

On-Line Simulations/ Real-Life Politics

A Discussion with Ricardo Dominguez on Staging Virtual Theatre

Coco Fusco

FUSCO: Electronic Disturbance Theater's actions since 1998 have become the focus of intense interest in the field of performance studies. It would seem that EDT is being viewed as an ideal bridge between disparate worlds. Unlike other kinds of virtual performance that are fixated on the interface of bodies and machines in strictly formal terms, EDT's work stresses how the Internet is a dramatic scenario that can facilitate social and political engagement with issues in the off-line world. Whereas much Latin American performance and theatre that is celebrated as representative of a distinct cultural identity relies on ethnographic or folkloric representations of "nativeness," EDT's support for Zapatismo combines the political struggle for indigenous self-determination with a critique of neoliberalism. What is your point of view about the explosion of academic interest in EDT's work?

DOMINGUEZ: There has been a proliferation of analysis of EDT in different academic communities: in the fields of new media and robotics, art history, performance studies, electronic politics, virtual architecture, urban studies, and recently globalization studies. We have also been examined by experts on information war and security and the RAND Corporation. This is an outcome of EDT's insistence that what we do is a type of performance that is similar to the agitprop theatre of the last century. The strange attractor for each of these academic groups is that EDT is not only using the latest technology, i.e., the Internet, but that our work negates the dominant ideologies that surround this technology's politics, distribution, and "commodification."

EDT's gestures offer a different form of social embodiment for the networks. We have also argued that we do not have to accept "communication and documentation" as the only options open to nonspecialists for interaction with the networks. We proposed that the Internet can become a "decisive" zone to articulate

what is most needed by those who have the least in the 21st century. EDT's performance is about disobedience in a lived social reality being felt on-line. It is this particular dramatic twist that has created such a strong response among scholars. Other issues surrounding EDT have also become points of interest: traditional/nontraditional, mimetic/nonmimetic, body/machine, nativeness/globalization, material/immaterial, real/simulation, activist/hacker, agent/swarm, actors/audience, info-peace/info-war, streets/networks, and Zapatismo/neoliberalism are just some of the binary categories EDT explores.

Each sector traces out a different map of how EDT's performative matrix shifts and implodes this series of social dramas/traumas. Each binary offers scholars a topology of the social spine that a particular actor/audience network manifests during a performance. EDT's staging of its performances also allows the academic audience to see a disturbance take place in each specific actor/audience network. The actions force a rethinking of their own networked subjectivity as "hackers," "activists," "actors," and "audiences." EDT's staging compels these actor/audience networks to encounter each other. In other words, members of each group face a challenge to their identity: hackers used to secrecy have to "come out," activists committed to working in the street meet on-line, and actors and audiences accustomed to purely fictional representations of reality with no social repercussions to their engagement find themselves in a simulation that does have a visible impact on the social.

The disturbance of each binary also creates a different response within each group. For the hacker community, EDT's gestures create awareness that something outside of code is relevant. For hackers this was simply not a matter of concern, as is the case for many actors who are only interested in the formal aspects of theatre and its particular history. Suddenly, with a FloodNet action, they face a code that simulates code and pushes code toward real structural inadequacies that cannot be resolved by code. They also become aware that bodies outside the networks can stage an immaterial presence as a united mass of electronic bodies. One can see how using agitprop theatre via the simulation of code creates a very real disturbance for the immaterial politics of the hacker and information war sectors as it might also for the conventional theatre world.

FUSCO: Although I have at times been a bit skeptical about studies that stress the performativity of everyday life (nice idea but not so fun to watch!), I can see that EDT's emphasis on the dramatic aspects of civil disobedience and the political implications of interactivity with virtual representations of the state point to important ways of envisioning global citizenship and how the Internet serves as both a staging of "the globe" and an instrument of communication. What are your thoughts about this?

DOMINGUEZ: EDT was interested in the performativity of communication gestures in digital contexts that do not conform to interactivity as defined by virtual capital—which is to say, have credit card, will travel. EDT was seeking a type of interactive performance that would collapse the space of difference between the real body and the electronic body, between everyday life and everyday life on-line, between the activist and the hacker, the performer and the audience, individual agency and mass swarming. This is not very different from trying to stage a good production of *Hamlet* by foregrounding the tension between the actor playing Hamlet and Hamlet the character.

We wanted to create a gesture in which the particularity of social embodiment and the contemporary social imaginary of digital globalization would come together in a disturbing way. EDT's style of interactive performance involves one type of electronic civil disobedience. We do not say that it is the only form of electronic civil disobedience. FloodNet is a software program that automates the

Glossary

A **code** is the basic mathematical pattern of 0's and 1's which establishes all computer and network interactivity.

DDoS, Distributed Denial of Service, is characterized by attempts to “flood” a network, thereby preventing legitimate network traffic; attempts to disrupt connections between two machines, thereby preventing access to a service; attempts to prevent a particular individual from accessing a service; and attempts to disrupt service to a specific system or person.

Hi-fi, **low-fi**, and **no-fi** elements are simple euphemisms: “Hi-fi” stands for “High Performance Technology” (such as NASA’s Space Shuttles); “low-fi” stands for ubiquitous technologies (consumer technologies such as cell phones, beepers, VHS, etc.); “no-fi” stands for those communities who have no access to very little access to any technology (such as the Zapatista communities in Chiapas, Mexico).

HTML, HyperText Markup Language, is a collection of platform-independent styles (indicated by markup tags) that define the various components of World Wide Web documents. HTML was invented by Tim Berners-Lee while at CERN, the European Laboratory for Particle Physics in Geneva.

A **hub** is a common connection point for devices in a network. Hubs are commonly used to connect segments of a LAN. A hub contains multiple ports. When a packet arrives at one port, it is copied to the other ports so that all segments of the LAN can see all packets. A passive hub serves simply as a conduit for the data, enabling it to go from one device (or segment) to another. So-called intelligent hubs include additional features that enable an administrator to monitor the traffic passing through the hub and to configure each port in the hub. Intelligent hubs are also called manageable hubs. A third type of hub, called a switching hub, actually reads the destination address of each packet and then forwards the packet to the correct port.

A **listserv** is an automatic mailing list server developed by Eric Thomas for BITNET in 1986. When e-mail is addressed to a LISTSERV mailing list, it is automatically broadcast to everyone on the list. The result is similar to a newsgroup or forum, except that the messages are transmitted as e-mail and are therefore available only to individuals on the list.

A **node** is a processing location on a network or a local area network (LAN). A node can be a computer or some other device, such as a printer. Every node has a unique network address, sometimes called a Data Link Control (DLC) address or Media Access Control (MAC) address.

A **platform** is any operating system of a computer (Windows is a PC platform). Many platforms also function on top of operating systems, such as Java.

RAND (a contraction of the term research and development) is the first organization to be called a “think tank.” The RAND Corporation was created in 1946 by the U.S. Air Force (then the Army Air Forces). <<http://www.rand.org>>.

Scoring refers to the number of points one receives for accomplishing a set goal in any game. Here, the reference is related to digital gaming where “killing” is often the main method of gaining points and moving forward towards the games dominant goal.

Side-loading is the process by which information and software is shared on a distributed network (peer-to-peer or user-to-user computing). It is different from the process of “downloading” from a centralized network (server-to-user computing).

Swarming is a digital process of gathering around an issue and a related URL as a critical mass and then dispersing without a trace.

sending of messages to a designated server. To actually flood a server so that it cannot run properly, literally hundreds if not thousands must engage in the action at a given time; in that sense, collective use of the software constitutes the critical mass needed for the action to be “felt.” But being able to down a server and actually doing it are two different things.

Ours is a simulation of a type—“Distributed Denial of Service” (DDoS)—that is the result of mass agency and digital liminality. We say it is a liminal event because it is not a real DDoS, which would only require one hacker to actually bring down a server. EDT’s gestures fall between a real use of the syntactical code of a DDoS and the semantics of an e-mail. The Zapatista FloodNet is more than an e-mail and less than code—it is neither and more than both. EDT also learned from what Digital Zapatismo understood in 1994¹ within a few minutes of crossing over into the electronic fabric: that the fractal politics of the web is different than that of the networks.

FUSCO: I take it that the distinction you are drawing here is between networks as the actual architecture of machinery through which the Internet operates—routers, servers, and such—and the visualization of the Internet as a communications system via the web interface.

DOMINGUEZ: Yes, exactly. Those interested in the networks want flawless code for command and control, while those interested in the web see opportunities in abandoned spaces. Networks are about utilitarian rationality, the web is about an ontology of empathy. Those who focus on networks look mostly at infrastructure. On the other hand, the web creates a strong social imaginary that can re-route around lack of access. EDT posits digital zapatismo as a type of interactive empathy that the web can offer to network_art_activism.²

FUSCO: What are the particular complexities that arise in staging EDT’s virtual theatre—and how does this compare to directing actors on a real stage or organizing a street action?

1. *Jorge, a Mexican maquiladora manager played by Ricardo Domínguez, hassles a young woman working at the maquiladora. From Dolores from 10 to 22 by Coco Fusco and Ricardo Domínguez, 22 November 2001, at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Kiasma, Helsinki. (Video by Coco Fusco)*



DOMINGUEZ: Staging virtual theatre is about making sure that the hi-fi, low-fi, and no-fi elements of the performance can be mixed, leveraged, and made functional. One has to be sure that the infrastructure of the ISP [Internet Service Provider] is ready to maintain access to all gathering URLs. One also has to guarantee that the code for the performance works on as many platforms as possible. It is also important that the time period for the performance allows for the greatest number to gather; and finally that the e-mail announcement about the performance frames all the elements of the gesture as clearly as possible. This hi-fi element is the equivalent of getting your theatre and stage set ready for a performance or better yet making sure that the streets for gathering are clear so that you can march and chant together.

We keep the hi-fi infrastructure to a very basic level so that with very little knowledge of code people can participate. Everything is done through HTML. When we first started we often wrote of EDT as a type of HTML conceptual theatre. If people want to build their own stage for a performance they can use the “Disturbance Developers Kit” we devised for others; they can use this for their own actions or in support of ours. In network speak, we call this “mirroring.” Mirroring has always been a core exercise for modern actors to center themselves within an ensemble. The same principle applies here.

The most important gesture for EDT is the low-fi use of e-mail. It is the use of e-mail that connects EDT with early forms of documentary theatre by Erwin Piscator and the Living Newspapers presented by the Federal Theatre Project in the USA in the 1930s. We use e-mail to set the stage by distributing documentation of the issues we will address as they have been described in newspaper reports, eyewitness accounts, human rights information from NGO’s—all easily available on-line for individuals to read and research.

Staging an EDT performance is like initiating a large street action, which I first started doing with ACT UP/Tallahassee in the ’80s. You focus on developing a core group that will not only perform the action, but also become part of the ensemble that will collaborate, produce, mirror, share, and swarm. This core is the first people you contact on your list during the first stage. You depend on this group to create the possibility of a swarm. They not only have an intimate link with you, but they also have links with other groups beyond your frame. So we often work with The THING (<http://bbs.thing.net>), Zapatistas Networks, Federation of Random Action in France, the Ehippies in the U.K., thehacktivist.com in Canada, Reverend Billy in NYC, and many listservs, both local and global. These core groups then become nodes that funnel the bodies to the right space at the right time—with the right information.

FUSCO: I have written about EDT’s work as nonmimetic theatre (CITE), in that the actions that take place are not literally represented on-line: there are no avatars, there is no streaming video showing irate systems administrators struggling to manage their flooded servers, there is no web page where excited activists can post pictures of themselves using FloodNet. What you have are abstract representations of the “hits” and textual descriptions of the purpose and/or motive for the actions. How does the nonmimetic quality of the work change your role as a director? Do you address others involved as actors?

DOMINGUEZ: My role as a director to my actor/audience network is both very intimate and very removed—a very traditional position for a director. Some actor/audience networks only want to know where to click, some networks want to mirror the gesture, some networks want to build something else, some want to build more networks, some want to know if the action is real, some networks protest the protest—not for content but for the gesture itself.

So the question is: How do you stage them all? How do you get them all to

focus on the performance and its social spine—the emotional spine of this mass gesture? You treat each actor/audience network as a unique somatic architecture that needs to connect with the right frequency (the “right vibe,” we use to say in the ’70s) to feel they are participating in the performance and have agency to expand the performance. They have to feel that they are staging themselves. The process then is a hybrid between Augusto Boal’s Invisible Theatre and a Situationist gesture. It allows for visceral and political poetics to carve out social spaces for mass and intimate protest that can now be poly-spatial.

Each performance has a very traditional three-act structure: act 1, the e-mail call to a core actor/audience network (you may also start to get responses from reporters for information and updates); act 2, the gesture itself, which is not very interesting to look at since you don’t really see that much—you just click (click = action); act three, you re-encounter your core actor/audience network to determine what might have occurred within your staging space, how many people participated, where they came from, what they might have said, and of course what has been reported about the performance. What you want from the performance is a side-loading of the information that creates ripples that add to a much deeper question around the issue that you are documenting in a lived manner via a staged simulation.

To direct an on-line performance like EDT’s you need to have a strong sense of how actor/audience network relations function so that you can build trust and a strong sense of collaboration and autonomy. In the mid-’90s I started to hear that while in the real world we were all separated by six degrees, on-line we were all only two clicks away from each other. So, you have to understand the nature of degrees on-line. A degree is based on how many direct connections you have to an active node; this node may be you. This does not mean that you have lots of connections/e-mail to others; it means you have access to a hub or cluster of nodes that connect to the unconnected.

As a director I want to have access to only a few actor/audience networks at a time. I am trying to get to those powerful unconnected that have the potential to become actor/audience networks. For an on-line performance you want to have a high level of “betweenness” or liminal flow between the networks. You want to be open to actor/audience clusters and what they need to gain a strong sense of

Dolores from 10 to 22

Dolores from 10 to 22 began as a streaming video net.performance created by Ricardo Dominguez and Coco Fusco. The performance is based on a true story of a Mexican *maquiladora* (factory) worker who was accused of trying to start a union in her workplace and was locked in a room alone for 12 hours to intimidate her into signing a letter of resignation. We performed on Thanksgiving Day 2001, at Kiasma in Helsinki, Finland. The 12-hour performance was transmitted to the Internet via several surveillance cameras. Fusco took the 12 hours of video and edited it to 98 minutes and created a video installation based on the performance. The video has been shown at the Dundee Contemporary Art Center in Scotland and at the Memling Museum in Brugge, Belgium. It received an honorable mention from the 2003 Transmediale in Berlin and will show there in February 2003.

information access and control. You don't want them to be dependent on your connections for access to the flow: that ends up building single points of breakdown. The more you reach a high degree of "betweenness" between you and your actor/audience the more the networks will grow and function beyond the limited event of the performance.

The level of intimacy is also very important in developing your actor/audience network. Intimacy allows a strong and short path to trust, to the virtual faith that is needed to do the performance. On-line intimacy is based on having direct access to all of the actor/audience networks, or having one of your actor/audience networks with a high trust level in relation to the rest of the group. The intimate nodes have an emotional link that is direct and allows them to access all the nodes in the network more quickly than anyone else. They are only one click away from everyone and can quickly give a director a sense of the information flow. Intimate nodes are boundary spanners connecting their group to other clusters in the network.

For a good performance you want intimate nodes to click into one or two periphery clusters. For instance, you may be able to access someone within the site that you are doing the action against. You may be able to find a bridge to the internal networks of the Mexican government or a corporation. This will give access to unmapped flows of information that could help develop a better performance. You want all the actor/audience networks to create a distributed web rather than network centralization; you don't want to depend on one node for interconnection between you and all the unconnected subnetworks. This allows for a resilient swarming to take place. The action can function extremely well even when the technology fails or a number of the actors/audience are unable to join at the proper moment.

FUSCO: EDT's actions turn audiences into actors, into political actors engaged in a simulation that has detectable physical impact (the flooding of servers) and noticeable social impact (the plethora of media commentary prior and subsequent to your actions). Part of the attraction in joining a FloodNet action is the game-like feel of the interaction: participants log onto a screen with thousands of other "players" and the combined force of their playing with their keyboards yields the effect. "Scoring" here would be achieved by a simulated victory over the server. But the other part of the attraction it seems is the intervention in the social produced by dispersed collective engagement with computers. What aspect of the actors' roles do you stress more as a director of a FloodNet action?

DOMINGUEZ: What I stress is that the "game" mentality not be an important state of being for the actor/audience network. It is too easy to have a network performance become about "scoring." We can see this in so much on-line work. What is more important is the process by which EDT attempts to connect to the streets. The actor/audience network should have a sense that the "collective engagement with computers" is not a "game" just as it is not "hacking." The idea is for the networks to communicate about the process of witnessing and sharing.

Also, because a number of the actor/audience networks are not in agreement with EDT's performance or counterperformance, EDT is able to engage the issues of politics of code beyond code. These encounters also manifest themselves as critiques and analysis from each sector. Each reading of EDT's performance comes from distinctly different concerns that often converge on EDT's use of simulation. From Critical Art Ensemble to street activists to the National Security Agency, all become very nervous about this issue. What we tell these actor/audience networks is that our use of simulation is not Baudrillard's but Genet's style of simulation in a play like *The Balcony*. The role of the actor/audience network for

EDT is to become aware of the pragmatic use of simulation that is concerned not only with what simulation can mean, but with the narratives of empathy that it might create.

FUSCO: Working on *Dolores from 10 to 22* [2002] called for other kinds of staging. In this case, the streaming video image was supposed to be a stage, and the actions viewed were supposed to be controlled at least in part by audience response. The chat room around the streaming video was another stage for the audience participants to survey each other's reactions to what they were seeing. In reality, you were directing the net performance on many levels at once. You played Jorge, the *maquiladora* [factory] manager whose job it was to get Dolores to sign a letter of resignation. Your intimidation tactics change from coercive to violent over the course of the 12 hours, but everything was designed to make Dolores act according to your expectations. At the same time, you were surreptitiously moderating the chat, posing as a well-informed audience member. On top of this you were overseeing the streaming video's technical performance, making sure that the performance remained stably connected over the 12 hours. How did it feel to move among those different levels of directing and those different simulations? What was it like to return to mimetic theatre as an actor?

DOMINGUEZ: It was great fun to perform in so many spaces all at one time. It is always fun for an actor to play multiple roles. It allows the audience to have a sense of one's acting talents which can so easily be missed if one is playing only one character. I was also able to control the infrastructure of the performance at the same time to a degree that would be much more difficult to accomplish without the networks. This multitasking was only possible because we worked out the spine for each of the 12 scenes (so that we knew where we were going in each scene), one set, and only two characters. The piece had a very Beckett-like minimalism. The contained formalism of *Dolores* allowed me to function beyond what would normally be too much during a live performance.

Dolores was a return for me to mimetic theatre. I took on your Dolores character and improvised. The interaction with you was really a type of "hidden the-

2. Jorge (Ricardo Dominguez) berates Dolores (Coco Fusco), a worker at the *maquiladora* who is being confined there. From *Dolores from 10 to 22*, 22 November 2001, at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Kiasma, Helsinki. (Video by Coco Fusco)



atre.” Our encounters followed the standard simulation of modern realist acting; we did not introduce any disturbance in this space. The differences for me between theatre and nontheatre tensions were more apparent: the filmic nature of the staging created streaming images and sound (we used QuickTime streaming) using four cameras. One of them was infrared to pick up our movements in the dark. The nature of on-line streaming technology is that its aesthetic is very similar to that of silent films. Streaming works best if one approaches it as media for gestures that can be read as black and white photographs. So much of the world that is on-line lacks the bandwidth to access net.art. It was important that simple images be created that allowed anyone to quickly get a sense of what may be happening and why it is wrong; that the issues of exploitation of women and labor in the Free Trade Zones be readable. Those who were able to stay for a longer period could begin to sense the weight of duration that Dolores was living through.

Also, another difference was that the audience was distributed and invisible, so we could not feel the existential presence of audience that one would in a traditional theatre. The audience was only present as a chat system or in some other space upstairs, occasionally watching the CCTV monitors placed in different sections of the museum in Helsinki. The chat performance was very traditional, or digitally correct, for that platform. I used an avatar and pretended to be an outside-insider who would attempt to offer explanations, translations, and asides to the drifting chat actors/audience network.

FUSCO: *Dolores from 10 to 22* was not just a commentary on the political situation of women workers on the global assembly line, but about living in a society obsessed with surveillance and voyeurism, two interrelated kinds of looking that theatricalize the objects under observation. Surveillance evokes the scary scenario of being an involuntary actor for someone else’s gaze, and in most contemporary fantasies the other who is watching is the state. Voyeurism evokes the glamorous, erotic scenarios of pleasurable and empowering looking at others as spectacle. Web surfing would be seen as a kind of voyeurism, while the almost obsessive encyclopedic command of information that is the mark of many a cyber-player could be characterized as a form of surveillance. Alt.net.culture devotes an enormous effort to critiquing surveillance, but it also celebrates voyeurism through the proliferation of webcam-based art ventures, and through its embrace of cybersex and its generally pro-porn stance. What is your take on art about surveillance?

DOMINGUEZ: The interconnection between voyeurism, exhibitionism, and the generalized fear of being under surveillance has been playing itself out in the theatre and art since the 1960s. I did not feel I had very much to say about it, about the vision machine and its sexual economy. Most of the new net.art’s take on surveillance did not add much more to what had already been done. So much of the work was a formalist presentation of surveillance and its roving jerky frame. After all, surveillance in the public space is about capturing what happened after it has happened—very little happens during the actual event. Also, other network activists and artists, like the CCTV Project (2000) by irrational.org or the Surveillance Camera Players, were attempting to map it out and foreground the social spaces that were being taken over by CCTV in the ’90s. EDT had chosen to stay away from the surveillance issue by connecting our performances to the theatricality of transparency instead. We also felt that the dramatic tension of transparency on-line, where the hacker tradition of anonymity was dominant, was an important gesture to make.

It was only after our 1998 SWARM performance at Ars Electronica that we started to develop a semantic simulation concerning surveillance. Many reporters and scholars wanted to know about the future of hacktivism and the Zapatistas. So, we decided to play with our Mayan technology and wave our intergalactic

The **Surveillance Camera Players** is a group of performers that stage plays for real surveillance cameras in New York City and elsewhere. The video version of *Dolores from 10 to 22* is presented as a simulated CCTV system (Closed-Circuit TV).

The **CCTV Project** (2000) is a work by one of the first net.art groups, irrational.org (<<http://www.irrational.org/heath/cctv/>>) on the issue of CCTV surveillance in the U.K.

stick in front of them by informing them that the Zapatistas had the Mexican military and paramilitary under surveillance 24/7 and that these images were being streamed as live video that was distributed via satellite to the international Zapatista networks and Human Rights NGO's. We told them that Big Brother was being watched by many little sisters. That a new version of the Black Panther's tradition of Cop Watch groups was now occurring on a global level.

This semantic simulation started appearing in magazines like *Time* and U.S./Mexican military journals and created a number of positive social after-effects for the Zapatistas and EDT. On 13 December 2000 Zapatista communities began to overrun a number of the military bases that surround them. They did it without weapons, but they did have a large number of video cameras with them. Many who took part in the actions have spoken about the military response to move out instead of shooting as a response to the possibility that this wall of people was being watched live on the Internet.

EDT also received a grant from Creative Capital³ to develop the project further. *Anchors for Witnessing: Surveillance for Off-Grid Communities* is the title of the project that developed out of this semantic simulation. *Anchors* proposes to build a wireless streaming video network for communities like the Zapatistas and the indigenous communities in Woomera, Australia, and the island of Vieques in Puerto Rico. *Anchors for Witnessing* will give communities who live under daily low-intensity warfare the ability to instantly witness, document, and disseminate the abuses of power to the networked world. The project will allow each community to control the lens and what images are produced. But *Anchor for Witnessing* is not really about the video that will be produced and archived. The core of the project is to alter the conditions of surveillance and countersurveillance. We are facilitating reverse anthropology: allowing those usually watched to watch those who watch them. The gesture is meant to trigger a social break and expose the top-down circuits of who watches who and why. Perhaps those who are in command will begin to feel the social pressure of being watched from a space beyond their control.

FUSCO: In making *Dolores*, I wanted to express something about those polarized ways of seeing on-line, to question whether everything can and should be seen on-line. Is there some fallacy to that way of seeing everything as theatre and seeing the on-line world as capturing everything that can be seen? The dramas of everyday violence in border zone maquiladoras are never seen on-line, the subjection of women workers to the rule of machines is not acknowledged as politically problematic, and multinationals do not expose themselves or allow investigative reporters to expose them, though management routinely surveils workers. Can we use the Internet to present simulations of the unseen? Is that understood?

DOMINGUEZ: The possibility of presenting the unseen spaces of social production as the core of simulation is exactly what Genet was attempting to do with his



3. Jorge (Ricardo Dominguez) refuses to look into Dolores's (Coco Fusco) purse. From *Dolores* from 10 to 22, 22 November 2001, at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Kiasma, Helsinki. (Video by Coco Fusco)

work. From *Deathwatch* to *Prisoner of Love*. Genet wanted to bring forth what the vision machine does not want to see within its need to see everything: the blind spot that produces systemic reverse hallucinations. If a hallucination is seeing what is not there, then a reverse hallucination is not seeing what is there; the primary disturbance of *Dolores* is connecting the life of those who build the computers unseen/overseen to those users who everyday stare at their screens and turn away from the dirty state of this supposedly clean technology. Genet wanted to create spaces for traumatic myths that could manifest spontaneous simulations that would haunt post-spectacle power. To haunt the simulacrum of the visual economy with simulations of the small unseen gestures being made by those who are unimportant, by those who are unseen: that can suddenly build-up an empathetic moment beyond the screen.

These minor simulations would then become real myths that would allow others to imagine and invent another world that does not suffer from this blindness to the real. What the Internet adds to this is the possibility for a speed of production and distribution that was not as available before. An actor/audience network can quickly develop a dialogue, a design, a meme, and an outcome that can build small waves of visibility that grow. Simulations of the unseen should focus on those tricky passages where the spectacle/simulacra networks come to transgress their own limits. The performance is thus a simulation of what has not been seen in the real—and it becomes the truth of the event. It becomes an enabling fiction. A simulation that hits the ground mobilizing networks for those who have been excluded. Genet was attempting to develop an ethics for the politics of simulation by affirming the possibilities of the false for fragile voices and the potential of the subaltern communities.

4. Ricardo Dominguez during his on-line Chat Performance as a young female art student watching the net.performance of *Dolores* from 10 to 22, 22 November 2001, at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Kiasma, Helsinki. (Photo by Coco Fusco)



Notes

1. On 1 January 1994, one minute after midnight, just as a Free Trade Agreement between Canada, the U.S.A., and Mexico went into effect (NAFTA), the EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation) took over a large section of Chiapas, Mexico, and declared it an autonomous zone for 28 different indigenous communities.
2. The underscoring is a net.art gesture that links words as code, in the same manner that software and hardware developers often name important files. One could also use the “/” or the “.” to create a similar word to code diagramming. The “_” and the “/” are “path markers” that maps the folder structure that culminates as the narrative of interactivity.
3. Creative Capital Foundation is a national nonprofit organization that supports artists pursuing innovative approaches to form and content in the media, performing, and visual arts, and in emerging fields. They provide advisory services and professional development assistance along with financial support. Funded artists agree to share a small percentage of any profits generated by their projects with Creative Capital, which applies these funds toward new grants.

Coco Fusco is a New York-based artist and writer. She is the author of English Is Broken Here: Notes on Cultural Fusion in the Americas (New Press, 1995) and The Bodies That Were Not Ours and Other Writings (Routledge, 2002); and the editor of Corpus Delecti: Performance Art of the Americas (Routledge, 1999). She is Associate Professor in the School of the Arts at Columbia University.

Ricardo Dominguez is Cofounder of the Electronic Disturbance Theater.