Improving Cybermedia Literacy In Art Education Through Internet Art: A Study on Adolescent Perspectives

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Cover photography & artwork are courtesy of Ryder Ripps, Chet Lo, Momena Khatoon, and Liana Castillo.
Background: The Advent Multimodal Communication Systems

- Industrialization
- World Wide Web
- Digital Transformations
- User Generated Web or “Web 2.0”

Today: Digital Age
What is Cybermedia Literacy? A set of concepts & critical views” to help us understand the Internet and how we use it (Gurak, 2015)
What is a “digitally native” generation of adolescent artists & designers confronted with?
Challenges for Adolescents¹

Vast amounts of visual information is easily accessible (See Chung, 2010; Gardner & Davis, 2013; Turkle, 2012)

Through digital technologies there are new possibilities for identity role confusion and variations in identity (See Kroger, 2006; Turkle, 2012)

Use of the Internet and digital media is reshaping human cognition, including working memory and long-term memory (See Carr, 2011; Mayer, 2001; Sweller, 1991)

[¹] This research focuses on art & design students who have adequate Internet access. Some design students lack adequate Internet access altogether, which presents challenges, such as “Digital Divides” (See Studio Usher, 2014).
The Cybermedia Literacy Paradigm

92% of teens use the Internet daily & 24% use the Internet continuously (Pew Research, 2015)

Cyberculture is solitary

Cybermedia literacy is a widely unaddressed issue
The Cybermedia Literacy Paradigm

Cyberculture presents many opportunities for complex creative expression

(See Gardner & David, 2013; Kroger, 2006)

Professionally, young artists & designers will encounter “unprecedented assignments that challenge them to adapt to the constantly changing dynamics of technology and media” (Grefe, 2013)

Instant access to information
Examples: Integrating CyberMedia Literacy In the Classroom

Critique & analyze Internet-based visual art. What are the social implications?

Exploit “teachable moments” (MediaSmarts, 2015)

Make Internet-based visual art

Identify biases
**Design of Study**

Goal: Pilot study to explore an enhanced focus on cyberliteracy in art education

Collaborated with Parsons, High School of Art & Design, and the Educational Video Center to recruit adolescent artists & designers to interview. Asked conceptual artist Ryder Ripps to also be interviewed.

Selection of Internet art artifacts for discussion

Designed the interview protocol

Facilitated semi-structured, in-depth interviews

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[2] This research was a pilot study that gave me the opportunity to explore my research interests. The preliminary research in this project has contributed to my doctoral dissertation research at Columbia University.
Pilot study: participants

Chet Lo, 19
Central Saint Martins, UK, London

Momena Khatoon, 18
Queens College, Flushing, NY

Liana Castillo, 18
York College, Queens, NY

Artwork by Liana Castillo

Photography & artwork are courtesy of Ryder Ripps, Chet Lo, Momena Khatoon, and Liana Castillo.

[2] The participants pictured represent part of the group interviewed.
An Exercise in Cybermedia Literacy
Goal: Critique & analyze Internet-based visual art in order to observe social & political implications, biases, and contexts
Figure 4. Internet Archaeology, Copyright 2010 by Ryder Ripps
Results
Theme: Cybermedia Literacy in the Visual Arts

The adolescents actively participated in extracurricular activities at schools and media centers and received exposure to literacy types, like computer and information literacy, outside of the classroom.

All the adolescents proactively engaged with the Internet art artifacts during the interviews. They grasped onto the symbolic meanings, demonstrating political, cultural, and digital media literacy.

The adolescents in this study acknowledged the need for more cybermedia literacy interventions in formal and informal learning environments.
Results
Theme: Adolescent Internet Use

Adolescent participants reported using the Internet 25-40 hours per week. All of the adolescents viewed Internet use as indispensable, as a major resource for their art and design inspirations.

Adolescents are presented with opportunities to network (locally & globally) online, including ways to showcase their art and design work across social media platforms.

Adolescents observed social media fatigue, compulsions to text and continuously touch their electronics, and challenges separating from Internet use.
Results
Theme: Identity Development “Offline”

Adolescents observed society as fast paced, harder to grow and succeed in

Issues pertaining to identity development in late adolescence emerged during Internet art observation, including: gender inequality and insecurities about self-image
Results
Theme: Developing and Identity “Online”

Adolescents observed that it is both liberating and scary to develop an online persona. It many ways it feels very “free” but also like a “cage”

The theme of feeling both connected and lonely growing up online emerged several times. There were concerns about feeling disconnected from reality and the outside world, growing up online.

The adolescents were cognizant of Internet privacy issues. They expressed feeling wary about the safety of their personal data.
Thank you for listening! If you are a designer or have design students interested in interviewing about their experiences with creative technologies and the Internet, inside and outside of the classroom, I would love to hear from you!

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