

## The Work

### The Network Is the Artwork (TM) (Reverse Engineering the Author)

(At least) two "works" in *Beyond Interface--Homework* and *Desktop IS*--expand both the traditional notion of a collaboration--between and among artists, writers, designers, programmers--and what constitutes "a work."

Bookchin describes the genesis of *Homework*:

It began as a homework assignment for a class i was teaching.

[Intro to Computing in the Arts.  
<http://jupiter.ucsd.edu/~bookchin/syllabus.html>]

Heath Bunting found the url from his server, because I had linked to a page of his (the one you are including in your show).

[Example of Bunting's list of links from pages linked to his, including the syllabus for Bookchin's for Digital Revolution?, which links to *Own, Be Owned or Remain Invisible*]

he then posted my url on 7-11.

[a listserv <http://www.vuk.org/7-11/>]

you saw some of the mail that followed.

[some of the mail that followed...]

Alexei asked me if some artists could do the homework assignment for me, and they asked if i would grade it. I then received work from heath and vuk and alexei. I linked their projects to my homework page, posted grades and it continued from there.

[Final projects: <http://jupiter.ucsd.edu/~bookchin/finalProject.html>]

Alexei then sent out a call for artists to do the homework to a number of art lists, like rhizome, nettime, and some others.

[Attention uncertified [net][internet][web] artists !]

So the project emerged collaboratively from

If depth is but another surface, nothing is profound.... This does not mean that everything is simply superficial; to the contrary, in the absence of depth, everything becomes endlessly complex....If, however, nothing is profound, is it any longer possible to write detective stories? Who would be the detective? What would be detected? Would there be anything left to hide?

--Mark Taylor, *Hiding*

For all netart projects there is a retraceable starting point, an author, so to speak.

Nevertheless, what develops from one idea of one single artist with the collaboration of many others, is incalculable.

--Joachim Blank

"(History of) Mailart in Eastern Europe"

Bookchin's "Grade Evaluation" for Shulgin's "Homework version 2"

[N.B. Doc title = "Claiming the rights to your idea"]

[Vuk Cosic]

>I am glad you're admitting the 7-11 submissions

>it is a bit like if Picasso and Braque and Gris would join some >students in California at DIY Cubism class in 1908.

[Bookchin]

your modesty is charming!

[Cosic]

discussions that took place on 7-11 and with the artists mentioned above and then other artists, mostly from the 7-11 mailing list, began submitting work.

Authorship is complicated enough when it revolves around issues of the collaborative possibilities of the Net [Bookchin, Shulgin], the increasing commodification of language [Andujar, Bunting], or the authorship of "derivative" texts [e.g. through viewer interactions, Biggs].

It becomes even more layered with issues of the authenticity/anonymity of remote communications [see Bookchin's "Artist Statement," which is authored by an anonymous source who purported to be critic Peter Weibel], as well as the conscious role playing that the Net engenders [note for example, that in Bookchin's Grade/Evaluation of Keiko Suzuki, she writes "woman to woman" but links to "The Transvestite Page." And in her Grade/Evaluation of Rachel Baker, she writes: "You would \*almost\* think that Keiko's work was done from a male perspective..."].

As much as *Homework* raises all these issues in exemplary ways, perhaps the most fascinating negotiation is how Bookchin manages to actually grade and evaluate a number of net.art projects. While on the surface, it is all in good fun, Bookchin not only does grade the work (A-F) but manages to get in some succinct lectures about the three C's of the computer, throw her art history weight around, anoint a couple of new sub-genres of net.art, skewer net demi gods, and generally hold the line against work that does not meet the assignment. It *is* good fun. It's also a lot to find out.

--Steve Dietz

>We did have some dialogue about it  
>and yes, that is the whole idea, to feel better in this context than  
>in, for instance, Kassel. Or at least, to express the authentic  
>feeling that the two are equal.

[Bookchin]  
yes, it worked I think--and not just as a posture, but in actuality..

[Cosic]  
>I am notifying you officially that on this particular point  
>the agreement is total, congratulations.