

**Lorna Mills****ARTIST**

At this point, you know I am being described as a net artist and a lot of my work is created specifically for online consumption but I also have started my career with a variety of media. I have been exhibiting for years. So, the media art kind of label is pretty much recent. Really only in the last ten years. So yes, I make things (laughing). I mean, every kind of label that artists can have imposed upon them have a best-before date. Like, you know in a few years everyone who is described as a net artist would be extremely embarrassed about it. That's just natural (laughing) but I don't really worry about the label. If anyone is referring to me as a post internet artist or what ever. It doesn't matter. So authorship, that's an odd thing and also becomes even more unclear when we are talking about Ways of Something. Which is a curatorial project, and yet is being heavily identified with me and I think that's more because when it's all said and done it's gonna be 114 artists involved. And so for easy identification it like, becomes me but, I don't like the label of the 'artist as CEO' or 'artist as outsourcer'. The source, the images how they chose to make their 60 seconds was totally up to them as artists. It's their art. And because it's THEIR art the whole work, even though it's identified with me, really belongs to 114 artists. So it is like respecting their decision as an artist. That it was NOT my place to say: well, this doesn't fit with the next piece. I am wrangling them (laughing). It's true! It can be very, very tricky but it's worth it for the work. What's unique in ways of something, is that it was an opportunity for artists to look at art history and try to negotiate the art history with their own practices. Especially episode one because I think that dealt the most straight forwardly with art history and the artists that were involved with that were absolutely DELIGHTED to be dealing with art history. Because that's not something that gets handled much in net art! Most artists are kind of... if there is aesthetic choices, they're generally somewhere around New York modernism in terms of graphic style or else, in all fairness a lot of net artists who are dealing with code are thinking about contemporary issues of surveillance and control and what it means to be a digital user. Not just a digital artist.

**ARTWORK**

The artwork is to me more than just an idea. Ideas are involved. I would never describe myself as a conceptual artist so I don't have to worry about that. What is the artwork? It's the thing I end up making that I declare an artwork and, you know, according to whatever kind of rules or structures I have in place. For myself. I'm a visual artist and I am currently, I mean at this moment in time, I am solidly devoted to the pictorial and that tradition! Though I DO think about how my work occupies space and there are times when I do treat it as an installation it is still...The main thing for me is the picture you're looking at — in motion, of course. It's moving images.

**PRODUCTION**

I am in internet culture. I mean I am embedded in that in a way that I am stealing constantly. It's remix culture, it's collage. I do take animations that I find online. And I alter them, I recombine them I take them out of their initial context and recombine them into new artworks. So, my art act is like transformation of existing materials. What's unique in ways of something is that huge collaboration. Except collaboration isn't a fair word, because if it's collaborating to me it would seem that you would be discussing the structure of it with everyone. That would have been unmanageable to set up the structure for it and to insist that they would stick with the rules. Once we get through all four episodes it will be 114 artists will have made — remade a minute of each or 60 seconds of the original documentary ways of seeing by John Berger. I am NOT a director in that way that I kind of asked artists to create stuff specifically. What I did is I set up rules, a structure. One of the big rules was first of all, you couldn't use the original footage but your 60 seconds had to include the soundtrack and the most important thing was that it also had to include the closed captioning. Because I saw the text being present there as a way of really unifying it but at the same time causing attention of discontinuity because a minute can end like, you know, 60 seconds, can end mid-

sentence and so when you see a sudden switch in text style or the fonts or even like animation of the fonts from a still... to me that's the most interesting thing going on is the tension between the visuals and the text. Because I mean, the text is Berger's and it flows through the whole piece.

It's a weird thing because I have never done this before in terms of like taking something. I think actually, you know, technically probably it all belongs to the BBC. Now we got all the source files came from youtube so the sounds from youtube, the closed caption - like the youtube video where closed captioned in the first place - so I was just like writing down the captioning so I could send it to each artist. It's kind of interesting that it's not like I, you know, I went to BBC archives. This was something widely available as a historic kind of thing on, you know, a video file sharing platform.

## MATERIAL

It's funny, I think the material seems to be, you know, video. There's still with me there's a sense of hands on. I have to make work. I don't come up with ideas that simply get followed through. It's always a relationship between me and the materials that has to provide a surprise, obviously, or else I just wouldn't do it. Sometimes I do create things that are specifically for a playback like, we were talking about earlier these big beautiful, old, professional CRT monitors. Yes then I am thinking about those and those become part of the piece and in some works that I have done the video part, the playback is definitely part of the pieces. I think the material is always shifting. I mean, GIFS are just file formats, you know? So, I guess the material is what you're seeing.

The animated GIFS that I get. These ones come from this big community of people who are in it for the laughs or in it for the money shots. I don't take GIFS from people who position themselves as artists. I prefer to use work, GIFS that were created by people who aren't thinking of art. Also these GIFS that are created by people are generally sourced in network TV, news, drama, film, computer game recordings... The sources are so wide that, you know, you can't go back to a primary source. And it generally belongs to a corporation (laughing) somewhere along the line, you know, CNN (laughing).

## MEDIUM

The medium at this point is animated GIFS and the reason I would state clearly that it's animated GIFS is that there are so many restrictions and constraints with the file format. You know, 256 colors, your frame rates are much lower than film so that there is a jerky motion and that to me is really important. Because, you recognize when you are looking at them that your eye, your brain is not as tricked by the illusion of motion with animated GIFS as it is with film. And even if I dump it to a video it still got the gifiness of it. So yeah, animated GIFS, That's an easy answer.

There are some times when there is a certain animation that becomes a linchpin for a whole piece. I would say that's almost true of almost every piece if I have done that there is something special. Either it's a dog walking while he's got one of his hind feet in his mouth or something like that. That has some kind of abjection to it. Or, something ridiculous like some guy riding naked on a bicycle wanking like, what? (laughing)

And the fact that someone saw that it is like an old media, I don't describe it that way, I describe it as a very successful media. Even before art magazines and, general interest magazines online were taking an interest in animated GIFS. People were making them! So it's not like they just kind of popped out of nowhere. Since 1987 since the file format came along, since it was born (laughing), people have been producing them and posting them on various sites.

## PROCESS

Each GIF that I've downloaded that I decide I like, or can use... it's more like, can I use this in some way? I cut out frame by frame so it has that jagged edge. That's also animated as well as the content. Then, I bring them into a program like flash that has a stage situation and I place them on the stage and then it becomes like just pure intuition! There's either something formal that can accidentally happen, that excites me...But it never is just purely formal because they are pictures of something. So they are not abstract necessarily. Yet, people have made arguments that they are abstractions in

some ways because of the disassociation from their backgrounds, from their context. So, it's that MIX into a new context and negotiating relationships between images both in terms of the content and the movement and the background and the edges and how it occupies the white spaces... it is just as important as the black space - the background, is just as important as the foreground. So it's a level of technical complexity, which I love. I love doing it. I don't always know what I've done until it's finished and I've looked at it for a while. So the intention is... I don't work with a narrative in mind, I'm not a narrative artist that's why the things are perpetually looping. So there are no literal meanings to it. It's about relationships.

Well, it's more that most of the time it's, look at that in relationship to that! There are very few art pieces that I've done that are just as single GIF. It's almost always a relationship between images, a re-combining.

We're talking about surface, we're talking about, you know, an aesthetic- like pixilation as an aesthetic, there's texture - this illusion of texture. Depending on the source material, because the photo based GIFS, their film based and video based, are from all sorts of sources and so the quality of light is different in all of them. So that's also another part of the composition. It's deciding what is working with what? In terms of... It's not like I'm trying to match (laughing) a quality of light or texture as a matter of fact. And I did paint and I may even paint again someday. So there's that concern of color and texture and composition. I mean solid, pictorial (laughing) stuff that really isn't radical at all.

## PRESENTATION

Image quality is important! Playback quality is important. If I am working with projections, I want a good projector with high lumen count, for instance. I absolutely HATE washed out projections! That just enrages me. Most CRTs are beautiful, most computer playback...it's not an issue. I would say the only issue seems to be most of the time, with projectors because they are not all created equal (laughing). You don't ever know who your audience is. I've been doing this too long to presume who would understand it and who wouldn't. I no longer know that. The audience is whoever wants to look at the work. They always start out online. Like, there is always a version that goes online. For this show, for instance I was given specific pixel dimensions for the playback so I created the GIFS in those dimensions but I can, you know, of course shrink them, I can re-size them and stick them online so they're not crashing everyone's browser. Any other considerations for playback depend on the context. Depend on where I am showing whether we are using projections or computers or laptops whatever.

No matter what you're doing whether you are a painter or a draftsman or whatever your medium is, if you're not thinking about the context, the actual room it is being shown in, the actual space, you can loose out and your work can fail. We're no longer sucked into the wall, like to a wall piece and accepting that. We're walking into a room and looking at the space. We are all too aware of that now.

## INTENTION

It's just to produce the work and for me to be engaged. That's all. I don't think in terms of manifestos. I just think in terms of making work that I am engaged by and want to show. So the aim is just to continue that. There is like different ways of something. We're talking a linear time. So, you know, minute by minute it is a narrative, but the animated GIFS are totally about looping time. It's about perpetuity and repetition. So I mean, they are quite different in that way. So it's different than dealing with visual relationships.

## METHOD

Labor and looking (laughing). That's the easiest way, really. I don't know. No, because there are so many methods depending on the artist, depending on what the artist needs to do and whether the artist needs to find new methods. Like feels that it is absolutely necessary, you know, to break out of older ways or of traditional ways, whatever... or just contemporary ways. Because I think that's more

important that there are certain artists that are contemporary and yet they don't want...they feel constrained by what is going on right now and they are looking for another form. Artists do that all the time. That's part of the condition of being an artist in history.

## ART

It seems to be whatever the artist is choosing it to be. Yes. But, you know, that's not the same as what is good art? What do I consider good art? Oh, that's actually quite easy. It's something that I see that I didn't know how desperately I needed to see it, until I saw it. And for me, making my own work it's... When I feel I've done something that it's not something I've done, it feels like it's beside myself. But I can look out and go, I made that. Like it has got it's own life now. It exists without me.

## BIO \*

\* Canadian artist, who has actively exhibited her work in both solo and group exhibitions since the early 1990's, both in Canada and Internationally. Her practice has included obsessive Ilfochrome printing, obsessive painting, obsessive super 8 film & video, and obsessive on-line animated GIFs incorporated into restrained off-line installation work. Recent exhibitions include "Abrupt Diplomat" at the Marshal McLuhan Salon for Transmediale, "At Play in the Fields of the Lord" at Transfer Gallery, Brooklyn NY and "DKRM" at DAM Gallery, Berlin. Mills has also co-curated monthly group GIF projections, with Rea McNamara, for the "Sheroes" performance series in Toronto, a group GIF projection event "When Analog Was Periodical" in Berlin with Anthony Antonellis, and a four person GIF installation, "Zip The Bright:::" at Trinity Square Video in Toronto, with Sara Ludy, Nicolas Sassoon and Rick Silva. Lorna Mills' most recent curation project, "Ways of Something" is a collaborative remake of the 1972 John Berger documentary "Ways of Seeing" episodes one through four, featuring 113 networked artists. *For her general online appearance Lorna Mills chooses to display her work in place of her human image.*

WEB: [www.digitalmediatree.com](http://www.digitalmediatree.com)

## Credits:

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