NEW VISIONS + NEW VALUES
Creative Practice Reframed

e/book prospectus
for
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PROSPECTUS

NEW VISIONS + NEW VALUES: Creative Practice Reframed

Brief Description:

In 1965 and 1966, artist and MIT professor Gyorgy Kepes edited six anthologies called the *Vision + Value Series* whose aim was "to stimulate the circulation of ideas, to find channels of communication that interconnect various disciplines and offer us a sense of structure in our 20th century world." These books, along with his related publications *The New Landscape in Art and Science* (1956) and *Arts of the Environment* (1972), framed a vision in which art, science, engineering, and design were symbiotic with each other and where creative practitioners in all fields embraced bold new technologies, all for the betterment of humanity.

Times have changed. Since 1972, we've seen bold new technologies such as the video camcorder, the personal computer, the Internet, and mobile devices, but we've also seen a fracture in attitudes about them. Roughly, and with many variations, on one side is the view that technology fuels progress and that progress is good, while on the other side is the view that the creative community has a responsibility to serve as a mirror for society, that criticality is more important than progress. While exemplars exist of achieving both, most everyone in the creative community is aware of this divide, and it affects how we make deep decisions balancing our inner and outer lives.

New Visions + New Values updates and reopens the dialogue by "going back to the source" and taking advantage of an opportune historical moment. At MIT, in the post-Kepes era of the past three decades, the divide between creative criticality and creative progress has been real, with the Center for Advanced Visual Studies/Visual Arts (now Art, Culture, and Technology) operating as a "critical studies and production based laboratory" and with the Media Lab researching "technologies that promise to fundamentally transform our most basic notions of human capabilities". While both groups are equally world class and pace-setting, they've evolved near-independently of each other on opposite sides of the MIT campus - until last year when ACT moved in the expanded Media Lab complex.

New Visions + New Values is based on video interviews with faculty, students, alumni, and "special guests" of ACT and the Media Lab. Like the original *Vision + Values Series*, the goal is to "drill down" into the most fundamental issues of vision and of value, of why we do what we do. Also like the original series, its organization is emergent based on the material. (It is anticipated that Kepes' organization around "structure, motion, module, symmetry, proportion, rhythm, sign, image, and symbol" may be replaced by "progress, expression, control, invention, collaboration, provocation, exploration, intervention, and enterprise", but alas, these are only by way of example.)

Its format is inspired by Bill Moggridge's *Designing Interaction* and *Designing Media* books: co-designed as a book and an ebook or website, and based on transcription of the video interviews augmented by still images. But it will differ in two significant ways. First, it will be organized around themes rather than people, where each theme will be very finely parsed for rich hyperlinking. Second, it will be based on roughly twice as many interviews, including with students.

Outstanding Features:

The first outstanding feature is that "art at MIT" has historically been ahead of the curve for the international electronic arts community, almost certainly more than any other institution. Kepes was likely the first art professor at a technology institution; CAVS was the first major academic art, science, and technology center; and the Media Lab is responsible for creating an entirely new academic venue. The "fracture" between CAVS and the Media Lab in the early 1980s presaged what happened everywhere else. "Coming to an understanding" now is a huge opportunity, possibly with broad international impact.

A second outstanding feature is timing. Right now, both ACT and Media Lab communities share the same building but not the same background, intentions, or even vocabulary. It's a known moment of awkwardness and has so far been compared to "Zanzibar and Madagascar", "siblings grown up so differently", and "Gaza." ACT has two new faculty hires and the Media Lab has two new arts-related faculty postings, yet neither group can articulate exactly how they differ, especially in ways the other

group will agree upon (e.g., NOT "happy art" and "angry art"). Students are particularly aware of this situation.

A third outstanding, or at least fortuitous, feature is my history and recent work at MIT. I graduated in the first class of MIT's Media Arts and Sciences graduate program in 1979, and upon graduation served both as a CAVS Fellow and a Media Lab Design Team member. Over the years, I've kept in touch with everyone, and in Spring/Summer 2011 was a visiting associate professor at the Media Lab, to "be part of the academic community from the inside" (Dean Adele Santos) to understand the dynamics of the current situation. I believe that all parties will feel comfortable being interviewed by me.

One final note: Gyorgy Kepes and I had a special relationship. After leaving Boston in 1980 and for the next twenty years, Gyorgy and Juliet were kind and generous hosts to me in their home(s), and I tried to visit annually. Gyorgy and I would begin with a drink, he'd ask me what I was up to, and we'd take it from there. These were life-changing meetings for me.

Competition:

As publishers well know, digital/media/art/society related books have experienced an explosive growth, as have academic programs in these areas. (Brown University professor Mark Tribe and I initiated a wiki for academic art and technology programs in 2004 that has since nearly doubled in size.) Many of these books deal with the current zeitgeist. *New Visions + New Values* is intended to have a longer timeframe and broader coverage. It's also intended to "map the territory" more than provide answers or ideologies (such as Manovich, Galloway, or Wark, all personal friends).

Bill Moggridge's *Designing* books are similar in style but tuned for the design community rather than for the larger digital/media/art/society communities.

It's noteworthy that the original *Vision + Value Series* has a near cult-like following. Colleagues including Scott Fisher, Golan Levin, and Neri Oxman treasure their out-of-print copies. As recently as last year, the New York Times ran a story on Kepes, quoting Hans Ulrich Obrist: "Kepes is a great inspiration. He had a holistic approach to knowledge, and the links he made between art, design and other disciplines, especially science, are so important now."

Apparatus:

The core of the book will be based on video interviews, all conducted in the Media Lab complex. Unlike Moggridge's on-location interviews (e.g., Paul Saffo in front of a redwood tree), these will all be conducted in a dedicated space with outstandingly proper lighting and no discernable background. One option under consideration is to digitally add defocussed backgrounds later. Another option is to use something like filmmaker Errol Morris' "Interrotron" for direct eye contact with both interviewer and camera. In any case, from a practical point of view, a single dedicated space would heavily streamline the interviewing process.

The video interviews would be conducted (by me) in conjunction with informal, unrecorded, off-record, "salons" held monthly or bimonthly during the course of the semester. These salons would be intended to "throw the medicine ball hard" and motivate people to want to participate. (One absolute rule: nobody looks bad.)

After the semester, the material will be transcribed and edited. Selected interviewees will be asked to provide still images to supplement their words. The final material will be designed into both a book and an ebook.

Hence, the resources required for complete production are: video production during the semester, transcribing/editing and book/ebook design after the semester.

Audience:

The book is intended for all people who consider themselves "creative practitioners".

Market Considerations:

Though the book is primarily intended to be of general interest to the creative community, it could conceivably cross over to the "Parachute" genre as a practical guide for making decisions about one's career. If so, it may be the kind of book that people buy to give to other people.

Status of the Book:

Pending deal-making between MIT Press (for approval) and MIT / MIT Media Lab (for support).

NOTE: Supporters exist who believe that opening channels of communication between ACT and the Media Lab communities has a timely urgency and immediate value.

Reviewers:

Roger Malina, Joan Shigekawa, Ruby Lerner, Kevin Kelly, Machiko Kushahara, Peter Weibel, Bill Arning, and Julie Kepes Stone. (I know everyone except Bill A.)

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Writing Samples:

"Aspen the Verb: Musings on Heritage and Virtuality," **Presence**, Special Issue on Virtual Heritage, MIT Press, 15.3, June 2006.
"Two Unusual Projection Spaces," **Presence**, Special Issue on Projection, MIT Press, 14.5, October 2005.
"Sensory Anomalies," in **Design Research: Methods and Perspectives**, B. Laurel, Editor, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003
"Truth, Beauty, Freedom, and Money: Technology-Based Art and the Dynamics of Sustainability," **Leonardo/ISAST,** May 2003.

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Short Bio:

Michael Naimark was 2011 visiting faculty at the MIT Media Lab, on leave from the USC School of Cinematic Arts' Interactive Media Division, and is currently visiting faculty at NYU's Interactive Telecommunications Program. He has also held faculty appointments at the Art Center College of Design, CalArts, and the San Francisco Art Institute; and artist residencies at the Exploratorium, the ZKM, IAMAS, and the Banff Centre. Naimark has directed projects with support from UNESCO, National Geographic, the Rockefeller Foundation, Ars Electronica, and the Paris Metro; and from Atari, Disney, Apple, Panavision, Lucasfilm, Interval, and Google. He was the 2002 recipient of the World Technology Award for the Arts and has been a member of the Society for Visual Anthropology since 1984. Michael's short essay ranks #1 of over a billion results on Google searches for live global video.

Long Bio

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