Digital Frontiers' Social Media and Digital Communities Roundtable
and Questions of Belonging

Created by Chance Dunlap

20th-21st Century Graduate Art History Seminar

AEAH 5813.001, Fall 2012

Dr. Jennifer Way, Professor

On Friday, September 21, 2012, Dr. Jennifer Way's graduate art history seminar on 20th-21st c art attended "Social Media and Digital Communities: A Roundtable Discussion," a session featured at the Digital Frontiers 2012 conference sponsored by the UNT Libraries. The roundtable speakers and titles of their presentations included Jennie Fleming, "Examining Flickr's The Commons: What does creative interaction with digital image archives mean for users and institutions?," Robert Emery, "Telling Stories of The Dallas Way: Finding LGBT History and Creating Community Using Social Media," Heidi J. Wachter , "RevolutionaryAct.com and ExperienceLife.com," and Mariette Papić, "Digital Rights, Media and Practice: The Right to Bear Arms in The Information Age." Spencer Keralis, UNT Libraries' Director for Digital Scholarship, moderated the roundtable.

Students in Way's seminar are studying how recent scholarship on belonging illuminates contemporary and historical art and art history. They are considering how art and culture foster belonging to a place as well as a nation, and the ways that places index belonging, inclusion and exclusion. A primary concern is the way the creation and use of works of art participate in facilitating someone or something belonging or not. There are also questions of what counts as a belonging and how this relates to someone belonging to someone, thing or a place. Ways of facilitating belonging include civilize, salvage, domesticate, diplomacy, accommodate, remember. Examples of forms of belonging include autochthony, citizenship, memory and heritage. Ways of not belonging encompass but are not limited to outsiderness, alienation, dislocation, refugee, and homelessness.

Way charged her students with writing a short paper to explore connections between the roundtable and their seminar studies. What follows is a short paper by graduate student, Chance Dunlap.

Chance Dunlap

Globalisation threatens identity in that it eliminates any attempt at personalizing one's existence. (Oliva, 43) The discussion "The Right to Bear Arms in the Information Age," discussed technology and social media exchange as methods of persuasion and potential control. If everybody is involved globally and removes all the differences between themselves then the personal is removed from existence? Identity is based on inherent differences between individuals. Oliva gives us an alternative to globalization, which comes in the form of tribalisation. This term represents a frequently reactive product, possibly regressive, the rebirth of nationalisms, and a new value attributed to stability. (Oliva, 43) If globalisation means denying a real individuality, then tribalisation reestablishes the identity of self. This idea contains many of the inherent human traits to categorize, collect, and place awareness on certain differences between entities. The world of art collecting certainly places higher value on some artists than others, and unfortunately those same parallel separations are too often made between different class, race, gender, geographical, and social groups.   The Speaker in this forum brought up that Disney and Wal-Mart are leaders in new telematic technologies especially facial-recognition technology. This idea of collecting data on individuals based on appearance features alone perpetuates traditional stereotype and at the same time farther removes itself from individuality. Placing people in folders is no sure way to identify them. The folders could get out of order, or their "dog could eat their homework" kind of situation. Anytime humans are in control of something error will occur. Bohrer gives us a report on digital road signs in the Washington D.C. area, which often read "HEIGHTENED SECURITY ALERT. REPORT SUSPICIOUS CONDITIONS." Rather than telling us that an accident has occurred and to mind the road and your fellow drivers, this implies that one should watch for differences in individuals. Look for what is not the same. (Bohrer, 31)   Bohrer also quotes artist Moukhtar Kocache's fascinating conclusion of an incident which occurred just after 9/11. "The reason I am a New Yorker is I can practice a number if identities', I am an Arab American…I have made a home here, I am British by passport, I'm French because I have lived most of my life in France. (39-40) An individual should understand what it means to be individual, and also how that self-identity affects their role within the larger social environment.

Bohrer, Frederick N. "Borders (and Boarders) of Art: Notes from a Foreign Land." In *Belonging and Globalisation*, Kamal Boullata, 31. London: SAQI, 2008.

Oliva, Achille Bonito. "The Globalisation of Art." In *Belonging and Globalisation*, Kamal Boullata, 43. London: SAQI, 2008.

Papić, Mariette. "Digital Rights, Media and Practice: The Right to Bear Arms in The Information Age." Presentation at the Digital Frontiers Conference at the University of North Texas, September 21, 2012.