subconsciously loops-the-loop, tries a few Half Cuban Eights and thinks little more of it. But these primitive drawings stay with him, floating across his vision like a caveman's entoptic signs. He prints out his favourite; it becomes a little fetish object. He goes back to it, gridding the sketch to enlarge it, in true renaissance tradition, into a drawing so detailed that the tiny tiled pattern of the original dot matrix impression is revealed to the naked eye. Row upon row of pixelated circles patterned around individual dots drawn by hand; a bitmap mandala.

Just as we don't know exactly how long it will take our waste plastics to decompose, neither do we quite know the long-term effect our new technologies will have on our bodies, minds or societies. While some might claim to be in the midst of an ongoing paradigm shift, to those born since the mid-1980s, distinctions between a 'before'

and an 'after' of digital culture may be less evident. This generational difference equates to a cosmological rift which educationalist Mark Prensky neatly – perhaps too neatly – expressed in his 2001 article '[Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants](#)'. The geopolitical analogy with technology users suffers from some of the flaws of nationalism. The fantasy of a clear-cut distinction between natives and immigrants masks the more fluid reality of contemporary nomadism and hybridity, which characterise large groups in places where people come and go – cosmopolitan cities, refugee camps.

Might we imagine a time when this grey area of digital citizenship and identity fade away completely? Today, computer programming is taught in resource-rich countries to five-year-olds. However, for those less fortunate, or those born before the 1980s, illiteracy can act as a spell, with the power of computers or their influence on behaviour perceived as quasi-magical.



Rapt, you relinquish vast realms of attention to your devices. You wait for Pavlovian cues, for the red circle to effloresce at the top right corner of the light blue square, for a micro-timeline to proffer another @dailyzen missive, for the polyphonic gong to warn you of an envelope dropping onto your online doormat. Technological events – like all events – provoke physical responses. Proud recipient of a message? Your body rewards you with a shot of dopamine, the hormone that, rather than just making you feel good, makes you want more. You become hooked into a loop of seeking and anticipating minor trophies that, in turn, cause you to seek more of themⁱⁱ. It's of little surprise that in the present condition of personal device saturation, which takes us on a rollercoaster of short-term rewards, counter-practices such as mindfulness meditation or the Slow Movement have gained in popularity among the privileged classes.

Machines are creatures of our own making; they reflect our innermost desires and needs. We feed them, and they glow with light or warmth for us. Sometimes they seem happy; occasionally they fall prey to tempers. Hold a phone in your hand for a moment and put it through its paces, and it will send the energy it consumes back to you by heating your hand up. If we spend too much time with our devices, as with any best friend, we begin to mirror their behaviour, fancying that we can perform commands just as they can, that we might be able to return the world to 'some past state'ⁱⁱⁱ. But even at their finest, products of the most sophisticated design, these machines can retain an air of mystery; an impenetrable, uncanny aura, like the bewitching automaton Olympia in E.T.A. Hoffmann's 1816 short story [The Sandman](#). Olympia, who can dance and play the harpsichord with skill but whose sole utterance is the perfunctory 'Ah, ah!' she emits whenever she is spoken to. 'Ah, ah!' is Olympia's default response, but it's enough to keep her admirer Nathanael in thrall to her artificial beauty, to her glass eyes.

A Fourth artist writes words and computer code. He develops a typeface which allows him to apply a set of instructions to any text. This sans-serif font is 'Affirmation as Punctuation', and it replaces punctuation marks with the filler word 'yeah', lending 'concrete positivity' to a given text, regardless of its original emotional tenor. The quintessential filler lines of [Lorem Ipsum](#) gain an affirmative beat, morphing from the humdrum 'Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.' to the more upbeat 'Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet yeah consectetur adipiscing elit yeah'. Depending on your yeahness, text in this font is inflected with a groovy, nonchalant or street sensibility; gaining or losing in urgency, rhythm and speed. The font's default replacement of all punctuation marks with the universal 'yeah' puts texts on a transformational timeline, giving them new and unpredictable nuances and challenging the reader to separate out the rich yolk of the original text.

Although materials change and evolve, artists have stayed faithful to many of the tendencies established in the early part of the 20th century by the **Magister Ludi** of conceptual art Marcel Duchamp. Trickery, sleight of hand, illusion and visual or textual punning are as potent and popular now as they were then. Artists put a poetic spin on the everyday stuff we coexist with, shifting things from one point in time or space to another, and seeing what happens. As the First artist points out, the urge to edit and undo the world as it is indicates the fragility of what we see or say. It's a fragility that 'floats across the experience of being in space and time'.

Our common sense of time first developed in relation to observations of tides, one of the ultimate default activities of our planet, along with sunrise and sunset. In different places, time has grown into culturally specific constructs. Anthropologist Edward T. Hall posits a difference between monochronic and polychronic societies. Polychronic places, including Latin America and much of Asia, consider time as a fluid phenomenon. People in these places adapt more easily to changing circumstances and new information. In monochronic societies, including Europe and North America, we tend to perceive time as fixed and unchanging. People do things in a certain order, following a pre-determined sequence. This linear model fails to account for the free movement of things across time, propelled by the imagination. It can't quite cope with the nature of optical illusions, auditory jolts or linguistic manipulations that invite us to move through time in any number of other directions. In response to Hall's account of different cultural conceptions of time, a society of artists, if such a thing can be imagined, might offer a third way. It would be a culture outside of time as we currently think of it, in which prior worlds and impending states coincide and jostle alongside one another in an ongoing and asynchronic present.

Ellen Mara De Wachter

Artists in order of mention

First: Leo Fitzmaurice

Second: Damon Zucconi

Third: Alastair Levy

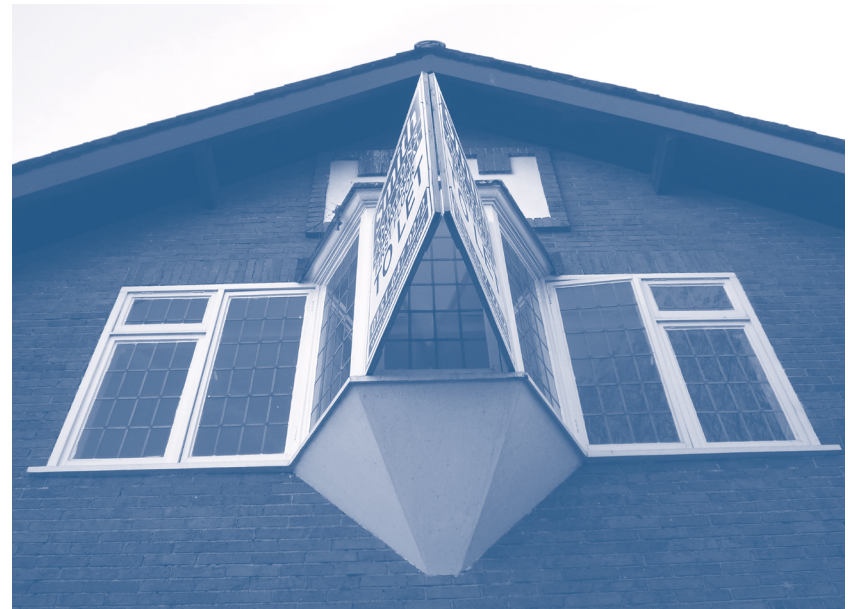
Fourth: Paul Flannery

i—Lance A. Miller & John C. Thomas, Jr., "Behavioral Issues in the use of Interactive Systems", IBM Research Laboratory: NY, 14 December, 1976, p.25

ii—Susan Weinschenk, Ph.D., "Why We're All Addicted to Texts, Twitter and Google", Psychology Today, 11 September, 2012

iii—'Recovery refers to the re-instatement of some past state of the computer system environment, usually after some kind of error malfunction.' Lance A. Miller & John C. Thomas, Jr., "Behavioral Issues in the use of Interactive Systems", IBM Research Laboratory: NY, 14 December, 1976, p.25

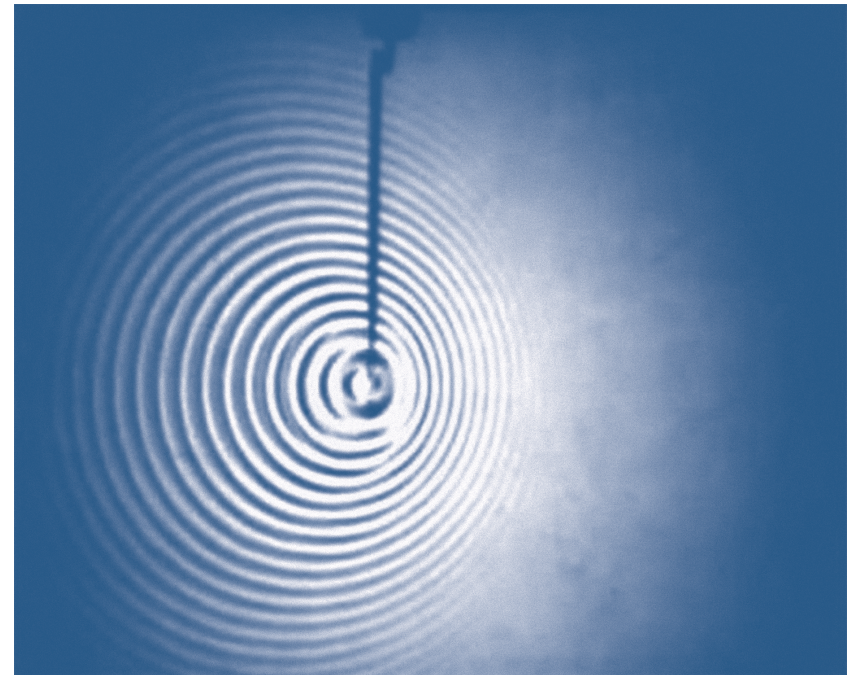
Leo Fitzmaurice (b.1963) lives and works in Liverpool. Recent shows include *You Tried To Tell Me But I Would Not Listen*, The New Art Gallery, Walsall (2011); *The Way We Do Art Now*, Tanya Leighton Gallery, Berlin (2010); *Niet Normaal*, De Beurs Van Berlag, Amsterdam (2010); *Flyersflagsheepself*, Seventeen Gallery, London (2009); *Good Riddance*, MOT, London (2008). In 2012 Fitzmaurice was the recipient of the 5th Northern Art Prize. www.leofitzmaurice.com



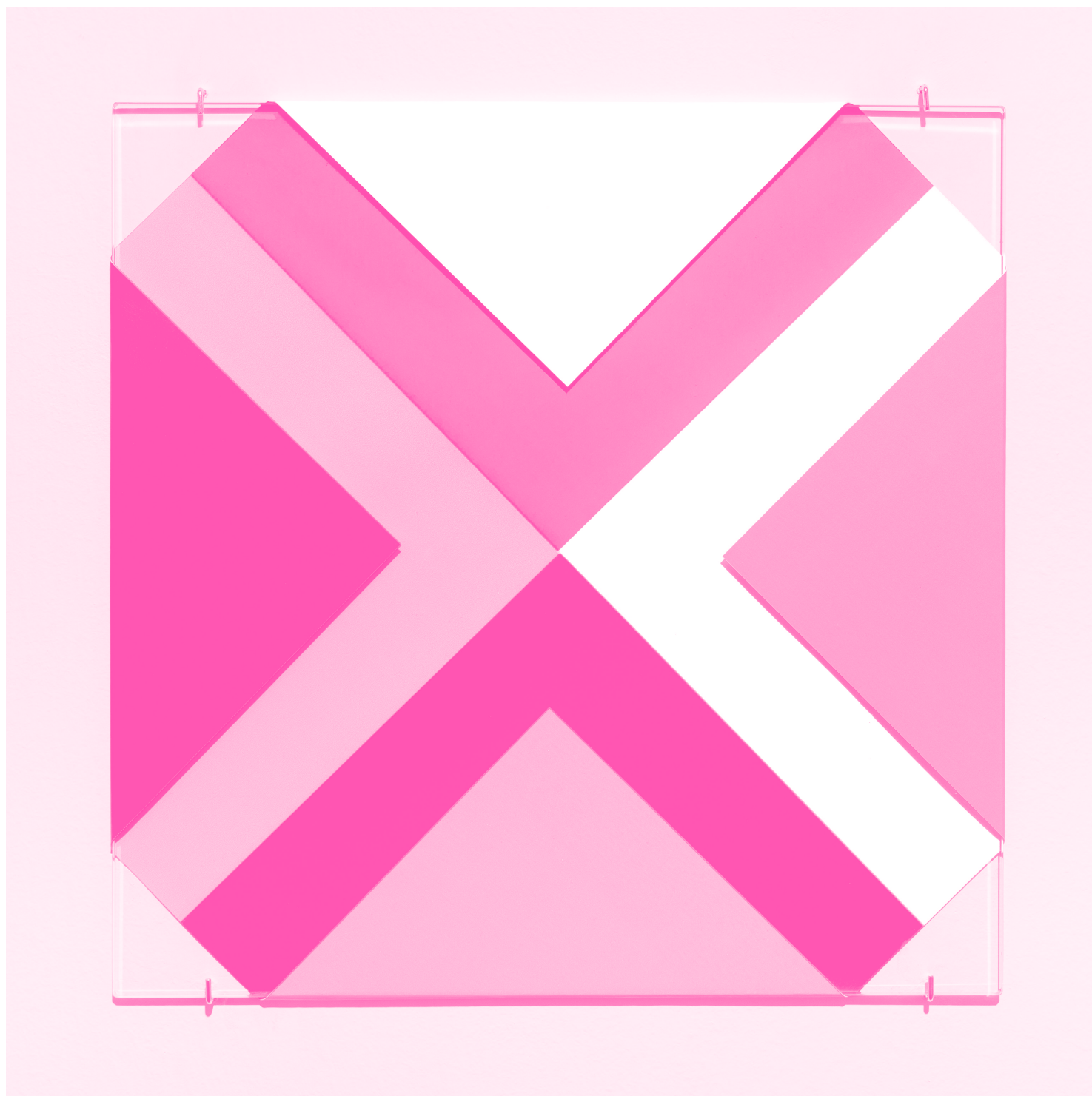
This page: *Frando*, photograph, 2011
Following page: *Dodo*, photograph, 2012



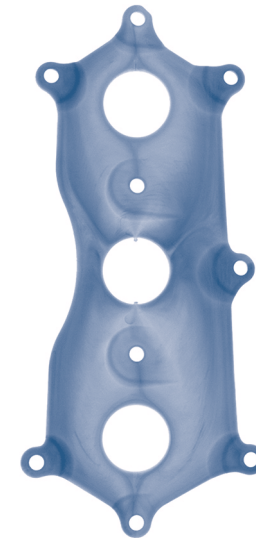
Damon Zucconi (b.1985) lives and works in New York.
Recent shows include *Windows in Progress*, JTT, New York
(2013) [solo]; *Damon Zucconi: Multiple*, New Museum, New York
(2013) [solo]; *Snow/Crystal*, Steamboat Springs Arts Council,
Steamboat Springs (2012); *Possession*, The Art Foundation,
Athens (2011); *Multiplex*, Peer to Space, Munich (2010).
www.damonzucconi.com



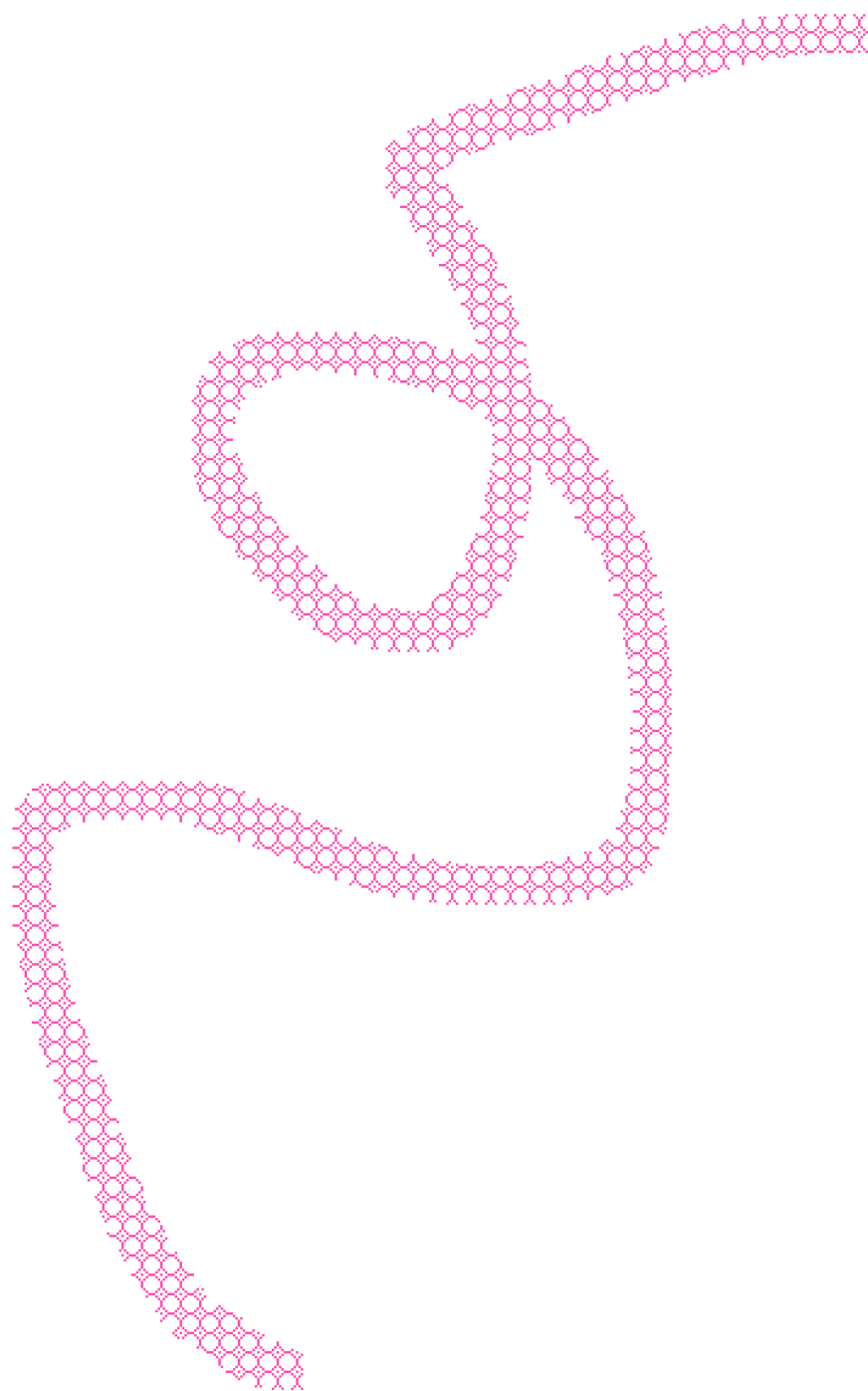
This page: *Doppler Shifted Ringtones*, 2014
Following page: *Tetradic Edit*, acrylic on pike and low iron glass, 2013



Alastair Levy (b.1979) lives and works in London.
Recent shows include *Journal of [Dis]Satisfactions*, Galerie Ferdinanda Baumann, Prague, (2014); *The Following Guidelines Should Assist You*, Benrimon Contemporary, New York (2013) [solo]; *Dienstag Abend*, Gdanska Galeria Miejska, Gdansk (2013); *Mostra Collettiva Estiva*, <http://bubblebyte.org> (2012); *Circa 1960*, Guest Projects, London (2012).
www.alastairlevy.net



This page: *Production still from Protection*, HD video, 9 second loop, 2014
Following page: *Cloudpaint*, graphite on paper, 2014



Paul Flannery (b.1978) lives and works in London. Recent shows include **Fun Autobahn**, Gloria Maria Gallery, Milan (2014); **Nuovo, Nuovo Vecchio**, Spike Island, New Contemporaries website takeover with bubblebyte.org (2013); **Secondo Anniversario**, Seventeen Gallery, London (2013); **Guide to the Galaxy**, Gloria Maria Gallery, Milan (2013); **Born in 1987: The Animated Gif**, The Photographers' Gallery, London (2012). www.paulflannery.co.uk



Extract from Behavioral Issues in the use of Interactive Systems, Lance A. Miller & John C. Thomas Jr., IBM Research Laboratory: NY, 14 December, 1976, cover and pp.25-7

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Computer Science 49 pages

Research Report

BEHAVIORAL ISSUES IN THE USE OF INTERACTIVE SYSTEMS

Lance A. Miller and John C. Thomas, Jr.

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Yorktown Heights, New York 10598

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tion modes (Chapanis, 1971; Ochsman & Chapanis, 1974), the development of much more sophisticated models of knowledge (e.g., Bobrow & Collins, 1975; Mann, 1975) and the development of methodologies for empirically studying natural multiple-person intercommunications ('multilogues'; e.g., Mann, Moore, Levin, & Carlisle, 1975).

1.2.7 Recovery Philosophy

Recovery refers to the re-instatement of some past state of the computer system environment, usually after some kind of error or malfunction. There has been almost no general consideration of recovery approaches (see Engel & Granda, 1975), but four types of recovery situations, with respect to the user, can be identified: (1) user correction of data input, (2) user abolishment of prior commands, (3) abnormal exit from within some program or programming language processor, and (4) system crash.

With respect to (1), user corrections of input data, most displays now provide for local editing (i.e., correction) before transmission. Following transmission, the user should have available some reserved key or command to provide for the correction, without having to invoke an editor. It seems likely that data input errors are usually caught immediately by users, and extensive buffering of input data should not be required.

A more complex situation, however, occurs for situation (2), when a user wishes to 'undo' the effects of some number of prior commands -- as, for example, when a user inadvertently deletes *all* personal files. Recovery from such situations is handled by most systems by providing 'backup' copies of (all) users' files, from which a user can get restored the personal files as they were some days previous. While this is perhaps acceptable for catastrophic errors, it would be quite useful to permit users to 'take back' at least the immediately preceding command (by issuing some special 'undo' command). Implementation of such a feature would require buffer storage of *all* of a user's files which were modified by the last command and

thus could be an interesting data-management problem for the systems designer. Nevertheless, the benefit to the user in having -- even just knowing of -- the capability to withdraw a command could be quite important (e.g., easing the acute distress often experienced by new users, who are worried about 'doing something wrong').

The first two recovery situations (1 & 2) require the user to detect the undesired situation and initiate corrective actions. The second two situations (3 & 4) originate with the action of the system. For both of these kinds of situations it is most desirable to provide users with two pieces of information: what happened and why, and how to recover.

Recovery situation (3), abnormal terminations from program execution, from compilations, or from any program controlling the user session, typically occur because the program is being asked to do some proscribed action, and no code has been written to test for and handle that particular error. Often, in such cases, the user is given no more than an abrupt 'JOB ABORTED' or similar message. Nevertheless, the first part of the error message should simply indicate *what* rule was violated and *where* in the program this occurred. Secondly, users should be provided with information indicating what they could do to mend the situation, to continue processing. Ideally, perhaps, *all* system and user programs would run under the control of and be monitored by some supervisory system which somehow preserved, and helped restore, the world just prior to the abnormal termination.

Finally, even a meta-supervisor is of no help in recovery situation (4), when the system *crashes* -- experiences an unscheduled and abrupt termination of operation. Here, typically, all is lost. While data sets can be recovered in the form in which the user last remembered to save them before the crash, it would be more desirable to shift the burden of responsibility for the consequences of crashes onto the system. Thus, the system could provide for copying user files quite frequently onto mass storage media configured (and powered) independent of the

primary processor. Following a recovery from a crash, the system would automatically recreate the prior file environment.

1.2.8 On-Line Documentation

The user will require a variety of on-line information: about personal files (see section 1.2.3), about errors or problems encountered in using the facilities (see section 1.2.6), and, more generally, about what facilities are available and how to use them.

This notion of on-line documentation of system facilities is not a new one (e.g., Thompson, C., 1970), but development efforts are still largely experimental (e.g., HELP, 1976). The approach often suggested for and followed in interactive information retrieval systems is to have the user move down some hierarchical classification tree via choices from menus until an appropriate information document can be retrieved, typically on a key-word basis (e.g., Thompson, C., 1970; Thompson, D., 1971). This is a reasonable approach and can be very useful in saving users the problems of maintaining and searching among numbers of hard-copy manuals. One difficulty with this method is that the traversing of the hierarchy via the menus can be time-consuming and tedious.

A better solution would be to permit the user to invoke the assistance of the on-line facility via a natural language question. One demonstration of such an approach involves a modification of Weizenbaum's ELIZA program (Shapiro & Kwasny, 1975). The IBM Research HELP facility (1976) is a hybrid of the two approaches: after a user has invoked the facility, an attempt is made to respond to the user's natural language questions with a menu of pertinent choices. Because of the limitations of retrieval by KWIC (Key Word In Context) approaches, it would seem that further development of natural language assistance facilities will also have to be accompanied by automation of *conceptual* indexing of the reference manuals and other documents.