

Issues in Social Media for the Arts 2019

## **Blueskying a Social Media Platform for the Arts**

Hosted by  
the Social Media Narratives Class  
Art and Technology Studies  
School of the Art Institute of Chicago  
Facebook and Google Groups, November 7-12

**Facebook Transcript:** Richard Lowenberg  
Includes responses to his Google Doc Statement

**Richard Lowenberg**  
November 6 at 10:34 PM

Networked society while wondrous in its emergent realization and collective potential, is evolving along an increasingly troubled path, now led primarily by corporate trajectories and unspoken capitalist visions, intertwined with the destructive influences and vested interests affecting the realms of localism-globalism, energy, economics, politics and all other segments of our inter-dynamic eco-social evolution.

Current social media is especially troubled. Our social media understandings as the basis for next iterations, must be considered in relation to the near future of the Internet, bandwidth matters, widening digital divides, and the development of technological society amid existential concerns for our narrow-minded economies and ecological survivability. How do the arts fit into this complexity?

While selectively using past and current social media and paying close attention to international criticisms of Facebook, Google and other dominant platforms, I have given little constructive thought to what next for social media and the arts. So, I look forward to jointly thinking through, conspiring and communicating about our topic and the formidable challenges before us.

Serious fun.

Social Networks for the Arts – Preliminary Considerations

- Project conceptualization and grounding
- Social, cultural and economic structuring
- Technical structuring
- Applications and user experience structuring
- Building on existing systems or radical innovation
- Testbedding and realization

#### Additional Considerations

- Real names or anonymity; privacy
- Micro-payments for postings
- Blockchained metadata
- Low and high bandwidth options
- Selectable arts apps menu
- Crap filtering
- Open and closed systems

[Judy Malloy](#) Hi Richard,

Great to see you here! And hard to believe that it has been 26 years since you produced the the Telluride InfoZone Ideas Festival [The Telluride Institute, Inc.](#)

And here is Richard's bio:

Richard Lowenberg, born in Haifa in 1946, is an artist, planner/designer and eco-cultural activist. He has dedicated his creative life to understandings and creative realization of works exploring and setting examples for an "ecology of the information environment", and via art/science/society collaborations, demonstrating emergent opportunities for development of a "cultural economy". Richard founded 1st-Mile Institute in 2006, its New Mexico "Broadband for All" Initiative, and

SARC (Scientists/Artists Research Collaborations) programs. Living on an organic farm in Jacona, NM, he serves on the Board of Parallel Studios' CURRENTS: New Media Festival. He co-organized Internet Society's Indigenous Connectivity Summit, held in Santa Fe, Nov. 2017. Richard studied design and taught at Pratt Institute, initiating its Electronic Media Arts program in 1971, and was one of the founding team of the Kitchen in NYC that year. He was founding Programs Director of the Telluride Institute from 1984-1996 and led its InfoZone rural Internet project. From 1996-2006, Richard directed the Davis Community Network, taught TechnoCulture Studies and was Artist-in-Bioregional Residence at UC Davis. For complete information visit <http://www.narrabase.net/socmedianar2019.html#richard>



**Judy Malloy** Thanks Richard Lowenberg for setting forth a thoughtful list of issues and goals! You ask: "How do the arts fit into this complexity?"

Looking back 25 years. I'm reminded of something that Robert Edgar said about 25 years ago at a CFP conference: "Today's computer artists are at once caught in the net like a butterfly, and walking the web like a spider." Hi Robert and all who are here, can we stand back and look at the situation for artists who now work or display their work in the net of commercial social media platforms? As Richard asks: "How do the arts fit into this complexity?"



## From Google Docs



Judy Malloy  
6:14 AM Nov 7

Hi Richard, Thanks for setting forth a thoughtful list of issues and goals! You ask: "How do the arts fit into this complexity?"

Looking back 25 years and I am reminded of something that Robert Edgar said at about 25 years ago at a cfp conference: "Today's computer artists are at once caught in the net like a butterfly, and walking the web like a spider."

Or to look at this issue from another point of view, in this Google Group, Adriene Jenik asks

"I joined with other artists to see what was possible to communicate with these new tools - where was the edge? I was equally interested in the how and to whom we were communicating."



Deanne Achong  
1:05 PM Nov 7

"communicate with these new tools - where was the edge?" Indeed. Indeed. Without being overly cynical (woops - too late:) sometimes I despair these platforms get "figured" out very quickly by voices which become dominant and thus drown out all the edge... But I remain hopeful.

Didn't know that Robert Edgar quote Judy, or their work, will now google:)



Deanne Achong  
1:03 PM Nov 7

Hi Richard, These "Additional Considerations" really speak to me in terms of a kind of practical/ real-lived experience viability for artists. I haven't thought about what Blockchained metadata might be though. Can you elaborate what you mean by that? Thx.



Judy Malloy  
5:52 AM Nov 9

In response, on the Facebook Social Media Narratives Group. Richard Lowenberg writes:

"Hello Deanne. The short lists that I had at the end of my statement, simply reflected my practical thinking about our agenda. Our digital domain is composed of addressable bits, and social media along with mapping, and all other applications live amid evermore deep and hyper-connected metadata. Blockchain portends more open, transparent and values based accountability potential. In case I need to say this, I am not a fan of current blockchained digital currencies, AI or other techno-consumerism promoting hype. I am curious about micro-payments for network prosumers, and the means to fairly track and account for such, amid new economic paths forward."



Deanne Achong  
11:56 AM Nov 11

Interesting that you say "In case I need to say this" about not being a fan. I am also not a fan of the "hype", but I am curious about what blockchained technology offers and how it works and your comment have led me to doing some research. In terms of how it might be part of a system for artists / "the" arts, on the face of it, it seems to offer some potential, with this concept of eliminating the platform in-between (this is what I've read not what I know), but I am also curious if, for example, a behemoth such as amazon is eliminated, what happens to the search results...

Which, as an aside, reminds of the old days, when I "owned" a few search terms on google via some net-art projects that were deploying them.

## Continuing the Facebook Conversation

[Judy Malloy](#) Hi [Richard Lowenberg](#) In your preliminary considerations, you bring up the core point of "Building on existing systems or radical innovation" You have a lot of experience in systems where this issue will have come up, so as regards contemporary social media for the arts, I'm wondering if you have any thoughts on this issue(?)

[Richard Lowenberg](#) A couple of thoughts about calling oneself artist today. Many have remarkable talents, but a primary reason to call oneself artist is to give oneself freedom, independence for creative mind, actions and way of life. I feel that this self-imposed creative freedom, for some, not all, brings with it a responsibility to be relevant to current circumstance, and to set creative examples that may inspire others. A high calling.

Regarding social media, I'll mention that I'm a longtime subscriber to <nettime>, a place where these related discussions have been active for a generation, and are currently also focused on the nature and ways forward for social media. At a big-picture scale, there are current initiatives involved in completely and radically creating a 'next internet', led by people like Tim Berners Lee. Our little exchange is taking place amid the cracks where the light comes in. And if technological progress proceeds without major eco-social change, get ready for the photonic era, which portends ways beyond digital of processing data, based on the nature of light; a new analogue, with a quantum twist. Languages, economic disparities, social differences, vested-interests, systematization of everything, values and sustaining paths are at play with much less certainty. Open, intelligent, creative conversations about relevance and ways to make a difference, online and in-person, are so important. Get on the path, but be wary of solutions.

R.

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