

PLAIDCOLUMN'S RESPONSE TO WHO WILL GIVE UP THEIR DISTINCTIONS?

cheyanne turions raises the question, "who will give up their distinctions?" as a curatorial call and, as she states, "a rallying cry." In her printed statement she writes, "*The question begets more questioning.*"

Clint Enns's film is a pregnant pause. By altering the circuitry of an Atari road race game, and then hitting play, he captures the resultant response from the electromagnetics of the toy. What sings and dances in *Prepare to Qualify* is an ever-changing freeze frame, a short circuit breakdown—*breakdown* in the sense of an exposed anatomy. (This reminds me again of Max Dean's exploration of mechanical implosion and rebuilding in *Robotic Chair*.) Enns addresses the nature of qualifiers. As turions puts it, "*a way to employ distinctions in the manufacture of fruitful 21st century identities.*" Videogaming is an activity that seems to always demand an explanation from the non-videogame playing populace. My game skills amount to pinball and *Tetris* but Q has been an ardent thumb weaver since he formed the desire to play electronic games—maybe 10 years ago. His anti-gaming uncle likes to invoke disapproving slurs like *LameToy* and *Nofriendo*, and his aunts demonize screen games and freak at the hours of game-time clocked by their teenage kids. It's not a generation thing though. I know more than a few people my age and older who live parallel screen lives in virtual worlds. But you know this is not regarded by the current power holders as fruitful. No private activity of mental process including contemplation, meditation, computation, or fabrication is regarded as fruitful until it becomes a business plan. But getting back to the abundant fruitfulness of this project—the Atari system is an active partner playing along poetically with Enns. The game *itself* exercises wit flashing hounds-tooth patterns, skewed checkerboards, electrically bilious colour-schemes that would make Etienne Zack investors drool. With comic timing it textually breaks up the word "START" as "ART" and "ST" in alternating announcements. Sonically the game drones and heaves in an arrhythmic pulse. It proclaims itself as art or rather claims it's art simply by the nudge of a copper connection.

Debashis Sinhas *skin* uses anatomy (which means 'to cut up') as well. *skin* is a lush and hypnotically absorbing screen of subtly shifting pixels in the interpretation of colour detailing the surface of a hand. Ambiguous forms unfold accompanied by an electronic, fluttering pulse. The piece marries skin surface with screen surface. By naming the colours on the screen, more dissection takes place.

Sight is the evidence of thermodynamics. The mind is ignited. That's the commonality of all sighted creatures. All art actions are, by nature, unifying because of this and despite this.

Still the question remains who will give up their distinctions? Giving up

can be an offering or a denial.

And here's another response to this exhibit. Can I substitute the word *affinities* for *distinctions*? When a strategy for chance outcomes is set up using a mechanical device for the purpose of denying or affirming art making I can take a look at my affinities. I anthropomorphize the Atari game as a maker because my affinities want to look for empathy and authorship. I do this to be convivial and to participate. At the same time there's a biochemical response to standing and watching anything with a certain amount of attention in a darkened room. There's a biochemical response in the muscle memory and tradition of entering a darkened room in public. This isn't so much a feeling as a mechanical reverberation. One of the things I love about technology as author is its inferred willingness to bear the mantel of *creator with intent*. No heart is on a sleeve. No appraisal will matter. No harm can come of it. It doesn't seduce or hint at a biography. I'm not asked to summon my BA. It leaves me alone the way the cherry tree out this window above my monitor leaves me alone.

I read a press release that mentioned a kind of neuroses in the machine as it “tries to qualify.” As if to say: Look at how it guesses—do you like this? Is it good? Look how it asks and doesn't just tell. And there's a comedy there somewhere of attempt and failure but how do we assemble a perch to comfort ourselves with that kind of entertainment?

If distinctions are outlines then giving up may be a call for blurring. Not naming. No contest.

In a post-meaning art world where does that leave us? Alone?

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