[Biography] A writer, critic and educator, Peter Lunenfeld, specializes in the history and theory of imaging technologies. He is a member of the graduate faculty of the Media Design Program at Art Center College of Design <artcenter.edu/mdp>. Peter received his B.A. from Columbia University, M.A. from SUNY at Buffalo, and Ph.D. from UCLA. He is the founder of **mediawork**: The Southern California New Media working group and is the director of the Institute for Technology & Aesthetics (ITA). An outgrowth of these projects is the *Mediawork* pamphlet series from the MIT Press. These "theoretical fetish objects" cover the intersections of art, design, technology, and market culture <mitpress.mit.edu/mediawork>. He is the author of *Snap to Grid: A User's Guide to Digital Arts*, *Media & Cultures* (MIT, 2000) and editor of *The Digital Dialectic: New Essays in New Media* (MIT, 1999) and has contributed to numerous catalogues, essay collections, and journals including *Afterimage, Film Quarterly, Flash Art, Artforum, and artext.*

Peter Lunenfeld: This welcome has been really remarkable. I have done a lot of guest speaking to groups like this, but I don't think that any of them have put that kind of effort into really thinking through the work that I have been doing, and it does resonate with the topic that I'm going to begin with tonight. Once I run through my prepared material, I'd like to open things up later to talk about your interests in contemporary digital cinema, digital video and things like that.

I was supposed to come in this week with tales from Utah, from the Great Salt Lake. I was supposed to go to see Robert Smithson's greatest work, "Spiral Jetty," which re-emerged after 30 years under water. I was supposed to, but it rained and snowed so much in Utah, that there was no way to get to the jetty, so we didn't go. Instead, I went with my family to the great desert, to Death Valley. The drive back from Death Valley is interesting because you begin in the middle of the desert and there is nothing around you. As you drive, it's the primordial California, and then you get to Shoshone which is a town of a couple of hundred and then you get to Baker which is a town of a few thousand and it gets bigger and denser and crazier as you

approach Los Angeles.

While I was in Death Valley I was reading Mike Davis's latest book called *Dead Cities*. Mike Davis writes books with titles like *Victorian Holocausts* and *The Ecology of Fear*. It's never all that much fun to read Davis but what is interesting about him is that he is the sole public intellectual in Los Angeles. If you talk to Germans and you mention you are from Los Angeles and they are from a certain virtual class, they will go "Ah! Los Angeles! Mike Davis." We could do a hell of a lot of worse than having Davis as our public intellectual. He is brilliant and he is committed, but he can be tough to live with. If you couldn't get this from his book titles, *Victorian Holocausts* and *The Ecology of Fear* and *Dead Cities*, he is kind of a downer. One of my closest colleagues and friends, Norman Klein, has done a pitch perfect analysis of Mike Davis' most famous book called *City of Quartz*. He says that Davis writes his grief over the death of the left, first on the civic history of Los Angeles, then on the physical body of Los Angeles, then on the whole of the earth itself. In other words, he is constantly placing the grief for the death of Marxism directly into a situated context.

Situated knowledge of the type that Joel was providing today with his tour of the non-places of Silicon Valley was wonderful. As I was saying on the tour, I would always rather see an empty 3Com building than take a Napa Valley grape tour any day of the week. It was a fascinating take on a place I've driven through a dozen times but have never really looked at. Everything that I saw today related in some way to that drive back from Death Valley. What I started to think about after reading *Dead Cities* which is sort of a grab bag of sad and angry things he has written over the last ten years about the place where I have lived is that no matter how bad it gets there is an exhilaration to the un-sustainability. And for me, the whole of California is sort of about that.

Flying here today, it was incredibly clear all the way up the coast. I started to realize California is even more mountainous than I ever realized and even more primeval than I had thought. And for all the people who live here there is so much more wild space, and it's crazy wild, the kind of wild that will eat us up and that living in this insanely beautiful dangerous landscape is going to prove to be unsustainable. But then, the whole project of civilization is unsustainable and life itself is unsustainable. We die, and so the exhilaration of un-sustainability is something that I think we are bred for. And then the question

becomes-- Where do you make your interventions? What do you do? What kinds of interfaces you create to the world? What kind of affordances do you offer? What are the ways that you live and the ways you wish to think and wish others to think and the way you wish others to live? What can you build? So that is what I would like to start by talking about tonight.

It's interesting that only now, in the last year, I have been able to make a transition from the classic scholar's regime, in which one writes a paper and delivers it, to doing something that I always admired about artists. I finally get to talk about "my work" (in quotes) rather than simply my work. And that is what I am going to do tonight. So my talk is titled Visual Intellectual and Network Ideals.

Let's face it, even when intellectuals aren't talking about words, they express themselves through, by and with them to such an extent that what they generate can never truly be seen as a discussion about anything other than them. This explains the way that no matter how much art history, architectural criticism, or film studies claim to deal with visual and spatial systems, these discursive modes tend to resolve themselves finally around, well, around discourse itself. This is not to say that this text-based intellectual work is in the end consecrated to the craft of writing, as anyone who has valiantly pushed through reams of turgid academic prose can attest (word processing aside, Truman Capote's chestnut, "That's not writing, that's typing," applies). But something new is brewing. I would claim that we are bout to witness the wide-scale emergence of visual intellectuals–people simultaneously making, pondering and commenting on visual culture, but in a way that doesn't perforce adhere to the primacy of the word.

These are the people creating the visual culture that surrounds us, a culture that over the course of the past hundred years has essentially supplanted text's preeminence. It would be easy enough to write this development off with the cliché about the triumph of the mute image over the expressive word. But we're long past that narrative now, willing to lift our "downcast eyes" (to cite historian Martin Jay) to look into the light box. Although the utopian promise that people are able to write with audio visual media is coming true, there is this sense that when ever something makes it into the population at large, professionals retreat or as they call it "advance" further into technological discourse of interface. Now basically, when you talk about 70mm Dolby sound, that is an interface. And it's the interface

that Steven Spielberg controls. And as more and more cameras get better and better the question of what constitutes the professional look continues to shift. One of your responsibilities as artists and makers is to figure out what your stake is, what is the line you draw, how much you chase and how much you stop and just work with what you have.

There is a growing body of work that proves that complex argumentations, sophisticated critique and even languages of praise are really important. Languages of praise have to be different from languages of criticism and languages of hype. A language of praise is something that we need to develop to sustain and nurture the things that we care about without falling into a ghetto of defense against all criticism. This one of the reasons I am less interested in the electronic art world now than it was 10 years ago. I encountered a ghetto and I thought it would break out. The ghetto closed backup again.

But again, what I am looking for are complex argumentations, sophisticated critique, and languages of praise, which are often generated outside of purely text-based discourse. Where is the first place to go to look for such multimedia ways of thinking? Fairly obviously, the World Wide Web. This is after all a medium in which the object and that of which it is composed which is to say the source code and any commentary on the object all exist contemporaneously and conceptually in the same place non-place of the network. The ability to scale windows upon windows to create instantaneous linkages and to comment on the development of an art movement using an identical mode of production distribution. All this has lead into the particular flavor of visualized hyper meta coded commentary. Now, I do believe that, but I also believe there are dangers inherent in this.

I see the main dangers that web based art encounters when it enters the museum is the fact that commentary is so inexorably linked to the object. And if you talk to people in the museum world, they will tell you power does not reside and has never resided with the artist. Most of them are dead. The power is not now with the curator. The place to go for power in the museum is the education department. The education department is dangerous because the education department wants to tell you what an artwork is. And it tends to situate you as a school child, because that is their ultimate constituency. It's a brutal and insulting thing to say, but the education department serves at the behest of the buses that bring the kids who keep the museums going. And that function is really important, but when that function shifts from the friendly old docent who sorts of totters you through the

museum morphs into an incredibly detailed wall text that tells you what an artwork is and how it should be read, to a commentary on the web that takes as long to read as the experience as the web piece… that is when you go to worry. And that is another place that you as an artist are going to have to draw the line. And let's not forget that one of the great dangers as well is when the museum becomes the commissioning body.

You can wail as much as you want against the gallery world, but one thing that can be said about the development of the contemporary art display distribution system was at least curators used to go out and look at galleries where there was a somewhat separated mode of finding people and then, they would curate out of the galleries. When the curators commission an artwork which is the way most new media work happens to come into the world, the rules are different. I have a question for you - lots of the commissioned works are failures. Do they ever not get this put into the museum? Absolutely not! Because that will be an admission of failure ... not on the artist's part but on the curator's and museum's part. Judging the success or failure of an artist is one of the contemporary art curator's functions. They were suppose to see whether the artwork is working or not, but there is no distance there. If the commissioned artwork is not good, it still goes out because the museum's money already has been spent. This is a strange new thing and it is much more prevalent within new media arts than almost any other form. Performance is one of the few places that it used to come up. Museums did very few commissioning of performance work over the years.

After this digression, I'd like to return to my arguments about the World Wide Web and its development of visual intellectuality. The first such instantiations were admittedly sophomoric–i.e., sites like suck.com (Web pages that suck, get it?)–but things improved as the net.arts evolved, and it became obvious that the art and the discourse about that art were contextually and constitutively indistinguishable. There was also a willingness to explore meta-structuring of data as art, as with IOD's remarkable deconstruction device, *Webstalker*, or to use the structures of the digital media to actively intervene into longstanding debates, as with pseudo-gaming model of Lev Manovich and Norman Klein's *Freud-Lissitzky Navigator*.

Too often, though, the Web breeds a techno-solipsism, an unwarranted confidence that computer networks are generating something entirely without precedent. This is nonsense, of course, as

avant-garde film and video offer a long history of audio-visual essays and meta-critical production (see, for example, *Tom Tom the Piper's Son* of 1969, Ken Jacobs's reframing at varying speeds and in different sections of an example of early cinema, and *Trouble in the Image* of 1996, Pat O'Neil's magnum opus of optical printing. What is amazing about *Trouble in the Image* film is that it is the greatest after effects work of art ever made. It doesn't of course use any Adobe After Effects. It is all optical printing. So basically this is the last great work of optical printing which is basically how people made multi-layered visual objects move before the computer. It is about various little masks on the negative that you shoot through on and above and then you can construct very complicated, very complex image metascapes within each frame and this continues to shift in shapes. Watch this film and see a catalogue of effects that people are working with now but done by old-fashioned techniques. It is though you morph forward in time and you found someone that is working on after effects brilliantly for 40 years. No one has worked brilliantly with After Effects for 40 years because it has been around for only about six. And so these kinds of things are why you look back on media history. This is why a historical grounding makes you a better artist. It doesn't just make you more familiar with reference and bullshit. It actually makes your work better.

Perhaps better understood by thinking netizens is the debt to graphic design. Although some ardent youngsters (and not-so-youngsters, unfortunately) protest that something as commercially "tainted" as the professional practice of design has nothing to say to artists like themselves, the impact of contemporary graphics is indisputable. While modernist masters like Paul Rand promoted the ideal of the designer as refining reagent, the substrate through which someone else's message could be filtered, contemporary designers no longer feel obliged to make a show of such modesty. Rand's model was already being dismantled when desktop publishing exploded, radically dropping the price of sophisticated visualization tools (programs like Photoshop, Fontographer and Pagemaker) and fostering an efflorescence of style for style's sake. More self-conscious designers also woke up to the complex challenges to "clarity" accumulating under the rubric of postmodern theory, and began to conceptualize how digital technologies could allow them to develop their own signature styles. The best architectural publications have long been examples of visual intellectuality, and the 1,344-page collaboration between architect Rem Koolhaas and designer Bruce Mau that is *S,M,L,XL*(1995) was rightly lauded. In *S,M,L,XL*, the point is neither to

illustrate words not to caption pictures, but rather to create a synergistic matrix of images and texts.

No one has ever accused Peter Halley of an inability to read the zeitgeist, so it's instructive to see how he has reacted to the emergence of visual intellectuality. Back in 1988, Galerie Bruno Bischofberger published *Peter Halley: Collected Essays 1981-87* (designed by Anthony McCall Associates) which, like the Semiotext(e) books so popular at the time, was an elegant, understated, monochromatic text that announced its seriousness and modesty to the point of having a brown paper cover. Contrast that approach to the overwhelming seduction of *Peter Halley: Maintain Speed* (Distributed Arts Publishers, 2000). Edited by Halley's studio director Corey Reynolds and designed by COMA (Cornelia Blatter and Marcel Hermans, who also design Halley's magazine Index), *Maintain Speed* is a Peter Halley production from exploding pink cover to incredibly detailed colophon. Like *S,M,L,XL*, it offers a new (if expensive) model for the visual intellectual.

One of the things that distinguish this volume from other catalogues is that the reproductions of the paintings, the installation shots, and the incidental photography of the artist and his milieu are all subtended by a delirious grid of parenthetical and relational databases. Many of the painting are, of course, grids, so there is an immediate relationship between the content and the form. Continuing this is a motif which the editorial and design team referred to informally as the "information bar": a row of ten, postage-stamp-sized boxes, delineated by pink, perforated lines, running along the bottom of the page. These "stamps" are filled only occasionally, sometimes in blocks of two or three, and can be images, diagrams, captions, or quotes. This allows not for a single parallel, but a multiplicity of argumentations and contextualizations of the work under discussion.

This strategy is taken to its utmost when the rows of stamps become pages of them, with a ten-by-ten grid of the pink, perforated lines defining the field for a postage stamp-sized Halley retrospective. The first double-page spread is devoted to the year 1981, and features just five paintings on one page and two on the other. By the time you get four spreads deeper, those original seven paintings have been augmented by 42 more, and their spatial relationships have remained consistent, though they've been compacted together toward the Y-axis. Turn the page, however, and the planar development of chronological sequencing is challenged abruptly. A series of blue,

curvilinear arrows is overprinted on the exact same grid from the previous spread, but this time creating a flow chart that indicates the conceptual and stylistic linkages both forwards and backwards in time. Along with the subsequent spreads, this offers as beautiful a double mapping of the diachronic and synchronic (to appropriate the theoryspeak of which Halley was so enamored in the '80s) as you are likely to see anywhere.

By discussing *S,M,L,XL*, and *Maintain Speed*, I've obviously stacked the decks, as these projects were masterminded respectively by an architect and an artist. How might historians of music, political scientists, demographers, or feminist legal scholars spin their tales, fabricate their theories, or illuminate their causes in commensurately dynamic ways? Could the turn from the mire of formulaic structures of knowledge with which we are all familiar to the point of sheer apathy? Perhaps first we need to let go of the notion that language is the sober way to truth, and put the visual's intoxicating powers to use doing something other than selling sex, stuff, or (as with so much of today's art) simply itself.

So that sort of finishes off the talk on visual intellectuality and it sets up a sort of expectation: if you raise an issue like this perhaps there is an obligation to manifest what you are calling for. I say how can the feminist legal scholars etc. enter into this world. What kinds of forms of intellectuality can come up? And this is something that has been a concern of mine for at least five years. In the words of Brenda Laurel, I wanted to move beyond critique, I wanted to manifest. I think the notion of manifesting is incredibly important. There is a certain kind of critical work that stays strictly within the realm of critique, and it is important and certain people are congenitally suited for it. I am not so sure I still am. I am going back and forth between making various things and writing various things. I thought it would be very interesting to think about how the book functions in peoples' lives. I thought the web should be this place where all of this happens and it probably is, but I am not very good at the web, and also I analyze my own predilections. I thought to myself web magazines should be fantastic. They should solve all the problems of print magazines. Then, I remembered something. I go look at web magazines once, and I never go back.

I used to write for them. I didn't read them. I much prefer list serves to web zines. I feel in love with that as a form, and when finds a place

on the web that one calls home, as with all homes you get exasperated with the family that lives there, I suppose for better or worse, my home on the web is 'Nettime.org' which was founded by Geert Lovink and Pit Schultz and it is the place where I get way too many posts a day from, and even read most of them. Sometimes I hate them, but that is my intellectual home, and it works for me. It arrives. I do not have to go search for it, and with 'Telepolos' and a lot of other kinds of web magazines, I would have to go. I go religiously every Wednesday to 'theOnion.com' I read that. I think that I am learning more about contemporary politics from the Onion than I do from the New York Times. I started to think about what I really like, and one of the things not that unsurprisingly is that I like books. I figure as long as people keep reading them that I will keep writing them, and as long as people keep writing them, I will keep reading them.

I like a lot of things about books. One of the things I like about books is their resiliency. I like the fact that the death of text has been announced so many times. It is like the death of painting. Never forget, you will hear the term of the death of painting all the time, but you only hear it from one group of people now, dealers selling paintings because it makes buying a painting, which is the single most conservative act you can do as a collector, seem like a revolutionary thing to do. So you will never hear the end of the death of painting (which may have indeed been in trouble for 11 minutes in 1972), but now it is just blooming. People love paintings. I love paintings. Paintings are fantastic. You don't become an art critic because you don't like paintings. Sometimes they are more interesting than other times, but they are never dead. Right now, here in San Jose, there is a show called "LA Post Cool" curated by Michael Duncan that pretends to be about saving paintings from those terrible theoreticians who say its dead. And again, it is just a totally conservative scheme to try to push some painters. Now, many of the painters in Duncan's show are painters I happen to love, and I can assure you they are not dead. They are, in fact, selling like hotcakes. So, you know that this myth of the death of painting is great…great for the painters, great for the dealers, great for the collectors, great for those of you who are lucky enough to see these good paintings.

Audience: I haven't seen a painting that I don't like.

Peter Lunenfeld: There is never a painter that hasn't liked you. But, I've digressed again, let's get back to books. So what kind of book?

Well, let me show you some things that inspire me. Here is *The Medium is Massage* and *Simulations*. I mean Marshall McLuhan is this bizarre phenomenon for the 1960's. A Canadian from Alberta trained at Cambridge in medieval English literature teaching at a small University… well… Toronto is a big university but still not the biggest in Canada, and he becomes interested in popular culture not because he likes popular culture, but because he finds it interesting. And he writes a number of books: *The Mechanical* about the establishment of typographic culture, and then, one in 1964 that is called *Understanding Media* and his world changes completely. *Understanding Media* is still central, and you read it, and you can't believe how much is off the wall Looney Tunes stuff. And then you read a few more pages, and you can't believe how much he gets completely right. He is writing about television, but it is even more appropriate when you take every time that he says television and mentally perform the replace function, swapping in the word "network." In the 60's, there are two groups of people who reacted incredibly well to what he is saying about television changing the world and changing the way that they lived: one were young people who actually gone though this. This first generation of watchers were, for the most part, being told by their elders that they were made stupider by television. And its hard to believe at this point of toothless government regulation of the broadcasting industry, but in 1961, Newton Minow, the retiring head of the Federal Communication System, came out and gave a speech about the very industry he was regulating. Minow created a term that lives with us still, the 'vast wasteland.' That was what he calling the medium that he was regulating. They don't do that anymore in the Bush administration. At that time, the entire intellectual community was writing books like the *Plug-in Drug*. They were critiquing television. Television needs critique. It is now and was then a very strange medium. But, McLuhan comes in and he is this bona fide, tweedy looking fellow with a pipe, who comes on television, and talks to you about how amazing television is. So young people found this very fascinating. And who else found this fascinating? Take a guess. The people who make television, the advertising agents who support television. And they have vast quantities of money. They found someone who was capable of saying that they were doing something interesting in the world and he wasn't that far away. So they kept flying him from Toronto down to New York. And they started putting him on television.

Now, what goes up that fast must come down. So by the 1970's, he retreats back into his little Hobbit hole in Canada and surrounds

himself with the slavish attention of graduate students. But before he goes, he leaves us with two things. He leaves us with his book, *The Medium is the Massage*, and another book called, *War and Peace in the Global Village*. And these were attempts to translate *Understanding Media*, which is a dense 200-plus page book, into something visual. It was produced by Jerome Agel, and packaged by Quentin Fiore and can be taken as a masterpiece of a 60's sort of graphic design poster aesthetic.

In the book you have things like this [pointing to screen]: you have a great 6 page sequence. Every designer who's any good loves this. This says at the top 'Environments are invisible, their ground rules, pervasive structures, and overall patterns elude easy perception,' and then that is the next page. So, the word "environment" is split up by a vast white space and these are really good ways to get these ideas across. I wonder why it was and what happened to this idea? There is so much good stuff in the world that is written in very dense packages. I read them, but then again, I am not just trained to read them, but I am paid to read them. So it's my job. No surprise.

But I started to think that there was also another thing that was missing in the environment that I am in right now. [Points to screen] This is a book called *Simulations* by Jean Baudrillard. Much of what passes for common knowledge in the classroom and the gallery about simulation comes out of this book. Now, *Simulations* is really an interesting book because it has an interesting size. It is provocative, and literally, everybody was reading this. Everybody is not everybody, but it was everybody that I was interested with at the moment. The book was part of a series called Semiotext(e). Semiotext(e) was founded by Sylvere Lotringer, a professor in the French Department at Columbia. He also teaches at Art Center, so I had the good luck to be able to quiz him about the development of this series. What is interesting about this book and this series. Lotringer functioned in a lot of different worlds: he taught French literature at Columbia. His friends in Paris included Baudrillard, Deleuze and Guattari, Virillio, and Foucault. But, he was also very involved in New York and in certain alternative cultures: in the S&M world he was like their poet laureate and he was also heavily involved in the art music scene. He started to think that his friends in Paris were saying things that were really interesting and of a certain kind of resonance with the people in New York. He just needed a way to get that connection made.

The issue of getting text translated is not that hard if something is

interesting there are people who know both languages and they translate it generally for not that much money because they are into it. And how do you get it to people? Think about 1977… I want a mental image from you of what Patti Smith and Lou Reed were wearing. Its September 28th, on Avenue B in the East Village, Patty runs into Lou. What are they wearing? I will tell you . They are both wearing … everyone in New York is wearing …a black leather jacket. To be precise, it's a motorcycle jacket made by 'Schott.' It is the classic motorcycle jacket. It buckles in the front. It's the jacket that every junkie, artist, musician in New York wore that winter because if you are a junkie you are not that cold or summer because if you are junkie you don't really care how bad you smell and that is just what you wear. Now, that jacket that everyone in New York wore had an inside, breast pocket. And so Lotringer said, "What if I made a book that fit in that pocket?" Then these artists, musicians, and junkies could carry Foucault, Deleuze and Baudrillard with them when they went down Avenue B. This is a product of industrial design of the highest form. And the story may even be true.

I started to think what I could bring into the world that would combine both of these strands of industrial design and book publishing. I was interested in Zone Books. I should have brought a Zone Book with me. They were designed by Bruce Mau. But why didn't I bring a Zone book with me? Because I am not that strong. Zone books though published by the MIT Press, are an independent entity, designed by Bruce Mau and Bruce Mau Associates. They started smaller, but kept getting bigger and heavier. I am fascinated by Mau's claim that the point of the Zone project is to have everyone in the studio read every book and design it directly in relation to its unique contents. Yet, one Zone Book looks very much like another: there is a signature style at work. They become coffee table books for a certain kind of intellectual. And if you look, I think the richest example of this is the exquisite way that he designed the retranslation by Donald Nicholson-Smith of Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*. Red and Black, an anarchist house in the 70's, brought out a sort of DIY translation of *Society of the Spectacle*. It was great. It was black with a black and white photograph of people watching a 3-D movie wearing the 3-D glasses. It was an absolutely direct metaphor, and it was cheap. Zone puts this beautiful typographic treatment the title which itself is a layered image, and subtends this elegance with a branding element reading "Zone Books" in the lower right quadrant. It is a gorgeous book but one wonders how closely Mau was reading Debord's critique of the sheen of culture. I was also interested in the fact that they tended to stop at the covers

with visual material. They wanted a very pristine text layout   a neo-modernist grid guide. The Zone treatment tends to lose its edge once you pass the cover, it doesn't make it to the inside.

I thought what if we took the visual excitement in a sense a series that Zone has, and combined it with the sustained approach offered by The *Medium is the Massage* and the way that Semiotext(e) translates private theory into public discourse, you could develop something really meaningful.

I confronted a series of problems. First, let's return to that East Village situation: In the 21st century, are all of you wearing the same jacket? No, you don't, but you have something in common. What is that? The bag. Yes, the computer bag. Yes, I wrote about that. And you all read it. So I look and each one of you does have a bag with a zipper or with something of this can fit in and the point is that this book can join you ... you look at it… you already packed up your PDA, you phone … if you are a woman, your wallet and some makeup... if you are man, maybe a wallet and some makeup.

Audience: Chuckles…

Peter Lunenfeld: I live in West Hollywood and skin is important. And then, you've got the other big heavy thing that you have to bring with you which is your computer. So the question is if you look into the big Zone Book readers on the body, or on pornography, they are simply too big. You would have to be suicidal to want to drag that along with you on your daily travels. But if one of my pamphlets is sitting next to your bag at home, maybe you will take it. That covers the physicality of the pamphlets, but I also wanted to have a transmedia approach to this project, which meant thinking through the relationship of print to electronic environments.

There were three ways I could approach the interface to this work: The first, most obvious choice was the Amazon.com route which is to use the web to sell the book. You put little parts of it up as advertisements and list the sales price. Frankly, I am hardly above that so the site does just that. The next questions were harder. I could take the word file and post it on the web, and say 'Here it is, you want it? Grab it.' This has worked incredibly well for some people. Lev Manovich posts everything he publishes including a beta and a final version. Basically, if you want the full text to be copy-edited of The Language of New Media, you will have to dig deep at his site, but it is there. You can get

it. The two people that did this to the best commercial advantage were William Mitchell who wrote a book called *City of Bits*. MIT was furious with him when they found out that he was going to publish all of it on the web. They said this is suicidal and that no one would buy the printed version. But, Mitchell is a savvy guy. He is the head of the architecture department at MIT, and he may become the next head of the Media Lab. And what did he do? He said, "No, they are not. It is going to sell great because nobody wants to read a whole book on the web." And this was a couple of years ago when screen technologies were much worse. He was absolutely right. Sales for that academic book went through roof.

Howard Rheingold has followed the same strategy with a lot of his books. In other words, while you can download them from the web, he assumes people will in fact go buy them as books because they will get interested in them. Why didn't I do that? This strategy as I understand it deems the books to be pure information, it's not about the actual physicality of those books. But with the Mediawork Pamphlets, their physicality as paper objects is important. These pages are designed not to be glowing phosphor. They are designed to be ink on paper. Paper specifically chosen. Because there is still something incredible about what ink on paper can do that PDFs can't. Frankly, it's amazing what these pamphlets accomplish, because you don't have this paper stock at home. If you have this stock at home, and if you have a good bindery in your house then maybe I will think about putting all of the books on the web. But, we don't. Also, there are certain ways that the black when it is properly printed rests on a glossy stock. Because I want you to think about magazines. Because this is magazine stock not book stock.

The question is how am I going to use the web given that I didn't want to put the full text out on the web. That is not to say I didn't do PDF's because you just saw one or six spreads of them in my presentation and on the website. So it is there. I mean that it would be foolish not to use that. But I didn't want to put the whole book up there because that really wasn't the point. So the question became what else could I do? I thought what if I commissioned artists, writers, people to make this kind of intellectual interventions that you can enjoy in and of themselves if you read the book or not. In other words, the web site is the open source part of the project. The printed copy is the $14.95 part of the project. [Pointing to the screen] This is the open source. Anybody can go grab it. Anybody can read this. There are excerpts from the text. There is a response and the point is that I hope a few

books down the road you know you will be able to come to this site just to get a sense of what is going on. Not just what is going on with the project but what is going on in the world.

Certainly, the Writing Machines Web Take, "Hollowbound Book" by Erik Loyer is a flash piece. It is going to involve music and it is going to involve a certain kind of dynamism from Kate's text, and Kate's text is about materiality.

(Erik Loyer's interactive, animated, WebTake, "Hollowbound Book" has already been made available on the Mediawork site as is the Writing Machines Web Supplement, an extension of the book Writing Machines. Writing Machines, written by N. Katherine Hayles, and designed by Anne Burdick, is the latest in the Mediawork Pamphlet series from the MIT Press. Writing Machines has already been hailed for its exploration of how literature has transformed itself from inscriptions rendered as the flat durable marks of print to the dynamic images of CRT screens, from verbal texts to the diverse sensory modalities of multimedia works, from books to technotexts.)The Writing Machines Web Supplement includes an interactive lexicon linkmap, index, bibliography, notes, and errata, and offers alternative mappings of the book's conceptual terrain with functionalities unavailable in print. Completing the cycle of remediation, the Supplement gives the user the ability to customize his or her own copy of the book by providing Adobe Acrobat .pdf files for each section, some of which are formatted in "printer's spreads" that can be printed out, folded, and inserted into the body of the book itself. All this and more, including information on ordering the book and a comprehensive interview with the author and designer is available at:
http://mitpress.mit.edu/mediawork)

The next pamphlet is going to be by Paul Miller a.k.a. DJ Spooky and it is going to be called *Rhythm Science*. We are working on that now and there will be books to follow. With that I'd like to open things up to you guys for questions or any kind of response that you would like to offer.

Audience: Sure. While we're on the subject of text you wrote an article called "Growing Up Pulp" where you talk about the comic book influence in your life. Is any of that influence also traceable to this series?

Peter Lunenfeld: In fact I commissioned a Scott McCloud, a comic book artist, to do the first WebTake. I always liked images and text. I like the way that they work together, but I don't make images, so I

function as a producer, and that is essentially what I am doing and it is very interesting. I think that every job I ever had I made up my job title. So with this I have to think if I am an editor. And the answer is that sounds like all I am doing is the text. Am I the art director? Well, sort of, but I trust my designers more than the art directors tends to trust their designers.

Audience: What about the curator?

Peter Lunenfeld: And curator. Well I am more active… I am a commissioning curator. Exactly the person I said that was evil.

Audience: Laughter…

Peter Lunenfeld: So I couldn't say that. But an Editorial Director has a certain kind of concern. I really like to have somebody else to come in to this group three years from now when you are all pretty much moved through and have the same question asked, "What are you all reading?" My greatest goal with this project would be for four people to say one of these pamphlets. It's too much fucking work to not have that as the goal. It's just… crushing. I can't believe how hard it is, but you know when I wrote the grant for this Rockefeller Foundation, I blithely said, "I will do three of these a year." Sure, why not… that sounds easy, but one a year is killing me.

Sustained projects always take more time than you ever think. It's in the sustaining of it that the project becomes meaningful actually.

Audience: The title of the first book is *Utopian Entrepreneur*. Do you considered yourself one a utopian entrepreneur or a cultural worker who employs mass media to bring about profound changes in institutions, cultural practices, etc… and if so how?

Peter Lunenfeld: Brenda and I work together. She is now the chair of my department, but we started this project before she came to Art Center. She is much more interested in an intervention on a mass cultural level than I ever have been. It creates an interesting dialectic in the department where I see she sometimes thinks I am just too focused and sometimes I think she is too open to a generalize pop culture "fandom" that I am not. But I do think in the small area that I am in, the sheer numbers that I have to make to double the size of the audience that I already have really makes me think is possible that I can get a 100% growth rate. A whole lot easier that Steven Spielberg

can. Do you really want to see another Tom Hanks film directed by Steve Spielberg. Maybe. It doesn't matter but if I can get twice as many people to read a book by Kate Hayles, that's my intervention.

Audience: You are also utopian because you are circumventing the academic peer review process to get private theory to public faster than would occur otherwise.

Peter Lunenfeld: You know I am really lucky to have a great relationship with a great press. MIT is the academic press that always has been the most driven by each concepts of design. You can see it in what they produce. You can see the fact the Muriel Cooper was their first in-house designer; her design of the Bauhaus catalogue in the 1960s was massively influential. I'd like to think that the Mediawork series fits into a history that includes that book as well as her work at the Media Lab in the 80s and 90s.

Maybe I hide my utopianism under a bushel because I was just at CalArts on Monday and I got the accusations that I betrayed the left. But on the other hand, part of what I am trying to do is build what I am talking about in 'Snap to Grid' and elsewhere' what I called post 89 theory. But that was the year that the Berlin Wall fell, and that within 2 years, the Soviet Union collapsed. You have to remember that time moves on, things change, and so I am really interested in the fact that the kind of opposition culture at CalArts was demanding I be a part of. To my mind, it strikes me as something central and essential to a period in time where there is an active viable opposition to capital that exists in world. Bohemia, the Avant-Guard, and viable communist socialist alternative dissolved in 1989 completely, and I disagree 100% with the moral tone of somebody like Susan Buck-Morss in her book *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*. She lays out that historical progression that reliance of western Avante-Guards and existing opposition models. When that is gone, everything is up for grabs.

And I was interested in something Mark said earlier when he said "what is it that things really mean right now"? That is what I am trying to figure out right now. That is why as much as I admire Mike Davis and his political agenda and his willingness over a 30-year period to hang with, his approach is not enough to explain the empty spaces that Joel took me to today. And it is not enough of explain why empty or not I can still feel the energy reverberating through a campus like SGI which I can feel dying as I walk in, and you can feel it dying, but you can still see that there will be something that will roar back. And

the question is how can you have that economic engine roar back, and at the same time come up with models that ameliorate the issues, the terrible inequities that capitalism brings with it. Is there a way to come up with something completely new? Last year I assigned 'Empire' to my graduate students because I was interested in the concept of the multitudes and the book had been promoted as a reformulation of Marxism. I don't see where the reformation was. You know I read a lot of Marxism and I can spend the next 15 hours non-stop we can discuss what the hair-splitting is in Empire, but I will still walk away feeling that there are few profound innovations to be found in that book.

Audience: I think that what you are trying to do with the book series makes the theory obtainable. And I like your quote about the image of text that sometimes text is just an image. I like the blending of it. Sometimes text is text. Sometimes truth is you can't read it. Sometimes you see it. Right? So I actually like that the way you go with the two. I think that it is critical.

Peter Lunenfeld: One of the things that I think is that design is much smarter than the world think it is. And design tends to be a lot smarter than the vast majority of designers. That design is a really interesting place to be thinking about right now and precisely because these campuses have been cranking out mechanisms and machines to make design in a way layout, paste-up and all of the language of design is everywhere. And one of the interesting questions is: Are we achieving the Communist utopia of working in the morning and making art in the afternoon or are we completely debasing the idea by having everybody who is working being told they are artists? This is a question you really confront in a place like Silicon Valley where people work 18 hours a day because they believe they are in some fashion an artist. And yet they are doing this for Cisco. Can you be an artist and work for Cisco? These are the kinds of questions that Hal Foster is addressing in a lumpen way in *Design and Crime and Other Diatribes* his new book. Although I object to the book less than I thought I would, in the end, he cannot come to grips with the world we actually live in.

Audience: How did you pick the authors or even the subjects or to have to go about curating it?

Peter Lunenfeld: These are people that I work with. The first two are people that I have worked with for a long time. Brenda because I have admired her work and I have worked with her for more than a decade and because I felt that she was right there. She had exactly what I

wanted to say. It was about market culture. It was about technology and it was about a certain way of thinking about the world and I really wanted to do that with her. And then Kate, because frankly of all the people that I have ever worked with she is the most respected academic that I have a working relationship with. I don't know Paul as well. This is the first project that I will do with Paul. We have been sniffing each other out for a while. And I really wanted to do something about music because I think music and sound are the places that the visual needs to look at because everything happens there first. It is easier, cheaper and has a large audience. You know people who have been cutting, and scratching, and manipulating collage with sound for 30-years and you know it is just out there.

Audience: I think that it is really beautiful to have you live here on this campus telling us about the power of combining text and illustration in times of recession because it is so trivial. Text and illustration ...It's trivial. I know that and I knew it before. Are you saying that we have left something out with all the hype? Did we go too fast?

Peter Lunenfeld: Not that much content was generated beyond hype, in other words the medium was really the message for the boom years and when the message was examined it is one of the reasons the bust happened. So I think there wasn't enough there. Frankly you may be coming from a very different place than people who are involved in reading academic books if you think that text and image are something that everybody knows. I recommend that you go to Keplers Books and leave the sections that you normally go to and go to the sections where you get one letter after another interrupted by number forms down at the bottom when you turn the page and keep going and you have an image on the cover and an image at the end.

Audience: Of course, but still... if you can find text and images … powerful things with text... powerful things with images… that we can find them. We have something even more powerful.

Peter Lunenfeld: I will be really interested in finding the people who could do both but frankly I still think it's coming.

Audience: Doesn't that lead or drag into the myth of multimedia - if you combine two why not combine three or four, add audio?

Peter Lunenfeld: Yeah! Actually I think that one of the things that is interesting is looking at somebody Scott McCloud and his analysis in

audio and motion. But the reason that I did books is precisely because I am not that interested in the myth of multimedia. I will stop at these two media for the next couple of years and I do think there is something to convince the rest of the world of. I don't think it is the slam-dunk that you seem to think it is.

Audience: I agree that so we seem to have left something out when we jump tracks into multimedia and hypertext and for example the way we use hypertext is not really what it is was intended to be. It is the web and how it is used and is not that useful if you look at html. I think for example the WIKI of self-reconstruct is more useful but it is not the top of hypertext.

Peter Lunenfeld: One of the things about html is it proves to be a technology that lots of people could use. And that as we move into the sort of more sophisticated or more complex systems you are going to lose that ability of someone to put up the web page how much they love cats and I will miss that because I think that it is a part. Part of the professionalization of these media is always leaving larger and larger groups behind and the other thing that I always get concern about is I think the more we look for access regularly.

Audience: Yeah I think it is a matter of perfection. It is not a matter of combining it and having something useful. But it seems that you presented it like it is wow … new.

Peter Lunenfeld: Yeah! I know I think it was… I never thought that it was going to save someone's life. But my question to you is what books have been published with a wide audience that take ideas from a realm I call private theory and visualize them and get them out to a larger audience that you can name in English language. If there is a list of 10, I will be surprised, 50, I will be humiliated. I can name one that certainly comes up which is an inspiration for this which was John Berger's Ways of Seeing. I know there have been books like 'Hiding' by Mark Taylor and a few others that have made it out into the world. These have not had the impact, frankly, that I hope the Mediawork series will have. But, now I have to say that I disagree with you. I don't think that what you are saying exist. It exists in the magazine world. It exist to sell celebrity and it exist to sell itself to sell sex and sells lots of it. I don't think it sells ideas very much except the ideas of sex and celebrities.

Audience: You are basically reading into the interface certain content?

Peter Lunenfeld: Yes absolutely. The content is the drive for it.

Audience: and I think that the opposite is ease of use?

Peter Lunenfeld: Absolutely, I am trying to play with seduction. I don't know if ease is actually it. Certainly I already have complaints.

Audience: So do you think the kind of seduction that you use does not prevent or does not make use in the understanding. Why do you want to use a tricycle when you can use a bicycle?

Peter Lunenfeld: Because I think the question is why you want to use a bicycle when you can use a motorcycle? There are times where you do not want an engine. Both have their appropriate uses. There are reasons that you ride a bicycle rather than a motorcycle. Because you want to a different kind of experience. You want a non-motorized experience. You want an experience that you want to push yourself rather than rely on a machine to move you.

Audience: Styling may introduce a limit of understanding. You can learn how to ride a tricycle. It does not mean you can understand a bicycle.

Peter Lunenfeld: Again if you want long books with straight text, they certainly exist. But I wanted to do 100 page books. I wanted to do books that you can think of as starter drugs. It would be experiences that in itself would be interesting. *The Medium is the Massage* is as interesting and compelling to read as *Understanding Media*. It has a lot less text and it is much more of a mind bomb that hits you but McCluhan is an inspiration for the Mediawork series. McCluhan used the differences between what you call probes and essays. Essays are where you take an entire argument and you lay it out. Probes are where you leave something to someone to unpack it. In other words, the unpacking of it is one of the things that I am interested in.

Audience: The relationship between design and text creates a kind of parasitical interplay between the responsibility of the viewer being able to make sense out of the relationship of these factors at the same time that the text is conveying the information that is supposed to be conveyed by the producers, the author or designer. Is there a self criticality in the artifact of the book that is evident where the reader can appreciate the limitations and play with the nature of approach, its

nature as an incomplete insertion.

Peter Lunenfeld: I know what you mean and my answer to that is in the reviews of *Utopian Entrepreneur* and *Writing Machines* that I have read, I am astonished by the number of reviews of both of these books that don't say a word about design. They don't say a word about the relationship of text and images. If there is anything it is it was too hard to read. That is the design trick. And I saw the same thing happening when I read reviews of *Punch Drunk Love* the movie by Paul Thomas Anderson. There is artwork all the way through it by Jeremy Blake. I mean literal artwork just like work he shows in the galleries. It fills the screen and it is unlike much of what you see in film. It is this interjection of a kind of art video, or new painting. I think it was mentioned once in the 15 reviews I read of the film. It reminds me why I left film studies because these are the people who are interested in story and story only. And just they don't have a visual vocabulary. And they don't understand what you are saying. The fact is, a good 15 shots in *Punch Drunk Love* are inspired directly by Andreas Gursky photographs, especially the famous photograph of the 99 Cent Store on Wilshire at Fairfax in Los Angeles. I don't expect film critics to pick up on that sort of inside knowledge. Art Forum is the one place that mentioned that. That does not bother me. But the fact that no one even commented on this makes me think that we are visually illiterate or we are just not conscious. I don't know if it is the lack of visual literacy or if is it, the fact that people just aren't conscious of the visual having anything more than a form-giving quality. One designer that I was talking to said that one reason she came back to back to graduate school is that she was tired of what she called the pinkblue. That was as far as design went with her clients: I want pink or I want blue. They thought that was the only decision that they have to make.

Audience: Today we were driving through here and there. And we passed this one building that is absolutely brand new, never been used, was unoccupied. It was magnificent, beautiful, pristine sort of façade with a vacant interior with a brand new parking lot with weeds growing through it. One can argue that site has self-criticality to it.

Peter Lunenfeld: Dependent upon recession. If the economic boom had continued and they found a tenant it wouldn't matter…

Audience: I would agree totally that it is context dependent. There are arguments about it that I think that are pretty interesting about the nature of the hypertexuality or the nature of the inmate itself having

that character and quality of self-comicality because of its very nature. Is the self-comicality of the book contextually dependent?

Peter Lunenfeld: I can tell you one of my fears. I can surely manifest one of my fears. I was judge for ID magazines interactive media design review is out right now. The INDR. I was judging the software category and I actually gave an honorable mention to a Microsoft product, their Windows Media Player. What I said was interesting was that the look of the software was going to decay faster than its functionality, that it was so exactly of its moment that it would have no resonance at all fifteen minutes later. I think one way to tell that technicality is built into these is if in 5 years I look at *Utopian Entrepreneur* and wince about how 2001 it is and then perhaps it will redeem itself if I smile at it in 2011. I know what's 60's about this but I also know that *The Medium Is the Massage* is classic 60's.

Audience: Do you see a difference between the visual intellectual and the knowledge worker in the sense of Jeremy Griffins take on the knowledge worker in this tech economy of the future? Where is the line between or is there one between the knowledge worker and the visual intellectual? Is the visual intellectual required to read the book? Is their expertise necessary?

Peter Lunenfeld: I would love this book to be an Oprah Book Club selection. But that did not work out, so what did was present it to the mother of one of my daughter's friends who runs a book club. I said "Why don't you read *Utopian Entrepeneur*"? I thought it would intersect with their interest and I wanted to see just what happens when it was read by people who just like books as opposed to read by the people I normally intersect with, who often have a professional stake in reading books like this. Being in the room during the meeting of the book club was a real lesson, though. The language that I had worked so hard with Brenda to make seductive, didn't succeed at all with half the room. Half the women in the room accepted its message and its form, but an equal number didn't engage with this on any level. There were no affordances for them. They didn't even use the term. It is a public product so if I have 50% US market penetration, I would sell a lot of books. You know nobody gets a 100%. Everybody Loves Raymond and he doesn't get a 100% share. And sitcom producers work really hard to get there. You asked the question about is the knowledge worker the same as a visual intellectual. I would say no. I would say there are so many terms for that. I always like the obscure terms like symbolic analyst. Lawyers are symbolic analyst.

Engineers are symbolic analyst. In other words the symbolic analyst is pretty much anybody who doesn't make his living making steel.

Audience: Someone working in 7-11 is also a symbolic analyst?

Peter Lunenfeld: Yeah, the bosses probably would like to categorize them as such (it would save them paying overtime)! I still think of it as more than reading UPCs. I think that of course it is problematic because we are talking about systems that can be much more than visual. I mean Paul Miller/DJ Spooky is about using the ear to inform these things. It is also about interaction. You have to start somewhere. What I would like to see is the kind of excitement that I saw in online environments, in magazines and desktop publishing, and desktop video applied to something that I care more about. It comes down to this selfishness that manifests itself again as a call for more. It is trying to illuminate other people into doing it. One road to success is to get out there and sell a lot of products. The other is to get out there and sell the product to the right people. And for some reason we are circling back to Lou Reed again. Do you know the old line about the Velvet Underground: they barely sold any records, but everyone who bought one formed their own band.

Audience: I am not quite sure where it is we talked about the banality and breaking out of banality of Nielsen Norman. I guess I kind of lived in that work for a while and as a professional designer I am going to be doing some more design for a publisher soon. I guess what is your advice for a designer who has cut his teeth and is ready to break out? What is the path that you see?

Peter Lunenfeld: Nielsen Norman will say that every web site should be easy to access and have information on the first level. They posit transparency and efficiency as the ultimate goals. But think about an Absolut Vodka web site. Vodka is a colorless, flavorless, odorless liquid distilled precisely to fuck you up. That is what vodka is all about. What more information do you need? If you go into a bar and you spend a lot of money on Grey Goose Vodka versus Absolut Vodka versus Smirnoff, you are not involved in a conscious and conscientious weighing of absolute attributes. The process is not even about taste or refinement like wine. To repeat, premium vodkas are essentially colorless, flavorless, and odorless. Instead of following the Nielson Norman credo, a company like Absolut is selling lots of other things besides service and utility. Their web site is not really giving any information out about anything at all besides the fantasy and

experience of being an Absolute customer. The people who made the Absolut site understood that.

Another thing is also is not to be afraid of decoration, not to be cowed into modernism because people understand it, not to take risk for no reason but not to take risk, to figure out what the affordances are that you can built into it. One of the things about the Nielsen Norman reductive approach is that it cuts out the good affordances at the same time it cuts out the potential of the sort of the flash intro that no one wants. But frankly that was dealt with early on in Flash: Skip Intro is a nice button. You know you can have it. It does not bother me that much, but then I am not always the audience. All the classic issues about design audience; who is the audience, what are they doing, what it is for, how much you need to do it and then push up a notch and see how much you can …And another thing is see how much you can get away with to come up with your own personal work, in other words how much of a voice can you develop in league with a client or ideally with a group of clients. If you can develop a voice across a range of clientele, that is the sign of a really interesting intervention into design as a field.

[Transcription Editor: Jennifer Henderson]