Rachelle Viader Knowles

PANEL 6: MEDIA THEORY IN PRACTICE
Mod.: Tapio Mäkela (FI)

Kathryn Farley (US):
Generative Systems: The Art and Technology of Classroom Collaboration
Nils Röller (DE / CH):
Flusser's Individual Academy: Thinking instruments in institutional and personal relations
Wendy Hui Kyong Chun (US):
The Enduring Ephemeral, or the Future is a Memory
Antony Hudek (US / CH), Antonia Wunderlich (DE):
Between Tomorrow and Yesterday: charting Les Immatériaux as technoscientific event

The panelists charted intersections of media theory and practice through points of tension and

friction, conflicts between innovation and institutional frameworks, displacements,

immateriality and the instability of memory in all its forms.

Kathryn Farley, an Adjunct Professor at Northwestern University, USA introduced *Generative*

Systems, an innovative, interdisciplinary, radical art pedagogy project, developed by

Professor Sonia Landy Sheirdan at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in the 1970's, in

collaboration with scientists, technologists and engineers. The result of a researcher-in-

residence grant at the Daniel Langlois Foundation in Montreal, Canada in 2006, Farley's

research findings have been structured into a 'complex matrix of ideas', a valuable and

comprehensive archive published on the Langlois website and developed in collaboration with

web designer Ludovic Carpentier and archivist Vincent Bonin.

(http://www.fondation-langlois.org/ - publications by the foundation – web publications).

Nils Röller, a media theorist based at the Academy for Design and Art Zurich, presented

research on Vilhem Flusser, a name that was prominent at this conference that also

encompassed a visit to the Flusser Archive, newly re-located from Cologne to the University of the Arts, Berlin. The paper placed particular focus on Flusser's time in Brazil, his choice and ability to find freedom within his own dislocation from fixed national identity, loss of roots and forced exile from Czechoslovakia, the development of his varied personal networks, the question of how to build a Brazilian nation, and the tension between the forces of unification and the forces of subversion that he believed were necessary for dynamic academic institutions.

Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, an Associate Professor in the Department of Modern Culture and Media at Brown University in Rhode Island USA, (author of Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics, MIT, 2006, and co-editor with Thomas Keenan of New Media, Old Media: A History and Theory Reader, Routledge, 2005), explored the idea of digital memory as the 'enduring ephemeral' and the ways by which this ephemerally is made to regenerate. Rich and poetic, the paper offered avenues of thought beyond the technical and scientific structures of computer memory into the metaphoric realm of language: of memory as place, source code as sorcery and the word memory's Sanskrit origins of martyr, the 'undead of information'.

Perhaps most demonstrative of intersections of theory and practice, Antony Hudek, currently a Researcher in Theory based at the Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht, Holland, and Antonia Wunderlich, art historian and philosopher, presented research on the exhibition **Les Immateriaux,** an exhibition-as-discursive space, co-curated by Jean-Francois Leotard and Thierry Chaput for the Pompidou Centre in Paris in 1985, an event that has itself faded from institutional memory. Performed as a conversation between Hudek, present in body at the

conference, and Wunderlich, present in recorded voice while her body was elsewhere giving birth, but represented non the less by a name-sign on the panelists table, the presentation strategy enabled both a pragmatic solution and a performative gesture to present a meta-discourse of presence and tele-presence, material and immaterial, live and re-presented, theory and practice.

Diverse in subject and form, the research presented in these four papers each addressed fragilities and instabilities of memory. In the question period, Faith Wilding, Associate Professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, USA and chair of its Performance Art programme, expressed her lack of knowledge of the Generative Systems project, highlighting most poignantly the speed by which institutional memories slip and the value of historical conferences of this sort to assist in re-freshing knowledge and re-placing threads.